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Mindful Facilitation - Designing a Workshop Linking Transformative Leadership Theory to Facilitation Techniques to Increase Facilitator Confidence

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Mindful Facilitation

Designing a Workshop Linking Transformative Leadership Theory to

Facilitation Techniques to Increase Facilitator Confidence

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Abstract

Facilitation skills have value in any setting where one seeks to persuade others, obtain deeper interaction in meetings, encourage or motivate others, make a lasting impact, and energize others. "Mindful Facilitation" integrates the ability to bring mindfulness, empathy, and connection to facilitation practice. This paper presents an applied project in creating a workshop developed to link adaptive leadership theories with the best practices of successful facilitation with the intent of raising facilitator confidence. The results show that confidence levels are raised when workshop participants learn facilitation skills that are rooted in mindfulness.

1: Introduction

Today, our world is changing. The internet has changed the way we communicate and gather information. Everything and everyone can be accessed, literally, at your fingertips. Yet, as technology makes the world seem smaller, our current political climate shows us that we are still faced with a growing intolerance toward understanding our cultural, racial and gender differences and biases. There is no doubt that there is a need for mindful, authentic, empathetic leadership, conscious leaders who focus on the "we" instead of the "me" to cultivate spaces of empowerment, growth and care for each other. One of the most important skills a conscious leader can develop is mindfulness.

A mindfulness practice that focuses on being mindful, selfless and compassionate can be useful in many leadership roles. (Hougard, 2019) These roles would include teachers, managers coaches, parents and executives. Mindfulness facilitation techniques can help when leaders seek more involvement from their team, need to persuade others, want deeper interaction in meetings, want to make a lasting impact or energize an audience. As students participate and complete the classes required for the leadership curriculum at the University of San Diego School of Leadership and Educational Sciences (SOLES), one can easily apply the program learnings designed around mindful and conscious leadership theory to successful facilitation.

Facilitation, which requires both public speaking and active listening skills, can quite often bring about feelings of self doubt and insecurity because there are specific goals that are intended for the facilitator to reach during the event. The personal challenges facilitators faced with are tied with the fears of public speaking. (Croston PhD, 2012). Other challenges a facilitator can face revolve around group dynamics, such as managing different personalities and creating interest

and enthusiasm among the meeting members. All of these challenges start with the *fear of the unknown*. Insecurity bombards our mind with questions such as, "What if I can't explain myself properly?" "What if they hate me?" "What if they don't get along?" "What if we never meet our goal?" We are afraid to lose control, but this is exactly what we need to let go of to be a mindful facilitator. Cyndi Maxey and Kevin E. O'Conner state, "*Presenters, participants, and leaders who facilitate well are fearless, because they give up the traditional control of an audience or a team and allow the other to talk, question, and disagree.*" (Maxey & O' Connor, 2013, p. 3)

Having a "tool-box" of facilitation techniques to rely on while practicing "mindful facilitation" can assist first-time, as well as experienced facilitators, alleviate some of the stress of the unknowns that contribute to the nervousness facilitators often face. Valuable facilitation skills, such preparartion, creating and inclusive envoronment and setting guidelines are described in Hannah Feldberg-Dubin's article entitled, " *Top 11 Skills of an Effective Facilitator.*" (Feldberg Dubin, 2018) Mindful facilitation not only helps in creating a reflective, authentic experience for the participants of the group learning process but also fosters a reflective and learning environment for the facilitators. Joellen P. Killion and Lynn A. Simmons identify this mindfulness as "*The Zen of Facilitation.*" (Killion & Simmons, 1992)

1.1 Literature Review

Facilitation is not new. A simple search on Google will result in 206,000,000 results about facilitation. Hundreds of books share the importance of sharpening your facilitation skills. Recent book releases are entitled *The Art of Facilitation*, (Hunter, 2002), *Fearless Facilitators* (Maxey & O' Connor, 2013)*,* and *The Secrets of Facilitation* (Wilkenson, 2012)*.*

There is an International Association of Facilitators (IAF) which is a "worldwide professional body established to promote, support and advance the art and practice of professional facilitation which provides a plethora of educational materials." With members in more than 65 countries, the IAF provides resources for new and experienced facilitators. The organization has developed assessments tests, a code of ethics, core competencies and a certification course, which can all be accessed on their website. (International Association of Facilitators , n.d.)

