



Facilitation in Dynamic Wargames



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Facilitation

“The act of helping other people to deal with a problem or reach an agreement or solution without getting directly involved in the process or discussion”

Facilitator

"An individual who enables groups and organisations to work more effectively; to collaborate and achieve synergy. He or she is a 'content neutral' party who by not taking sides or expressing or advocating a point of view during the meeting, can advocate for fair, open, and inclusive procedures to accomplish the group's work"

"One who contributes structure and process to interactions so groups are able to function effectively and make high-quality decisions. A helper and enabler whose goal is to support others as they pursue their objectives"

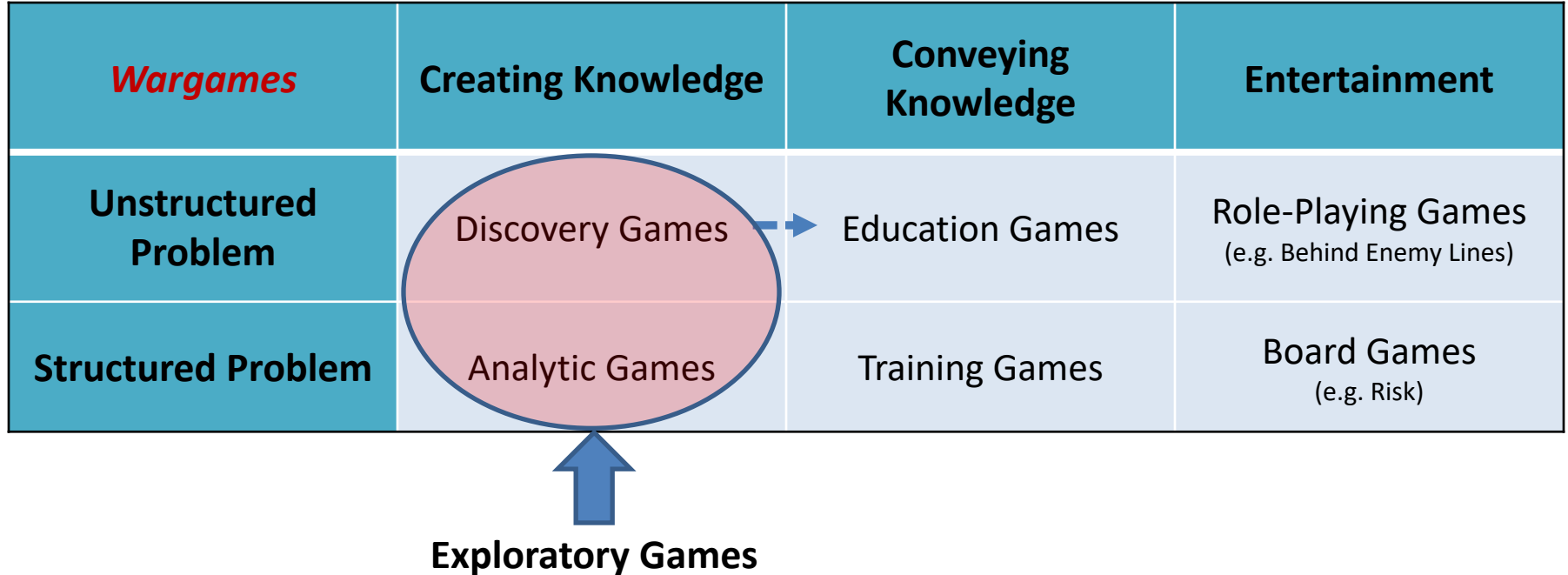
"A meeting or workshop leader who creates an environment where every participant has the opportunity to collaborate, innovate, and excel"

So What Makes A Facilitator?



Someone who helps people to do things that they might not otherwise be able to achieve

Where Do We Fit In Wargaming?



Exploratory Wargames Are NOT Exercises

- What makes an exercise
 - You are probably rehearsing for something that you know about
 - You have already trained for what is going to happen
 - It is organised around events
 - There is a right answer (which you should already know)
 - Somebody is collecting data on *how well* you are doing
 - Data collection for analysis is priority #99
- Exercises need judgements: umpires



Exploratory Wargames Are Experiments

- What makes an experiment
 - You are probably trying to find out something new
 - You may be doing something you've never done before
 - It is organized around questions
 - You don't know what the answer is (and nor does anyone else)
 - Somebody is collecting data on *what* you are doing
 - And *why* you are doing it
 - Data collection for analysis is priority #1
- Experiments need conditions: facilitation



Why Facilitate?

