



## SECTION I: FACILITATION STYLES



### Leading Change and Facilitation Styles

In their article, [\*The Irrational Side of Change Management\*](#) authors Carolyn Aiken and Scott Keller (McKinsey Quarterly, April 2009) summarize research and insights related to why change efforts fail:

...when we choose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome (almost by a factor of five to one). Conventional approaches to change management underestimate this impact. The rational thinker sees it as a waste of time to let others discover for themselves what he or she already knows—why not just tell them and be done with it? Unfortunately this approach steals from others the energy needed to drive change that comes through a sense of ownership of the answer. (p. 103)

For the Forest Garden program to be successful, farmers need to discover the benefits and value of a Forest Garden for themselves, and have the opportunity to adapt the recommended agroforestry techniques to their contexts. To enable this the Facilitator not only helps the farmers acquire new skills -- the role occupied by the traditional trainer -- but also helps them integrate a new way of thinking with their existing belief system, and ultimately helps them transform their farming practices.

This idea of the facilitator as a leader of change goes above and beyond the general expectation we have from the training role, and the more conventional training approach that relies on the one-way transfer of knowledge from the expert to the learner.

The facilitation styles covered in this section help you:

- Understand a continuum of facilitation approaches that you can use to create greater ownership within your farmer group.
- Discover your preferred facilitation style and ways you can add others to your toolkit.
- Learn how to best match your facilitation style to situational and group characteristics.

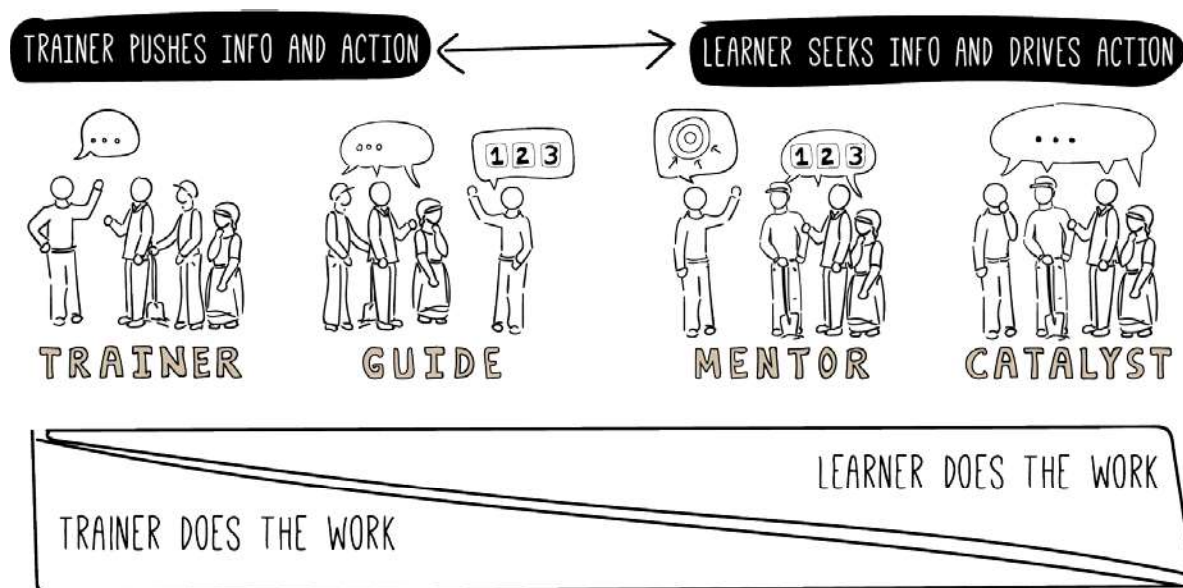
Before reading any further complete this [Facilitation Styles Survey](#) included at the end of this manual to learn more about how you respond to different facilitation scenarios.

## Facilitation Styles

Take a minute to think about your expectations of an effective facilitator. Now ask a colleague or a friend. Chances are your lists are somewhat different, based on your personal experiences and the role models you have seen. That's because in practice there is no single style of facilitating. Facilitators can employ multiple approaches along a "Push/Pull" continuum.

On one end of the continuum is "The Trainer" who has a strong "push-style" and assumes much of the work of facilitating learning and action in the group.

On the other end of the spectrum is "The Catalyst" who has a strong "pull-style" and focuses on creating a safe, inclusive environment where learners can self-discover solutions.