In *Fearless Facilitation* by Cyndi Maxey and Kevin E. O'Connor, facilitator is defined as "one who helps to bring about an outcome (for example learning, productivity or communication) by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance or supervision." (Maxey & O' Connor, 2013, p. 3)

The philosophy of the book is to be fearless as a facilitator, to be courageous and let your audience in and to build connections.

Michael Wilkinson expands on the definition by identifying four facilitation styles in his book, *The Secrets of Facilitation*: meeting advisor, meeting manager, meeting leader and participating leader.

> Meeting Advisor – In this role, the facilitator did not lead the meeting planning or execution but instead primarily sat on the sidelines and stepped in only when asked on or when a situation occurred that the participants could not handle themselves.
>
> Meeting Manager – In the role, the facilitator set the agenda, established the ground roles, and initiated the discussion, but stepped in only when needed.

Meeting Leader – In this role, the facilitator set the agenda, established the ground roles, and initiated the discussion just as the meeting manager did. In addition, however, the meeting leader was active in getting participants excited about participating. The facilitator challenges the participants when the discussion remains at the conceptual level instead of delving into personal application, and the facilitator is very active in ensuring that all participants engage in the discussion.

Participating Leader – In the role, the facilitator started out much like the meeting leader, but the facilitator also actively engaged as a participant in the discussion, frequently offering their own views, giving their opinions on topics, and expressing disagreement with various comments. (Wilkenson, 2012)

The Secrets of Facilitation "offers a wealth of targeted techniques for facilitators who seek effective, consistent and repeatable results." (Wilkinson, 2008)

Successful facilitation is a skill that anyone can use. It can benefit CEOs, managers, coaches, teachers, students, team leaders, community organizers, and anyone who needs to persuade, encourage and/or motivate others, desires deeper interaction in meetings, seeks more involvement with groups, and wants to make an impact and energize their audience.

Mindfulness also is not new. "Some archaeologists date meditation back to as early as 5000 BCE, according to *Psychology Today,* and the practice itself has religious ties in ancient Egypt and China as well as Judaism, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and, of course, Buddhism. Meditation's global spread began along the Silk Road around five or six centuries BCE, as the

practice moved throughout Asia. As it arrived in a new spot, it would slowly transform to fit each new culture. But it wasn't until the 20th century that it began to move beyond the realm of specific religions, especially in the West." (Ross, 2016, p. para 4) Though rooted in the past, mindfulness practices have become internationally popular in the past decade. (Fossas, 2015).

Mindfulness meditation is no longer a "hippy-dippy" counter culture practice. "The popularity of mindfulness in the western world has skyrocketed in recent years. It's on the cover of magazines and appears on the evening news. Celebrities swear by it, scientists study it, monks still practice it and business leaders use it to thwart burnout." (Sacchet, 2017, p. para 1) Westerners will often start a mindfulness practice as a stress reliever instead of a spiritual journey. And the research that shows the benefits of a mindfulness practice cannot be ignored.

Current studies show that mindfulness and meditation can help alleviate anger (Kimmel, May, . Seibert, Jaurequi, & Fincham, 2018); reduce anxiety (Goyal MD MPH, Singh MD MPH, Sibinga MD MHS, & al, 2014); regulate emotion (Guendelman, Medeiros, & Rampes, 2017); improve communication (Huston, Garland, & Farb, 2011); improve focus and concentration (Moore & Malinowski, 2009); improve listening skills (Jones, Bodey, & Hughes, 2016); lower blood pressure (Shi, et al., 2017); decrease time to fall asleep faster (Black PhD MPH, O'Reilly BS, & Olmstead, 2015); and help us have better sex (RG, AC, HD, & WB., 2011). And for those naysayers who scoff at what they might think are substandard study designs and publication requirements, Johns Hopkins University conducted a meta review of nearly 19,000 meditation studies that addressed those issues and found 47 trails that met their rigorous criteria for well-designed studies. (Goyal MD MPH, Singh MD MPH, Sibinga MD MHS, & al, 2014)