- Our job is to help keep the process on track
- We monitor progress and, where necessary, we chair meetings, pose questions, steer discussions and try to collate and summarize the positions the players have reached
- Our aim is to ensure that the needs of the analysis process, the players, and the event schedule are balanced
 - We work with the key stakeholders to make sure that the game is making the necessary progress at an appropriate pace
- **We have no opinions of our own!**
 - Our role is to help the players form theirs

In short, facilitators are the oil in the machine



The Game Context

- The techniques I'll talk about have been developed over a number of years and used extensively in a wide range of games
- The main programme in which they have been used is set in a hypothetical epoch 10 years in the future
 - Hence it is by nature exploratory and analytical
- The programme considers countering advanced air and missile threats, at the strategic and operational levels, with a strong policy focus (but with realistic tactical simulation)
 - We face the players with a range of adversaries on a global basis
- It covers all phases from global competition, through emerging crisis, to full conflict

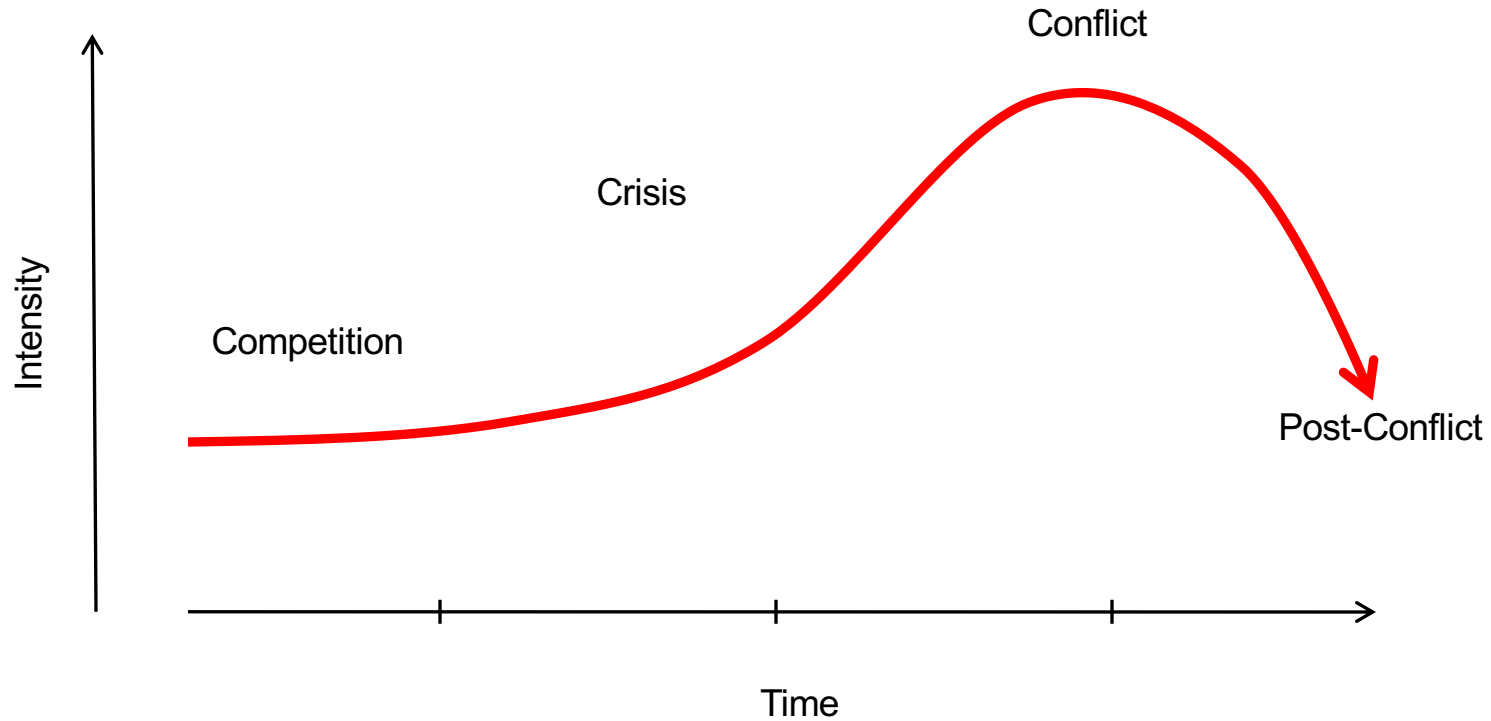
Playing

- The programme runs on a two-year cycle, with 3 – 4 gaming events per cycle
 - Each game typically lasts 5 days, with up to 100 or more participants
- The players come from a wide range of nations and organisations, on a global basis
- They are split between Defence and Foreign Policy, plus Legal