## The Trainer

**Summary:** An expert telling learners both 'what' needs to be done and 'how' it should be done.

### *What it looks like*

- The trainer tends to be an expert who employs telling and instructor-led teaching as their predominant techniques.
- It tends to be directive - defining both 'what' needs to be done and 'how' it should be done.
- The trainer does most of the talking, with learners doing most of the listening.
- There is limited room for discussion or feedback.
- This style demands compliance, which may or may not be forthcoming depending on how and when this style is used.



### *Outcomes and uses*

- The trainer-style can generate clarity on standards and straightforward tasks, especially when there is limited time.
- It is best used in urgent situations or when non-compliance can have serious consequences (e.g., a farmer about to use slash-and-burn to clear their field).
- It can be used in-the-moment for raising constructive feedback -- but is only effective in this context if followed up with 'the mentor' or 'the catalyst' style.

### *Disadvantages*

- Facilitating learning and action through telling is not effective at promoting genuine commitment from the learner.
- When used as the predominant style, especially over the long-term, it erodes engagement and can result in absenteeism or members dropping out from the farmer group.
- It is least effective with members who bring some existing knowledge of the Forest Garden agroforestry techniques, are confident, and motivated to initiate learning and innovation.

## **The Guide**

**Summary:** An expert defining 'what' needs to be done, providing options for 'how' it should be done - and seeking feedback from the learners.

### *What it looks like*

- The guide asks for input on the end goal and the best way to get there without giving up authority.
- This style tends to focus on the 'big picture', selling the vision of the Forest Gardens, and clarifying why the recommended actions matter.
- The facilitator is moving from telling as their predominant technique ('The Trainer') to persuasion.
- While the facilitator still does a majority of the talking - there is dedicated space for discussion and members providing input and feedback.



### *Outcomes and uses*

- The Guide style can be efficient in time-constrained situations, because the conversation has boundaries and the exchange is more structured.
- It is best used when introducing new topics, when followed up with other styles.
- It is effective with members who are specifically looking for guidance from the facilitator, and still building their knowledge of Forest Garden agroforestry techniques and their confidence in applying these.

### *Disadvantages*

- The Guide style runs the risk of missing out on creative ideas that might have been made available if participation were more open. Furthermore, buy-in on plans and decisions can be a challenge.
- This style fails to promote collaboration within the group, making it less likely they will identify and act upon market opportunities for collective action.
- It is less effective with members who bring localized experience in sustainable agroforestry techniques, are confident, and motivated to initiate learning and innovation.

## The Mentor

**Summary:** The facilitator focuses on defining 'the what' and provides advice and feedback as learners work to identify 'the how'.

### *What it looks like*

- The mentor focuses on defining the vision and end-goal, and encourages dialogue for learners to discover and identify the way to get there.
- This style has the potential to lead to high ownership for change. The facilitator gives up much of the control of defining the content, but still informs the options and decisions through proactive feedback and advice.
- The mentor is moving away from relying on their authority as an expert, and embracing the role of orchestrating discussion and collaboration within the group.
- The mentor invites learners to make decisions, listens carefully to members' ideas, and demonstrates trust in the capability of the group to identify a way forward.



### *Outcomes and uses*

- The mentor style generates shared solutions with greater buy-in from the group.
- It is highly effective in helping learners identify creative ways to localize techniques - a key goal of the Forest Garden program.
- It is most effective with members who bring some existing knowledge of the Forest Garden agroforestry techniques, are confident, and motivated to initiate learning and innovation.
- It promotes collaboration within the group, making it more likely they will identify and act upon market opportunities for collective action.

### *Disadvantages*

- The mentor needs to feel comfortable giving up some control and must be willing to commit to a process that takes more time.
- This style is less effective with learners who lack critical information and are specifically relying on the facilitator for guidance, and for members who do not have any prior knowledge of Forest Garden agroforestry techniques.

## The Catalyst

**Summary:** The facilitator focuses on creating a safe, inclusive space where learners can define ‘the what’ and ‘the how’ through self-discovery and collaboration.

### *What it looks like*

- This style can lead to high ownership for change. The facilitator gives up control of the content. Instead they focus on the process by which members identify challenges and solutions.
- The facilitator fosters joint problem-solving and collaboration by using open-ended questions, active listening, and helping the group create shared norms and expectations.
- Participants work together to create their agenda, define the issues, generate options and ideas, and identify the path forward. The facilitator provides structure to this group process.
- The catalyst sees mistakes as learning opportunities, and helps the group view them the same way. Their goal is to create an agenda for long-term change by building self-awareness, clarity of purpose, and a sense of personal vision.