7

The business world has embraced mindfulness and meditation as a way to reduce work-related stress. Jon Kabat-Zinn who has a PhD in molecular biology from MIT, became interested in the health benefits of mindfulness, which he sought to investigate and study through a scientific lens. Recognizing that people seemed to benefit psychologically and physically from extended time spent pinning their attention to the present, Kabat-Zinn went on to develop a popular mindfulness program that was dislocated from its religious roots. Kabat-Zinn founded the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program in 1979 at the University of Massachusetts Centre for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society. According to the center's website, the eight-week MBSR program has been attended by more than 22,000 people. Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), also an eight-week course, is an adaption of the MBSR program, which has emerged as a popular therapeutic intervention to treat depression. (Winter, 2016)

Companies such as Google, Apple, Target, Nike, Yahoo, General Mills, Goldman Sachs, have invested heavily in mindfulness and meditation programs for their employees. As westerners begin their mindfulness and meditation for nonspiritual reasons, a recent article in *Wired* magazine stated "the average mindfulness meditator is closer to the ancient contemplative tradition, and to transformative insights, than you might think. Though things like stress reduction or grappling with melancholy or remorse or self-loathing may seem "therapeutic," they are organically connected to the very roots of Buddhist philosophy. What starts out as a meditation practice with modest aims can easily, and very naturally, go deeper. There is a kind of slippery slope from stress reduction to profound spiritual exploration and radical philosophical

reorientation, and many people, even in Silicon Valley and on Wall Street, are further down that slope than they realize." (Wright, 2017) The article went on to define "slippery slope" as encouraging one to "lead a moral life, to be mindful and aware of thoughts and actions, and to develop wisdom and understanding." Most would find these traits and behaviors positive when describing the personalities and characteristics of a person on a mindful journey.

Mindfulness is beneficial, not only in leadership practices to motivate and mobilize groups, but it is also recognized as a valuable skill in the one-to-one, growing life-coaching industry. "According to the International Coach Federation (ICF), the largest professional coaching organization in the US, the number of worldwide coaches has grown from 47,500 in 2012 to 53,300 in 2016 with the addition of approximately 1,500 coaches per year for the last four years. Western Europe was estimated to have the highest number of coaches with 18,800 coaches in 2016. North America followed closely behind with an estimated 17,500 coaches in 2016." (Whittaker Dunlop, 2017)

"A life coach is someone that looks to empower others by helping them make, meet and exceed goals in both their personal and professional lives." (What is Life Coaching, n.d.) It is helpful for the coach to come from a place of mindfulness to be completely present for their client and it is beneficial for the client to practice mindfulness to reach their personal and professional goals. In the book, *The Mindful Coach* by Doug Silsbee, he writes about the importance of being a present and conscious coach. "In coaching, this mindfulness might show up as a surge of appreciation for our clients, an insight about just the right question, or jointly discovering a new way of looking at a challenge she is facing. With this often comes a sense of connectedness and a delight

in what is unfolding in the moment. These moments sometimes seem to happen spontaneously and the heightened awareness they evoke quickly slips away. We can greatly increase the availability of these moments, and the creativity, resourcefulness, and compassion that often accompanies them, through mindful practice." (Silsbee, 2010, p. 44)

Silsbee's thoughts about cultivating mindfulness as a coach to be of best service to your client is applicable to the facilitator's role. As facilitators, we ask ourselves, how do I help this group successfully reach their goal? We must listen actively, question with authentic curiosity and interest, explore the possibilities, support their learning and step aside to allow them to succeed. We are completely present for them. Facilitation is basically coaching for groups. And leading from mindfulness can help foster a space that is supportive of each team member, encouraging differing viewpoints, respectful of each other and focused on the intended goal.