 - Depending on the event, typically between OF-4 and 2-star, or civilian equivalent
- Our objectives are a mix between how to avoid getting into a fight (dissuasion, deterrence, de-escalation, etc) and how to win one if we fail (denial, defeat, and so on)
 - The objectives are set by and collectively agreed with the national sponsors
- The game has to be as realistic as possible, both for effective learning and for player immersion
 - So how do we learn how to win a war if we're successful in avoiding one on Day 1?

~~Un~~chained Melody

- At the start of each game, RED has a defined set of strategic goals
 - These may remain constant throughout the longer campaign if appropriate
- Within these, RED has freedom of action and a range of prior-developed battle plans ready for use
- **BUT**
 - Where the objectives need to be considered in an escalating situation, RED will be required to carry out certain specific antagonistic or hostile acts
- **HOWEVER**
 - How do you keep game play realistic (and rewarding) when all the diplomats are trying to kiss and make up?
- **OUR SOLUTION**
 - We don't tie RED's hands behind his back, but we do constrain his options
 - RED has his battle plan, but...

Example Escalation Curve



Example Escalation Curve

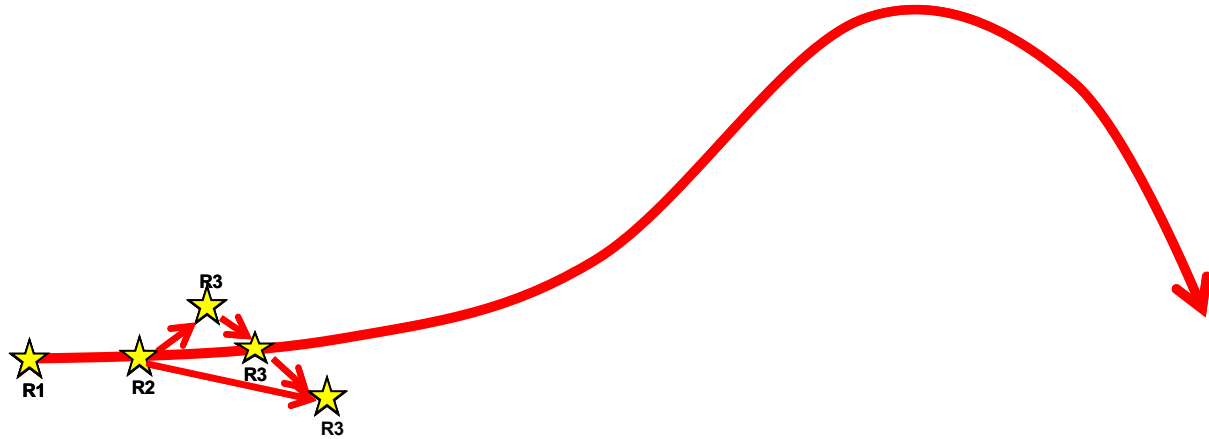
★ = Event Node

★
R1

A red curve representing an escalation curve. It starts at a yellow star labeled 'R1' on the left. The curve rises to a peak and then falls, ending with a red arrowhead pointing downwards and to the right.