### *Outcomes and uses*

- When successful, this style is most effective at creating ownership and facilitating transformative change.
- It is best used with members who bring localized experience in sustainable agroforestry techniques, are confident, and motivated to initiate learning and innovation.
- Catalysts can help build a sense of community, making it more likely that group members will identify and act upon market opportunities for collective action.

### *Disadvantages*

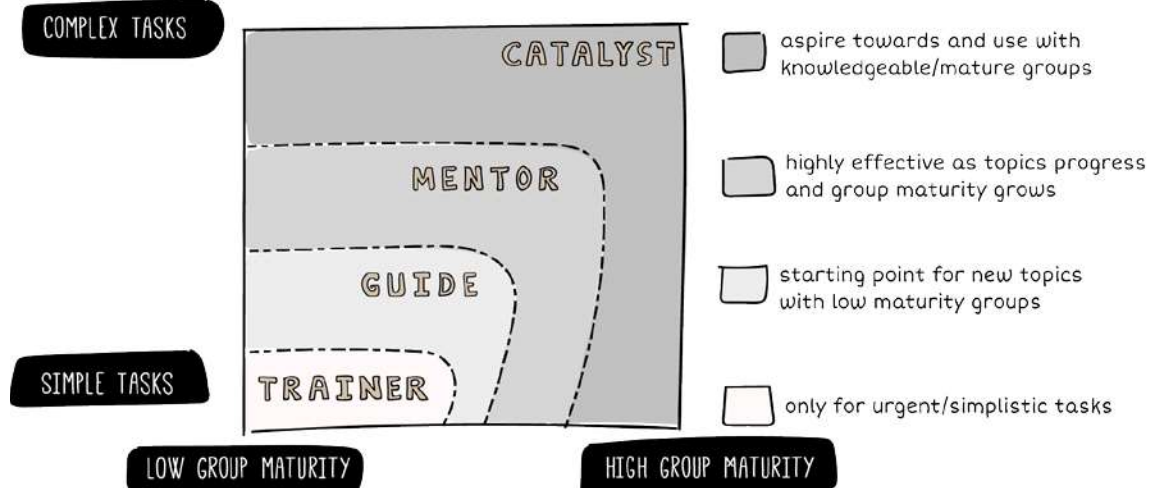
- Successfully using this style depends on strong, trusting relationships and progress can be slow.
- It is not effective in urgent situations or when non-compliance can have serious consequences (e.g., a farmer about to use slash-and-burn to clear their field).
- This style is not effective with learners who lack critical information and are specifically relying on the facilitator for guidance, and for members who do not have any prior knowledge of Forest Garden agroforestry techniques.



## Matching style to situation

Strong "pull" styles (Mentor and Catalyst) are more likely to produce long term success. However, there is no 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to facilitation. Relying on learners to drive action and seek the information they need when they lack the confidence and skills to do so can backfire and stall progress.

Determining the appropriate style depends on the following factors:



## Task Characteristics

Typically tasks that are simple, straightforward, and stand-alone can easily be taught via strong "push" styles and it can save the group time to learn them this way.

Tasks that are complex, take time to implement, and require the learner to change longstanding habits benefit from strong "pull" styles.

Finally, tasks or situations that are urgent or can have serious immediate consequences if done the wrong way require the facilitator to use strong "push" styles.

## Group Maturity

Typically, "push" styles (starting with the Guide) work better with groups that need to build their maturity levels. The facilitator can start using stronger "pull" styles as the group increases their levels of competence, confidence and cooperation:

- **Competence:** Participants who have little or no previous knowledge of sustainable agroforestry approaches will benefit from the facilitator using the Guide Style, and moving towards the Mentor and Catalyst

styles as the participants gain skills and understanding of Forest Garden techniques.

- **Confidence:** Usually confidence and competence go together. However, in some instances, participants might be hesitant to apply their existing skills. The amount of effort required might seem high, they may have tried earlier and failed, or environmental factors might be holding them back. To build confidence start with the Guide style, and combine it with a focus on celebrating small-wins and sharing success stories from both within and outside the group.
- **Cooperation:** In order to benefit from strong “pull” styles of facilitation the group needs to work together. By creating an inclusive space where everyone feels heard, acknowledging emotions and differences, and using dialogue to arrive at solutions -- the facilitator can play a powerful role in helping the group build its ability to collaborate and sustain results.

In practice, you will end up using multiple styles - creating a tapestry that best meets the needs of the group and the situation - and help learners move up the “push - pull” continuum. To achieve the best results, a facilitator gradually moves to the Catalyst style by helping members take increasing ownership of their agenda, their learning, and the desired outcomes.