



**Ohio Strong Start to Finish**  
**Supporting Healthy Teams in the Time of COVID-19**  
**April 2020**



# ABOUT SOVA

## Our Values.

- ❖ We are dedicated to advancing genuine socioeconomic mobility for more through higher education.
- ❖ We believe positive change is made & sustained through visionary leadership & the creative commitment of faculty, staff and administrators at all levels.

## What We Do. Our team brings expertise in:

- ✓ Adaptive change management
- ✓ Strategic communications & will-building
- ✓ Process improvement

**Our work focuses on supporting the creation of healthy, high-functioning, effective, and adaptive institutions capable of thriving in the mission to better meet the needs of today's learners.**



# Today's Goals

- Provide “adaptive” strategies and tools to help mid-level leaders protect and advance student success priorities amid ongoing uncertainty and the complexities of social distancing.
- ✓ Tips for running high-functioning virtual teams
- ✓ Concepts & tools for upskilling in facilitation



# The Challenge & Need to Support Teams Amid Social Distancing

## What we know...

1. Cultivating high-functioning teams & demanding better meetings was a key need in the world before COVID.
2. More important now than ever, but far more complicated, with an array of new opportunities and limitations.
3. “Zoom Fatigue” is real.



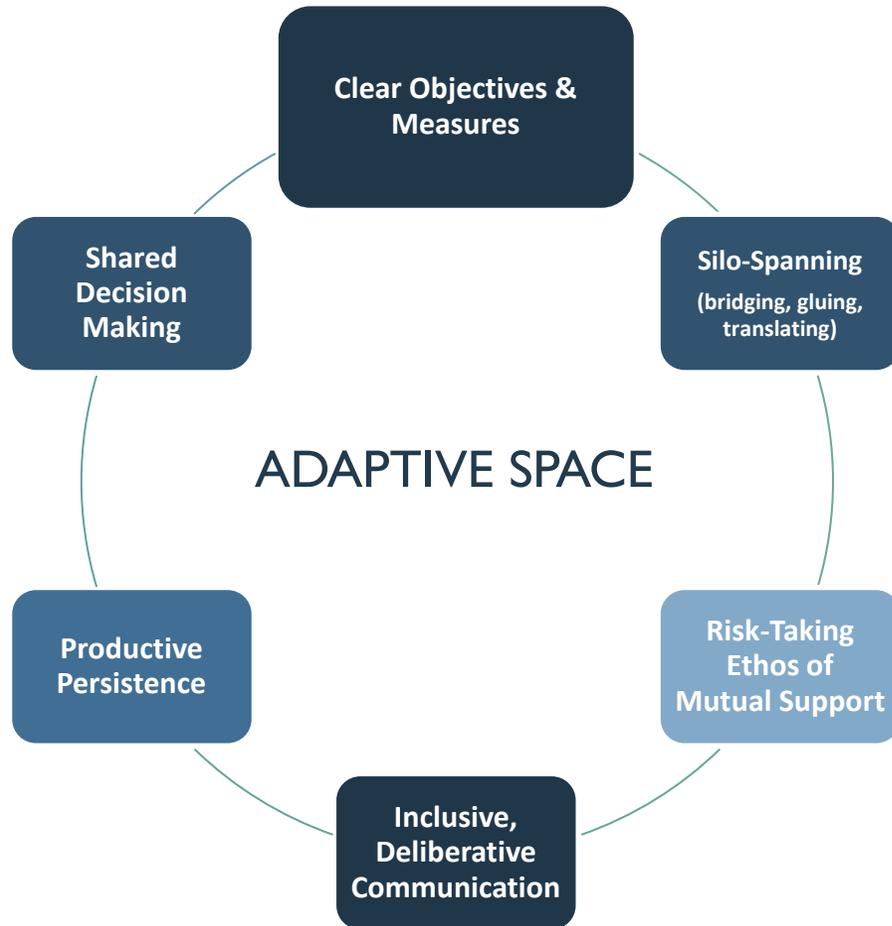
*“For some people, the prolonged split in attention creates a perplexing sense of being drained while having accomplished nothing. The brain becomes overwhelmed by unfamiliar excess stimuli while being hyper-focused on searching for non-verbal cues that it can’t find...” –Sklar*