"The synergy of executive coaching and mindfulness meditation is compelling. Meditation helps clients achieve a state of being in which they can think clearly about work-related stressors and goals. And when executives make positive mindset and behavior changes, they are better positioned to relax and achieve a meditative state — with all its inherent benefits. The two approaches continually deepen and bolster each other." (Brendal & Stamell, 2016, p. para 10)

The University of San Diego's School of Leadership and Education Sciences teaches the various leadership theories that are based in mindfulness, including adaptive leadership strategy by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002), the group dynamic model of Bruce Tuckman (Tuckman B. , 1965), and the reflective, presencing model of Theory U by C.

Otto Scharmer (Scharmer, 2018) to provide a framework students can use to practice *conscious leadership.* Conscious leadership is defined as bringing one's whole self and with total awareness to your leadership position. (Vermey, 2014)

The adaptive leadership strategies and framework developed by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky are presented to us in their book, *Leadership on the Line*, *Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. The book addresses the challenges of bringing about change while practicing leadership at home, at work, in our communities and even globally. They describe change as the most dangerous aspect of leadership, because leading people though a change of mind, heart and will is not easy, and leaders will need to be courageous and make themselves vulnerable to scrutiny, dissent, mutiny and sometimes "assassination." (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002) To face adaptive challenges, they offer five strategies.

1) Getting on the Balcony: stepping back to get perspective while remaining fiercely engaged.
2) Thinking Politically: keeping the opposition close, but also watching your allies.
3) Orchestrating the Conflict: using stress productively to work the issues.
4) Giving the Work Back: putting the responsibility on those who need to make the change.
5) Holding Steady: maintaining your focus while taking the heat. (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002)

In Bruce Tuckman's Group Development Model, his research identified four distinct stages a group will experience before coming together synergistically to work as a high performing team.

The four stages are:

1) Forming: when the group first comes together. They are polite, reserved, dependent on leadership for direction, defining roles and setting goals.

2) Storming: when the group begins working and challenges arise. There are disagreements, power struggles, confusion over roles and responsibilities.

3) Norming: Roles and responsibilities are clarified. There are agreements and consensus. The team begins to work together smoothly.

4) Performing: The group has a clear vision. They are focused on the goal of the team. The individual team members feel valued. There is mutual respect. (Tuckman B. , 1965)

These four stages were developed in 1965, while Tuckman was at Ohio State University. Later, in 1977, he added another stage which he called, adjourning, it can sometimes be referred to as mourning. In this final stage of group development, the team had completed the task and the group is now celebrating success or reviewing learnings and then moves on to dissolving. (Tuckman & Jensen, 2010) Understanding of these phases of group development can help manage expectations when facilitating small and large groups.

The Theory U Model by Otto Scharmer addresses what he calls, "the blind spot" of our inner selves. The blind spot is knowing how we are bringing our inner-most selves to what is happening in front of us. And only through transforming our inner selves can we support, guide and lead to transform others in bringing about positive change. That transformation starts with

mindfulness. "Mindfulness is the capacity to attend to the experience of the present moment while paying attention to your attention." (Scharmer, 2018, p. 17)

Scharmer shares seven ways of attending to and co-shaping the world:

1) Downloading: accepting information based on past experiences and old mental models.

2) Seeing: suspending our habitual judgement and noticing and observing what is new.

3) Sensing: redirecting our attention from object to source so our perception widens and deepens

4) Presencing: entering a moment of stillness, we let go of the old and connect with the idea of future potential.

5) Crystallizing: having the willingness to accept new data we begin to create new vision and intention

6) Prototyping: enacting and exploring the future by doing

7) Performing: evolving past the smallness of self and seeing things as a larger eco-system (Scharmer, 2018)

The heart of Theory U is the inner work a person experiences to travel through the seven phases. This inner territory can be summarized as: *open mind, open heart* and *open will*. "An *open mind* is the capacity to suspend old habits of judgement and see with fresh eyes. An *open heart* is the capacity to empathize and to look at a situation through the eyes of somebody else. An *open will* is the capacity to "let go" of the old and "let come" the new." (Scharmer, 2018, p. 25)

The tips and techniques shared in the multitude of articles and books published about facilitation commonly focus on how to *manage* groups of people, and directly linking and applying the mindfulness frameworks found in the theories of adaptive, transformative and conscious leadership can easily be called upon and utilized in situations of facilitating small and large groups to support confidence while practicing, leading to more successful facilitation experiences. The blending of facilitation best practices and techniques with a conscious mindfulness practice can be defined as *mindful facilitation*.

