Virtual Facilitator

Guiding Learning in a Virtual Environment

Contents

Welcome to Virtual Facilitator

More and more we rely on the magic of virtual classroom sessions. There are numerous advantages that this technology gives us. We must admit there are also some associated challenges.

In this short course we help you explore and develop your skills in Facilitating in Virtual Spaces – where you guide groups of people through learning activities and exercises.

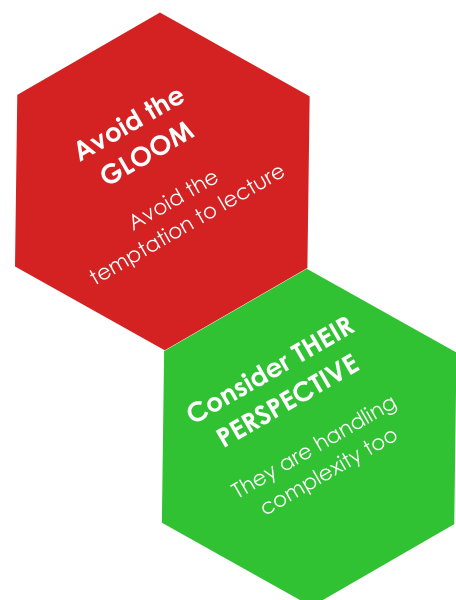This is a 2-Hour Course. We will provide you with:

Tips and techniques for creating a Virtual Learning Environment.	Guidance on how to lead different types of Exercises in Virtual Spaces.	Core principles to guide your Behaviour as a Virtual Facilitator.

The content we cover is applicable in a range of virtual scenarios, whether leading a small virtual class of four people, through to a larger class of up to 15 (training virtually a class of more than 15 people is a topic for a more advanced course).

There are two themes running through the course → Sometimes these themes will be obvious, and sometimes they will be there in the background.

Avoid the GLOOM
Avoid the temptation to lecture

Consider THEIR PERSPECTIVE
They are handling complexity too

Challenges & Fears

Working in PAIRS.

What are the challenges you face (and fear) when facilitating learning in Virtual Spaces?

✎

Be ready to share 2-3 answers

Result:

Spiral of Gloom

How does the "Spiral of Gloom" tempt us facilitate the group differently?

✎

Prepare a **Learning Environment**

A physical classroom gives us a very visual opportunity to create a welcoming atmosphere, where people come together, share ideas together in safety, and where people easily follow standard social norms.

A virtual classroom loses many of these visual and social cues. We need to add them back in.

Working in BREAK-OUT GROUPS

What makes a great "Real-Life" Classroom environment?	How do we replicate these into our Virtual Classroom?
	Pick a **Volunteer** – be ready to summarise conclusions from your group.

⭐ *tip:* Create the Safe Place
Find ways to make people feel like they are together, away from distraction and free from social embarrassment.

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Notes

Leading Virtual **Exercises**

As skilled facilitators, we have learnt many things about leading an exercise in a "real" classroom setting. We know to use body language to encourage different parts of the room to respond to questions. We have learnt that standing behind the noisy member who over-shares, will likely quieten him (or her) down. We are aware of their energy and engagement, and adapt our activities as needed.

Time will help you find the Virtual equivalences – but let's see if we can get you there quicker.

Working as a TOTAL CLASS – using Chat.

What different types of exercises have you (and the rest of the class) experienced in Virtual?

EXERCISE TYPES

INDIVIDUALS (all)

- **Use Handbook or Handouts**: Give them a specific real or electronic document to use.

- **Use Music**: A radio station works to avoid silence – think similarly - add music.

- **Encourage questions through Chat**: a single question spoken disrupts the group – so direct people to ask through Chat. IF an important question comes up, then break the exercise and answer to all.

PAIRS

- **Use fast random break-outs**: to create short safe discussions between participants.

- **Get them to connect and chat through writing**: we are all very quick and skilled at writing. Writing also creates a good creative energy.

- **Give timing Updates and Bring Back Clearly**: get creative yourself – Richard sometimes uses a glove puppet holding a time card.

Logistics Tip

For larger groups, e.g. over 30, probably use 3's rather than 2's. Otherwise, you will have a lot of people sat on their own with a partner off making a cup of tea.

BREAK-OUTS

- **Triple Clarity**: for exercises give the information in three ways: you say it + they can read it + show them a diagram.

- **Checking-In**: pop-in to check progress, and answer questions.

- **Bringing-Back**: have a clear and consistent process for bringing them back into the room.

- **Pre-warn if Victimization**: a break-out group works more efficiently when they know one of them will need to brief the class on their conclusions.

Language Tip

"You need a volunteer in your group to be ready to brief back to the class on your discussion. Can the VOLUNTEER give me a Sunglasses Happy 😎 when they are set"

CLASS DISCUSSION

- **Chat Rooms and Idea Boards**: explore using different means for fast group responses.
    - o Chat Box – fast but hard to group responses.
    - o "Idea Board" – using annotations over a blank slide or whiteboard = messy but easier to connect & group.

- **Group Charts – fast input**: find creative ways to get responses from groups – polling or creative whiteboard use.

- **Playgrounds – check engagement:** like Group Charts, but as much to re-engage them as for the responses themselves.

VOLUNTEER / VICTIM

- **Ask for bravery**: clearly explain the activity and acknowledge you are asking someone to be brave (they are taking a social risk).

- **Be ready to Victimize!** It is best when they feel able to come forward – but sometimes you just need to pick on someone.
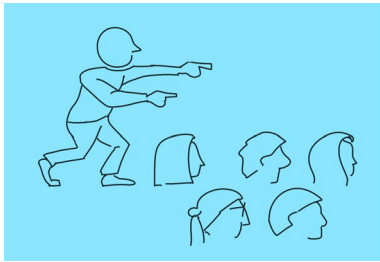
Three Virtual Virtues.

These are virtues to live by in your virtual facilitator existence.

Write in the name of each VIRTUE – and notes on practical application:

The 4th Virtue = PARTNERSHIP

Experience shows that the best advice for facilitating learning in a Virtual Space is to have a Facilitator to Producer partnership.

Facilitator

Content Leader – the class see them as the topic expert and guide through the content.

Group Leader – leads class discussions, and sets-up and explains training exercises.

Group Issues – where issues affect the whole group, Facilitator takes control of key decisions.

Focused and involved throughout the training.

Producer / Co-Facilitator

Tech Leader – maintains oversight of technical aspects of the training.

Breakout Leader – specifically owns the mechanics of managing break-out sessions.

Individual's Issues – where an individual learner has issues (technical or otherwise) is the primary person to handle.

Facilitator's Secret Cheerleader – send positive private notes. Keep the facilitator feeling positive.

Ready to help when needed but can disconnect and do other things during some sections.

Take It Forward

It is time to decide what elements of this training are most important to you – and what you are going to do differently.

What will you do differently when facilitating in a Virtual Space?

1.

2.

3.

In preparation for your Coaching session…

What questions do you have you would like to be addressed in your coaching session?

Q1.

Q2.

Q3.

In preparation for the 'Masterclass'…

What training will you facilitate in the Masterclass?

Personal Notes

This is space for personal notes and scribbles:

www.makingpresentations.co.uk

kirstie.hawkes@makingpresentations.co.uk

richard.pascoe@makingpresentations.co.uk