# 10 Tips for Running Good Virtual Meetings

1. Collaboratively set norms for virtual teams and practice rigorous goal clarity for each meeting
2. Send a realistic/achievable agenda in advance of every meeting, and ask everyone to consider one question prior to the meeting
3. Don't assume that video is always best, reserve some topics for phone-only and walking meetings specifically
4. Always check in with people on a personal level first, before diving into work
5. Keep video meetings short 30-60 minutes and/or provide frequent "brain breaks"
6. Experiment with different meeting lengths (15 min & 30 min meetings for specific goals)
7. Limit the number of participants in conversation pods (keep deep working meetings to >10 people or create breakout rooms)
8. Consider recording meetings to cascade information, and provide alternative input opportunities (collaborative documents)
9. Practicing community organizing skills to compensate for lack of connectors (anticipate hot spots, engage in shuttle-diplomacy)
10. Give everyone time on the agenda and/or assign specific roles (including a "Jedi" for harder conversations)



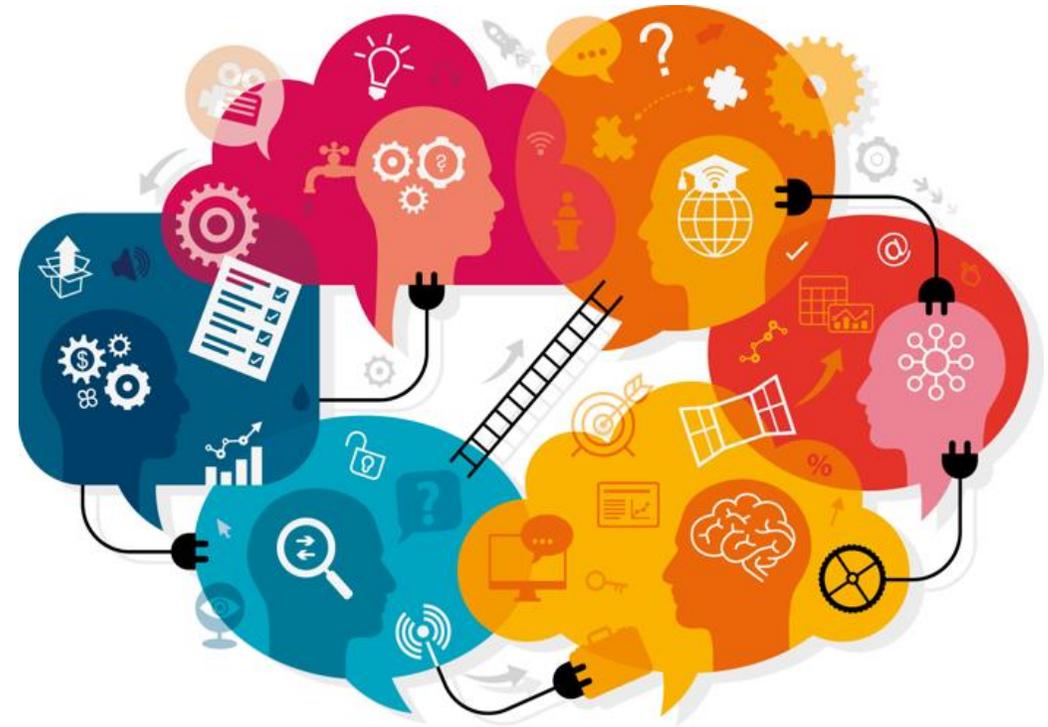
# Core Elements of Strong & Effective Student Success Leadership Teams



- Which are easiest and hardest to cultivate in yourself and others?
- How did your meetings before COVID-19 create or impede space for these elements?
- What's different now that virtual teams are the norm (for the foreseeable future)?