2: Statement of the Problem

While we learn the adaptive and integral leadership theories and applications here at SOLES, there are no current classes or workshops offered that combine that knowledge with the technical best practices that would help would-be facilitators feel more comfortable and confident in leading small and large group leadership workshops. Learning to apply the theories that utilize a mindfulness foundation is helpful in cultivating a successful facilitation practice. A mindful framework lends itself to the very definition of facilitation which is "the act of helping other people to deal with a process or reach an agreement or solution without getting directly involved in the process, discussion, etc. yourself." (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) The nuance of becoming a *mindful facilitator* is the ability to shift your awareness from what is happening to yourself. And to ask yourself, "What am I contributing to this scenario?"

Facilitation skills are crucial in various settings. Any leadership situation, whether academic, social and/or professional that calls for group learning, involvement, persuasion, motivation, and decision making would benefit from a skillful facilitator. This learning is especially useful for students of leadership because they will already have the base knowledge of various leadership

theory and models and can rely on methods rooted in research when approaching the dynamic

and uncertain scenarios of facilitating groups in the here and now.

3: Purpose

With the importance of solid facilitaion skills in leadership practice in mind, my capstone is an

applied project created to provide a workshop curriculum that can be utilized at the University of

San Diego, as well as other academic and non academic organizations, to train potential

facilitators who have an interest in utilizing mindful facilitation when given the opportunity to

lead in small and large groups.

This workshop includes the group dynamic models of Bruce Tuckman (Tuckman B. , 1965), the

adaptive leadership theory and practices by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky (Heifetz &

Linsky, 2002), and the reflective, presencing model of Theory U by C. Otto Scharmer

(Scharmer, 2018) to provide a framework students can use to practice *conscious leadership.*

It is the goal of the workshop to support the growth and application of a mindful facilitation

practice which will help build confidence in any situation where group interaction is desired.

The workshop curriculum can be modified with less focus on theory and more focus on

technique for those participants outside of the academic setting who have no interest in theory-

based learning.

4: Significance of Study and Rationale:

The motivation to create a *Mindful Facilitation* workshop originated from my first experience working with the Conscious Leadership Academy (CLA), which is a non-profit at the University of San Diego. The CLA mission "is to improve the understanding and practice of leadership by integrating advanced leadership theory with applied leadership practice. With a strong commitment to leadership that promotes social change for the common good, the CLA strives to develop conscious leaders who are prepared to meet the complex challenges they face in their communities, their social circles, and in today's global organizations. The Conscious Leadership Academy helps people create and activate new possibilities for effective action. Our programs develop self-awareness, personal clarity, and the ability to understand and integrate individual, group and community perspectives. We develop effective leaders who can create innovative solutions to social and organizational challenges." (Conscious Leadership Academy, n.d.)

While working with the CLA to conduct workshops cultivating mindful leadership practices for a large group of high school girls, a few of my peers shared with me how nervous and uncertain they felt facing their small groups the next day. They had detailed plans and agendas, they practiced presenting the topics they wanted to share, but it was the fear of the unknown that made them anxious. What if the young ladies refused to participate? What if they challenged the facilitator's authority? What if the facilitator could not get complete buy in? What if they came across a disruptive participant? The anticipated obstacles could be endless.

In a study entitled, *Identifying Challenges for Facilitation in Communities of Practice*, by

Halbana Tarmizi, Gert-Jan de Vreede, and Ilze Zigurs, the authors identified the ten most

difficult tasks leaders are faced with when facilitating. They are:

1. Encouraging new members to participate in the community's activities

2. Promoting ownership and encouraging group responsibility

3. Creating and maintaining an open, positive, and participative environment

4. Building cooperative relationships among members

5. Mediating conflicts within the community

6. Creating comfort with and promoting understanding of the tools and tool outputs

7. Keeping community focus on its purpose

8. Implementing a strategy for attracting new members

9. Advocating community independency to management

10. Encouraging multiple perspectives

    (Tarmizi, de Vreede, & Zigurs, 2006)

A strategy to help foster group development, an acceptance of the adaptive challenges that can

(and will) arise, and a willingness to be present to what can transpire within the process can help

lessen the feelings of apprehension before facing the task of facilitating small and large groups.