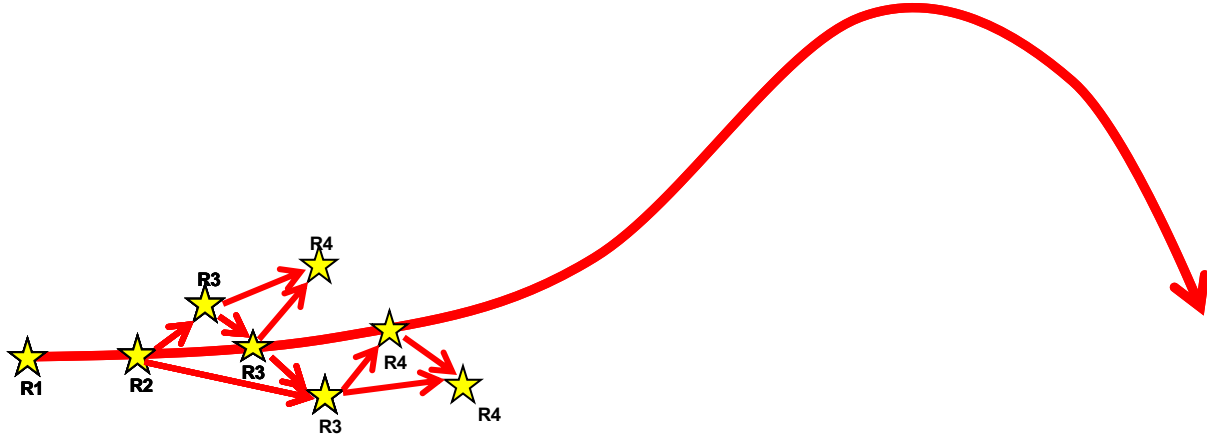
The first RED event is generally pre-scripted, and is often used to bed the players in
However, BLUE is expected to decide on and implement an appropriate response

Example Escalation Curve



RED will decide whether it sees BLUE's actions as increasingly escalatory (up), de-escalatory (down), or maintaining the status quo (the middle line), and will accelerate, increase, delay or decrease its next move accordingly
Every BLUE move therefore gives RED three basic options on the curve

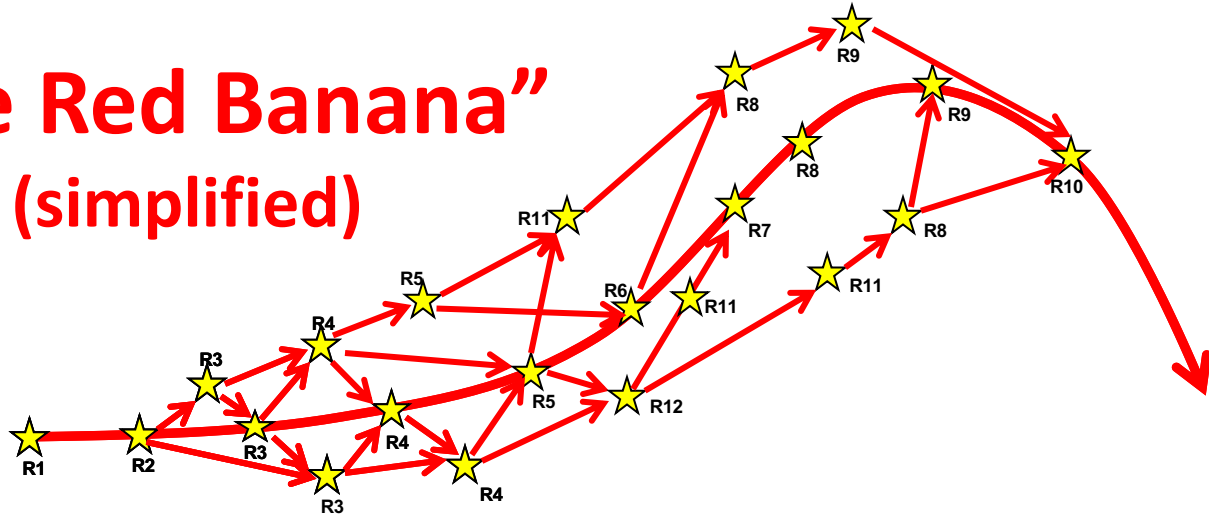
Example Escalation Curve



And so on – every action has a reaction. In some cases, RED may make alternative moves. Decisions on RED's choices are made jointly by RED players, Analysis and Facilitation

Example Escalation Curve

“The Red Banana” (simplified)



There can be up to four bananas running concurrently. With so many moving parts, things can easily go wrong if not properly monitored and controlled