# Why Upskilling in Facilitation Matters

- The insights and energies of a diverse group of stakeholders are necessary for sustainable progress
- Internal motivation and collaborative discovery is essential for accelerated problem-solving
- Threat narratives abound amid uncertainty, and helping people feel comfortable enough to collaborate effectively is crucial
- Candor is strongly correlated with productivity, and the conditions for productive candor don't emerge spontaneously



# Primary Responsibilities of a Facilitator

- **Motivator.** Ignite the fire of purpose within the group, establish momentum, and keep it rolling
- **Guide.** Know the goal and the steps participants need to take to get there -- and be ready to help people navigate complicated terrain
- **Questioner.** Listen carefully, analyze quickly, compare comments and formulate questions that help make the most of the group discussion
- **Bridge Builder.** Create and maintain a safe and open environment for sharing ideas, and for honestly exploring disagreements in pursuit of wider common ground
- **Conflict Negotiator.** Be ready to step into direct confrontation, calm participants, and direct the group toward a constructive resolution
- **Taskmaster.** Keep the session on time and on track to achieving session goals

# Key Characteristics of an Effective Facilitator

- ✓ Manages the group well
- ✓ Models cooperative attitudes & skills
- ✓ Does not take on an “expert” role
- ✓ Keeps the conversation focused and on track
- ✓ Intervenes *or* stands back as necessary
- ✓ Creates space for everyone to join in the conversation
- ✓ Helps participants find common ground and work through key tensions
- ✓ Encourages deeper, more honest reflection
- ✓ Asks probing questions to surface trade-offs & consequences of action ideas
- ✓ Helps people prioritize their ideas for action & take responsibility for next steps



# Recipe for a Great Facilitator: A Self-Assessment

SKILL AREA	POOR (1)	GREAT (10)	SCORE (1-10)	ADAPTATION STRATEGIES
Listening	Inability to hear what others are saying and to track the line of thought being expressed or pick up on the subtext of the conversation. Short attention span. Cuts people off mid-sentence. Distracted or closed-off body language.	Ability to hear beyond what is being said to identify the core meaning. Can answer the questions: What does this person's statement say about what he/she values? What is the main point he/she is trying to make? What is he/she trying to say that others might miss?		
Behavioral Neutrality	Seen as pushing a strong position or personal agenda at the expense of collaborative insight. Unable to refrain from inserting personal opinions into the conversation.	Reflects good "behavioral neutrality" on the subject. Able to acknowledge position on issues without forcing group attention to those positions.		
Group Awareness	Poor awareness of group dynamics. Inability to read body language, including participants' confusion, discomfort, or tuning out.	Awareness of group dynamics, including body language. Ability to sense how participants are responding to turns in the conversation. Knows when it is time to move on in the conversation, and when to keep digging.		
Cultural Competence	Poor awareness of positionality, privilege or power dynamics. Poor awareness of implicit bias related to gender, race, socioeconomic status. Low levels of understanding about historical and ongoing sources of equity gaps.	Awareness of the pervasiveness of implicit bias, and the ability to create an inclusive environment in which individuals from historically marginalized or minoritized groups are empowered as full contributors.		

# Recipe for a Great Facilitator: A Self-Assessment

SKILL AREA	POOR (1)	GREAT (10)	SCORE (1-10)	ADAPTATION STRATEGIES
Responsive Control	Either too controlling or insufficiently assertive. Unable to maintain an appropriate level of control of the group, to moderate the tenor of the discussion, to rein in dominant or aggressive speakers, or to elicit comments from silent participants. Intimidated or cowed by experts or bullies.	Knows when and when not to intervene in order to reinforce ground rules and keep the conversation on track. Effectively ensures everyone has an opportunity to speak by drawing out silent participants and/or managing dominant or aggressive speakers.		
Sense of Humor	Either excessively dour or serious, or inappropriately or excessively comedic.	Able to use humor appropriately to set a relaxed, informal tone for the conversation or to defuse a difficult or awkward situation.		
Adaptability	Overly dependent on scripted, predictable environments. Anxious about conversation that doesn't follow the expected path.	Able to adapt to unexpected situations with grace and humor, while keeping the key principles and objectives in mind.		
Public Speaking	Poor verbal communication skills. Either intimidated by speaking in front of groups or needs to be the center of attention. Can be perceived as uptight, disrespectful, anxious, unfocused.	Comfortable addressing groups. Able to sets a relaxed, respectful, and collaborative tone. Uses language appropriate for the audience. Able to verbally synthesize information.		
Image	Perceived as either elitist/ aloof or overly charismatic. Seen as unprepared or disorganized, short-tempered, manic, or volatile.	Seen as warm, calm, solid, approachable. Can connect with people from a wide range of backgrounds, ages, experiences, etc.		



**Thank you!**

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