Paired with techniques that encourage participation and cooperative learning, one might feel

more prepared and confident as they prepare to work with their group.

If we refer to studies measuring the positive effects of mindfulness, we know that incorporating a

mindfulness practice in our personal lives will position us to lead with improved focus and

concentration (Moore & Malinowski, 2009), improved communication (Huston, Garland, & Farb, 2011), and improved listen skills (Jones, Bodey, & Hughes, 2016). These three characteristics, which stem from mindfulness, are important in identifying problems, analyzing processes, empathizing and speaking with others, and motivating groups. Traits which are also valued in situations where facilitation is required.

I am creating a workshop that can assist in the training of new facilitators who have interest in working with the Conscious Leadership Academy and the various leadership development programs under the CLA organizational umbrella. (i.e.: The Center for Women's Leadership, Cultivate Conscious Kids programs, the SHExperience Conference).

My hope is to provide a workshop that is easily adaptable for any organization to utilize in supporting the cultivation of mindful facilitation while supporting emerging leaders.

5: Methodology and Methods

Successful facilitation utilizes the same methods that support the practice of conscious leadership. The journey one takes through "Theory U," co-initiating, co-sensing, presencing, co-creating and co-evolving, are all stages that will be experienced by the facilitator and the group members. (Scharmer, 2018) Leaning into this process while utilizing techniques proven to foster trust and encourage authenticity by all participants will be a valuable resource for anyone interested in facilitating small and large groups. Some of the techniques that are important may include preplanning, managing expectations, setting the tone and encouraging dialogue not discussion.

Adapting techniques from *The Secrets of Facilitation – the smart guide to getting results with groups* (Wilkenson, 2012)*, Fearless Facilitation* (Maxey & O' Connor, 2013)*,* and various articles written in business journals (See Appendix A), a workshop curriculum that defines mindful facilitation and shares best practices was developed.

A facilitator's role is a little different than a presenter, who is there to share information to the audience; or a trainer, who is there to teach information to the audience; or a mediator, who has been brought in to assist because the parties have been unable or unwilling to resolve their dispute on their own. A facilitator is there to *guide* the group. According to the International Association of Facilitators Code of Ethics, "Facilitators fill an impartial role in helping groups become more effective. They set aside their personal opinions and support a group in making its own choices. Facilitators act as process guides and create a balance between ensuring individual participation and producing meaningful results." (Facilitators, n.d.) Goals are discussed and solutions offered while keeping to a pre-planned framework. The definition for *facilitator* that was used for the workshop was the Webster's Dictionary definition, "One who helps to bring about an outcome by providing indirect or unobtrusive assistance, guidance or supervision." (Webster, n.d.) And the definition that was utilized for *mindfulness,* was the one shared by Otto Scharmer in his book *The Essentials of Theory U - Core Principles and Applications*, the "capacity to attend to the experience of the present moment while paying attention to your attention." (Scharmer, 2018)

Slides were created utilizing the cloud-based presentation application, Beautiful AI. The importance and application of the three theories were introduced along with common best

practice techniques needed for successful facilitation. The focus was to link those theories with the application and practice of facilitation. The workshop length was one hour and presented in classroom settings to small groups of undergraduate, graduate students, and faculty at the University of San Diego, as well as a few community members. (See Appendix B)

A survey was designed, and participants were asked to complete the survey before and after the workshop to obtain quantitative data comparing facilitation knowledge and levels of confidence in personal facilitation skills. The data results determined the effectiveness of the workshop in increasing confidence levels for those who were interested in facilitating. The pre-workshop survey asked whether the respondent had previous experience in facilitating. Both pre and post workshop surveys asked participants to rank the importance of thirteen possible facilitator characteristics utilizing a five-point Likert Scale; and to rate their confidence in facilitating. (See Appendix C and D)

6: Analysis & Interpretation

The survey measured 13 characteristics that were compiled from my literature review to be the most common skills a facilitator should have to be successful in facilitation. These characteristics were: presence, engagement, assessment, adaptability, communication, analysis, control, consistency, problem solving, listening, connection, inspiring, motivating. They were assigned a level of importance: not important, slightly important, important, fairly important, very important.

