

Preparation: Role of Online Trainers as Facilitators

The success of online discussion trainers or moderators is based on their performance as a learning **Facilitator**.

The role of the facilitator is comprised of four elements: **Preparation, Mind-set and Skills, Direction and Follow-up**. Let's look at the first element in detail:

Preparation

To prepare our program, we must first define clear, concise, complete objectives. We must be fully aware that online learning is a process that needs to be managed or administered before results are realized.

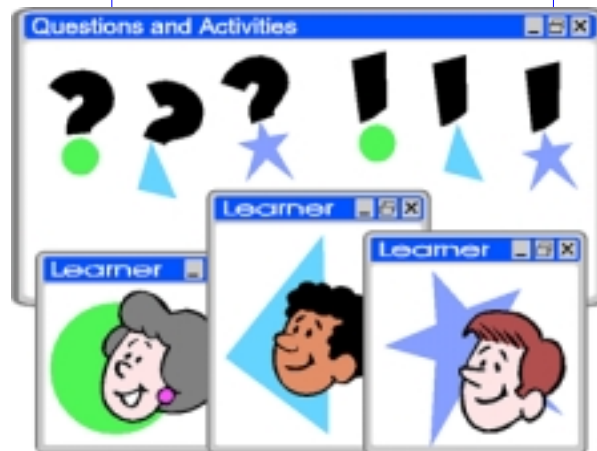
In other words, *"On completion of this program what do I want the participant to know, or be able to do?"*

Every second of the online experience must be directed toward these defined goals. Participants must believe, and, of course, it must be true, that their time online is well spent.

Asking Questions

An excellent way to achieve this is to develop questions

and activities that relate to the participants' **experiences**. Whether you are using discussion rooms, listserves or chat rooms and other interactive tools, preparing and submitting these questions to your participants will help focus the interaction.



Exercises

Preparing exercises and asking your participants to review or study the material in advance will significantly add to the value of the interaction. If you are conducting an online learning on "How to sell your business plans", you may wish to ask your participants as an assignment to complete an exercise on "Finding out what your boss wants to see in a plan". It is also a good idea to

publish or provide participants some advance copies of written or multimedia content presentations like the Vignettes For Training as references for the subject of your online learning.

Allow More Advance Time

Many online trainers believe that if you allow participants more time before the interactive session to learn more basic and background related information, the more time you will have to focus on relevant questions during the actual interactive sessions.

If appropriate, you may also wish to invite an expert or another resource person as a featured guest in your session. This adds to the value of the sessions and increase sources for more knowledge.

Finally, online trainers can request participants to send in their advanced questions. You can effectively use these questions to prepare better for the sessions.