

Facilitation; of WHOM? and for WHAT?

a paper in connection with the theme of "Facilitation in Europe"
Prepared by Jay Weaver for SCP Network meeting in Sopron, HU, 23-25 April 2007

My observation of saturation-church-planting-focused ministries (mine personally and others') in Europe since 1993 indicates that we have not been as focused as we need to be. "To facilitate" has become a favored approach to ministry; not so much DOing as serving so as to see that tasks get done. But what is this verb acting upon? What is the related adjective, "facilitative", modifying?

I assume that we are all seeking to fulfill the purpose of God for His glory to fill the earth and that we are captured by a vision of discipling the nations for Christ and his Kingdom. Furthermore, we have owned Saturation Church Planting (SCP) strategy as the best way under the sun to fulfill the Great Commission. If my assumptions are not your convictions, then this writing and related discussion may seem irrelevant (or even obnoxious) to you.

The "facilitation" word is a favored one in our region when discussing various ministries. Along with the use of the term(s) there is often the inference that, because of "facilitation", the ministry is contributing to SCP- not necessarily so!

One might therefore argue that we need to be more careful about what is done in that facilitated ministry; i.e. is the ministry program or activity something that actively contributes to the reproduction of worshipping communities? But I want to suggest that we avoid "facilitating" programs & agendas no matter how noble they might seem for SCP. Let's put our energy where it counts the most; on WHOM, in relationships. SCP facilitators facilitate *people*...not plans. Leaders plant churches and SCP leaders foster movement.

DISCUSSION:

1. Given our assumptions above, WHO should we be facilitating? What kind of people are we looking for?
2. What are some facilitation ingredients of the relationship that will more likely contribute to SCP?
3. What are some of the pitfalls to avoid if the rapport is to aid the discipling of nations?

I would like to assume that SCP is commonly understood by all those who use the term. Experience has taught me not to do so, given the plethora of activities that are conveyed as SCP-focused. For WHAT objective are we pursuing SCP strategy? SCP strategies should work towards the goal of assuring an evangelical congregation for every village and neighborhood of every class, kind and condition of humanity in the whole country.

DISCUSSION:

- A. What have you found useful to (re)focus yourself on the "Z"? Vision leaks.
- B. What have you found useful in vision casting to help (re)focus people who are pursuing another goal, yet calling it "SCP"?
- C. Given this objective, what track record, character ingredients and skill sets will be needed among outside-in SCP facilitators like ourselves?
- D. Given this objective, what track record, character ingredients and skill sets will be needed among indigenous leaders who will carry SCP strategy to the goal?

Facilitation is important...and the concept is widely known and practiced throughout our region. But, making it useful for SCP, requires that we, again, go out to “Z” and concentrate on key people; a lot like Jesus, eh? The “of WHOM?” and “for WHAT?” dimensions are what make revisiting “facilitation” of value for SCP practitioners.

Appendix A:

Facilitation discussed in another realm. Make the links to our arena and pay special attention to her last paragraph.

Facilitation is the art, not of putting ideas into people’s heads, but of drawing ideas out.

A facilitator is someone who:

- Recognizes the strengths and abilities of individual group members and helps them to feel comfortable about sharing their hopes, concerns and ideas
- Supports the group, giving participants confidence in sharing and trying out new ideas
- Values diversity and is sensitive to the different needs and interests of group members. These difference might be due to gender, age, profession, education, economic and social status
- Leads by example through attitudes, approach and actions.

A facilitator’s role is to help a group through this process by asking questions that encourage new ways of thinking about and analyzing their situation. There should be a balance between offering ideas to guide the group and patiently listening and questioning.

A good facilitator has certain personal characteristics that encourage group members to participate. These include humility, generosity and patience, combined with understanding, acceptance and affirmation.

Facilitation is about empowering others. It involves letting go of control over the outcome of a process and giving that responsibility to the group. This shows a sincere commitment to the value and potential of people. A facilitated participatory process will take time and patience. It should be open to God’s guidance. There is a challenge to those of us who want to see immediate results! However, it will eventually lead to change that is more far-reaching and sustainable, due to the building up of strong relationships, the quality of learning and because the group owns the process. A facilitator is ‘best when people barely know that he or she exists.’

When the work is done the aim of fulfilled, they will all say, ‘We did this ourselves’ Lao Tzu

Excerpts from Effective Facilitation by Sophie Clarke, *Footsteps* newsletter, No. 60, Sept 2004 by Tearfund.
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Appendix B:

Excerpted proverbs from Dr. Roy King in an email of encouragement to leaders from Columbia Intl. University; January 2002

1. Jesus was the ultimate servant, yet He never allowed those being served to set His agenda or strategy.
2. Only place people in leadership who leave more than they take as they relate to people. (McManus)
3. Proverbs 14:4 is true. You have to be willing to put with the manure of a messy stable if you want the abundant harvest. Never place someone in leadership who values a clean stable over the effective harvest.
4. Life transformation most often occurs within three feet of another person. (Hybels)
5. Learn from the past. Lean into the future. BUT always LIVE in the present moment.
6. If the whole team wins, I win!
7. Every day do something to advance the mission. Never stop being a builder in order to manage.
8. My prayers and my choices expose what I really believe.
9. Lead more by revisiting good questions than giving answers.