Enter The Facilitators

- There is always a three-way balance needed between the needs of both sets of players and those of the sponsors (through the objectives)
- Without good facilitation, you're quite likely to achieve it by getting all of them equally disgruntled



Facilitation Requirements

- We typically need up to 2 facilitators for each region being gamed (can be from 1 to 4 of these), plus 2 more for Global
 - They are sourced from the participating nations
 - Continuity is important, but you can't rely on it
 - At a recent event, one of our most experienced facilitators ended up isolated in a hotel room in Taiwan with COVID for 2 weeks instead...
- We always have a need for 'fresh blood' so I regularly trawl for volunteers
 - The selected candidates are run through a formal training programme, extracts from which are in some of the following slides

What We Need: Facilitation Skills

- Ability to listen
- Cultural awareness
- Without personal/organisational agenda
- Understanding of the topic
- Understanding of the objectives
- Ability to think on the fly (while listening)
- Language skills
 - Able to speak slowly, communicate clearly
 - Without jargon, acronyms, idiom or slang
- And last but not least: teamwork

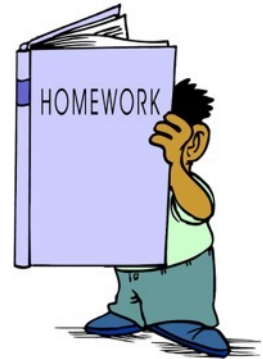


During Play

- Facilitators shouldn't worry if they feel they're not saying or doing anything
 - As long as the players are saying and doing things!
 - Everything may be running perfectly, and that's actually the facilitator's Nirvana
- When in dynamic play, their principal job is Repair Person
- However, they should be prepared to step in to steer things
 - But only if the players can't self-organize, which is always the preferred option

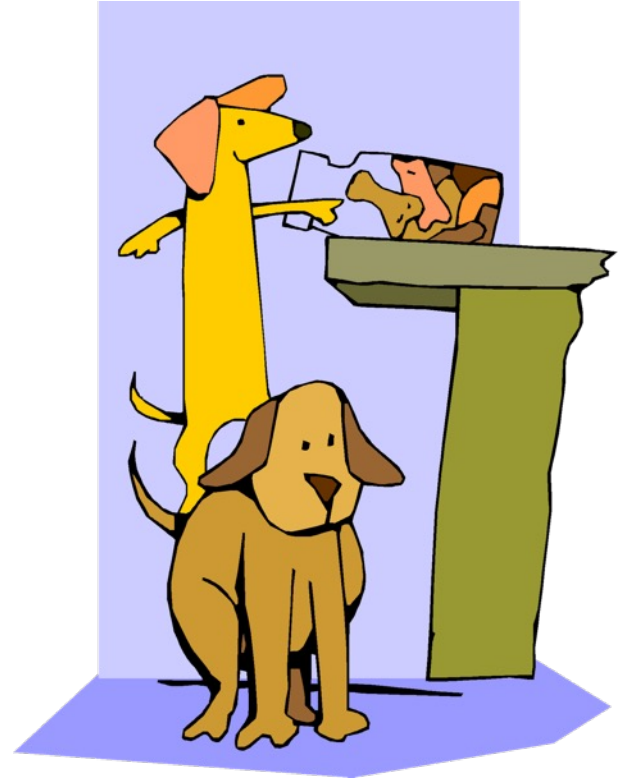
Top Tip # 1 - Homework

- Facilitators must take the time to understand the problem to be solved, the key players involved in the issue, and the "hot buttons" around the objectives
- They should resist the temptation of developing their own conclusions prior to the session
 - If they come across as biased they may lose the trust of the players
 - Nevertheless, they should have some idea of what they expect to happen



Top Tip # 2 - Articulate The Problem

- The key to good facilitation is a clear, crisp articulation of the issue and ensuring that all participants understand the objective



Top Tip # 3 – Encourage Inclusion

- Facilitators should take particular note of those who aren't speaking up during game events
 - *But they should note the cultural differences between nations*
 - They should look for opportune moments to ask them specific questions about what they think about the particular issues being addressed
 - But for the purposes of game tempo, they should encourage 'silence procedures' where appropriate
- While encouraging inclusion is important, they should be cautious not to "pick on" any attendees and create an environment of discomfort

