



# Teaching the 'Too Serious!' Way

***I love to teach.*** It seems to come naturally to me. Probably as a result of my unrelenting curiosity.

I made a deal with myself early in life - that as long as the ideas continued to flow in, I would continue to pass them on.

It has served me well for over two decades as I continue to pass on to others the skills that I have acquired in the areas of facilitation and group decision support.

There is nothing quite so gratifying as hearing of the delight of a former student who has just organized and facilitated a successful workshop on his own.

***It is in the nature of the topic that a lot of time in my courses is spent on the psychological aspects of people, interwoven with many ways of thinking about things.***

All of this teaching could be lumped under the scientific heading of '*Messy Systems Theories*' or, more properly, '*Cybernetics*'.

I cover about five different systems models and show which model best fits which real life situation. I also like to illustrate how you can play with, adapt and combine the models to suit unique circumstances.

In my experience, there are four phases to facilitating most engagements:

- ◆ Preplanning the workshop
- ◆ Facilitating the workshop
- ◆ Documenting the workshop
- ◆ Auditing post-workshop results

At the preplan stage, the facilitator needs to engage their broker in a focussed dialogue that deals with such items as:

- ◆ Workshop intent and outcome
- ◆ Content to be covered, especially politics and undiscussables
- ◆ Stakeholder analysis, or "who must be invited"
- ◆ Preliminary workshop design
- ◆ Location logistics, documentation support and participant prework

Facilitating the workshop is the heart of the process, the key to its success. Particular emphasis is placed upon how to deliver the workshop, and how to spontaneously redesign it, in mid-flow, should the need arise.

In addition to the fundamentals, I cover a number of less traditional methods that deal with:

- ◆ Thinking of the workshop in terms of "theatre"
- ◆ The do's and don'ts of presenting to different types of audiences
- ◆ Discussing the undiscussables
- ◆ When to use voting technology
- ◆ Mastering impromptu template designs to facilitate sub-group work
- ◆ Handling personal fear in a time of crisis
- ◆ Using humour and story telling to disarm potential bombs

***Each lesson is immersed in solid science. Yet, more important than the course content is the human factor - the facilitator.***

The facilitator is the instrument of change. A point that is sometimes lost in the teaching of facilitation.

# Teaching the 'Too Serious!' Way



In my view, the facilitator is not a catalyst. Not some aloof, immutable substance that changes others while remaining unchanged itself. Rather, the facilitator becomes a living, integral part of the system while he/she is part of the group. Just as vulnerable, just as scared, just as unsure as to how it will all turn out.

To help people get comfortable with this crucial aspect of facilitation, ***I incorporate improvisational theatre dynamics into my teaching.***

“Improv” is about responding in the moment. It is about not letting a person or situation get the better of you. It is about having the courage of your convictions. And looking at old challenges in a new light. And taking action in circumstances that used to intimidate or incapacitate you. And performing at the height of your potential, no matter what comes along to test you.

Having said all of this, my outcome is for every student to be able to do what I do in practice and get similar or better results. So I always spend a lot of time in practice sessions with my students.

Practice, not only of the foundational, mechanical techniques, but also practice for those ‘surprise’ events that creep up on every facilitator from time to time and leave us wondering what on earth just happened!

Upon completing the course, the student has a good grasp of the essentials of the business of facilitating, and enough experience to hit the ground running on their first workshop.

## ***Typical 3-day courses include:***

- ◆ Facilitating Complex Workshops through Simplicity
- ◆ Facilitating Cost Reduction and Cost Avoidance Workshops
- ◆ Facilitating Scenario Planning Workshops through Trumpetology


All courses are tailored in real time to the needs of the participants. Care is taken to ensure that each participant is comfortable with the material offered and aware of the next steps to be taken.

## ***Will you join me?***



Cliff Saunders, Ph.D

*Teacher, master facilitator, creative genius, speaker  
author, futurist, humorist, raconteur, bon vivant*

Too Serious!  Limited

13 Brynhurst Court . Toronto  
Ontario . Canada . M4P 2J9

Phone 416.346.9204  
Fax 416.346.0979

info@tooserious.com  
www.tooserious.com