“Read the room”

Graham Longley-Brown, *Successful Professional Wargames*

Top Tip # 4 – Stick To The Issue

- Facilitators must keep things moving toward addressing the objectives
- Frequently, they'll find that a discussion will drift off course and will not be contributing towards addressing the problem
- Their job as facilitator is to keep the discussion moving forward while at the same time not being so rigid that they'll frustrate the participants
- If the discussion has drifted to addressing a different problem or if the discussion has become destructive, they must bring it back on course



Top Tip # 5 - Establish A "Parking Lot"

- Many times a facilitated session will uncover other important issues which should be captured but are not germane to the stated objective(s)
- Those items should be captured in a "parking lot" to be addressed in future discussions
- Facilitators should refer back to it as necessary, in order to keep the discussion focused



Top Tip # 6 – Capture Key Items

- Frequently during facilitated discussions specific actions relative to solving the problem will be revealed (i.e. you just might find an answer...)
- Facilitators must be diligent about capturing those key items and ensuring they are clearly visible to all meeting attendees
- They should take the time to summarize these items at appropriate points to ensure everyone agrees as to the importance and meaning of the items



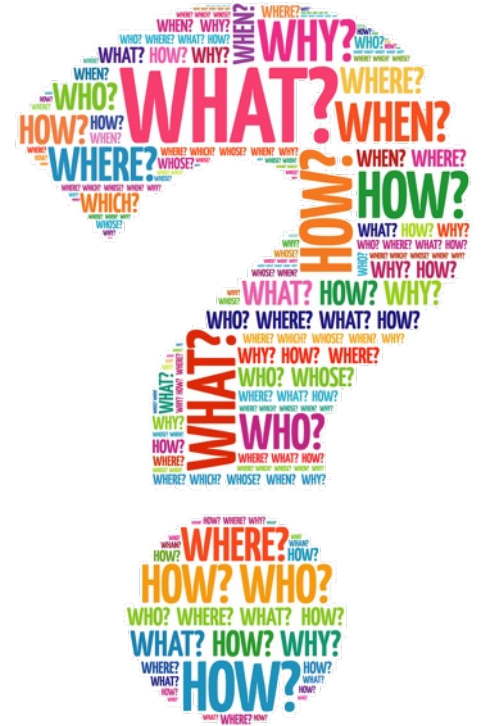
Top Tip # 7 – Stay Objective

- It is essential that facilitators are perceived as completely objective and are not viewed as being in anyone's "camp" during a discussion
- If a facilitator is viewed as leaning in a particular direction, then the trust of the attendees may quickly be lost
 - Particularly those who may be on the opposing side of the debate
- Once trust is lost, it's difficult to regain, so facilitators must stay balanced at all times



Top Tip # 8 – Ask, Don't Tell

- Facilitators must never get on their soapbox and espouse their vast knowledge
- Good facilitators use their wisdom to help others get to a common, agreed-upon resolution to problems
- The best facilitators do so by asking pointed, specific questions which are relevant to the problem statement and designed to bring new facts to light
- Once the facilitator starts pontificating then the event stops being about the *attendees* solving the problem
 - And therefore completely misses the point



Top Tip # 9 – Don't Get Hijacked

- Facilitators should keep individuals (especially 'senior' ones) from hijacking the debate
- Very often, the highest-ranking person present expresses his or her opinion and subsequently sets the course of the discussion to his or her agenda
- Once 'the boss' states a perspective then it can be harder for others to challenge it or to speak up



Top Tip # 10 – Be In Control

- The facilitators need to keep the event moving forward and avoid it being distracted into an off-course topic
- This may mean wrestling control of the discussion from an outspoken player or shifting the debate back to the objective
- It's isn't always pleasant and they may be likely to tick someone off, but that's their job
 - *Believe me, I've been there...*
- Lose control of the situation and they'll lose the respect of the participants



Despite All That



You'll still need to be prepared
to make it up as you go along

Why?

- The facilitator's job is to give the participants ownership of the process
- While making sure they're working on the right questions
- And keeping them in the right frame of mind to be both creative and effective
- It's not always easy...



But, in the end...

“Facilitation is like herding cats”





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Questions?

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