In both the pre and post workshop surveys, *presence* and *communication* were rated *very important* by 100% of the participants. In comparing the pre-workshop to the post-workshop survey results 100% of participants rated *listening* as very important after a 9% increase and 93% of respondents rated *connection* as very important after a 2% increase. The greatest increase in rating were the skills of *inspiring* and *motivating*. Both were rated very important by 86% of the respondents after a 31% increase. This was an interesting result, because there was no emphasis on inspirational or motivational skill sets in the workshop presentation. Table 1 shows the complete results of the pre-workshop survey and Table 2 shows the complete results of the post-workshop survey.
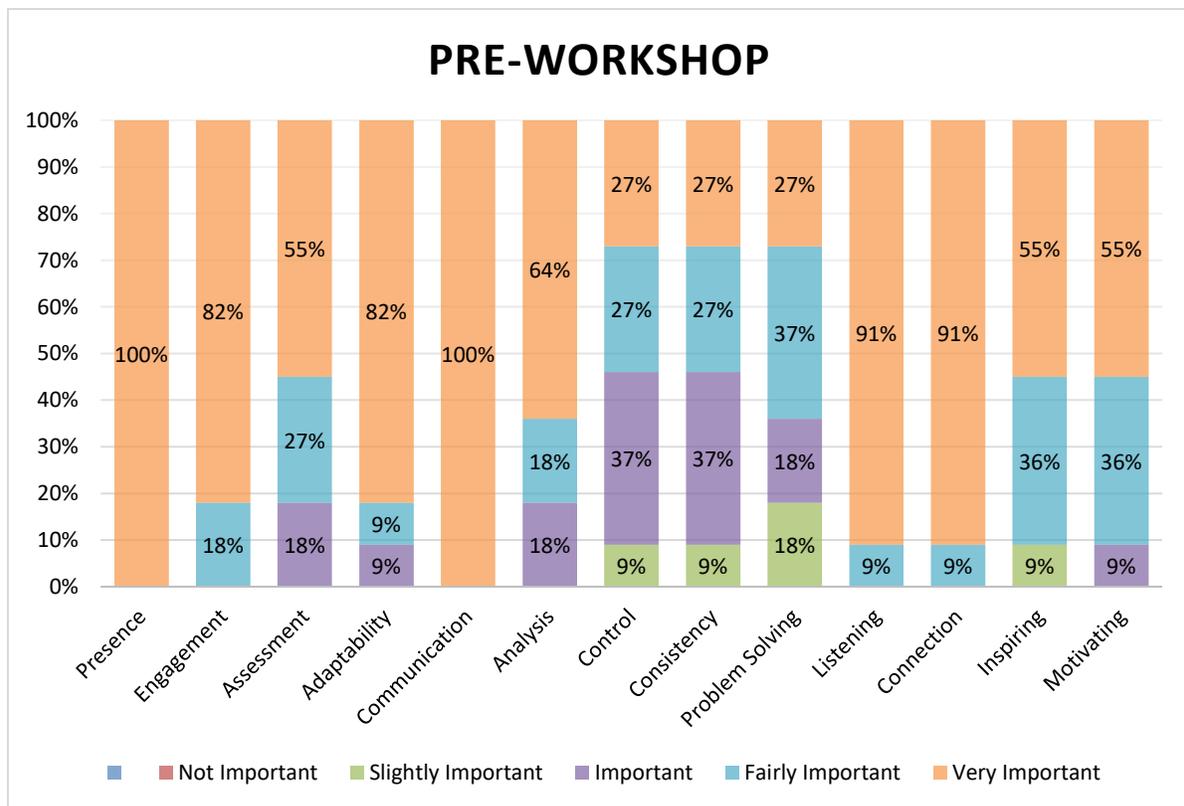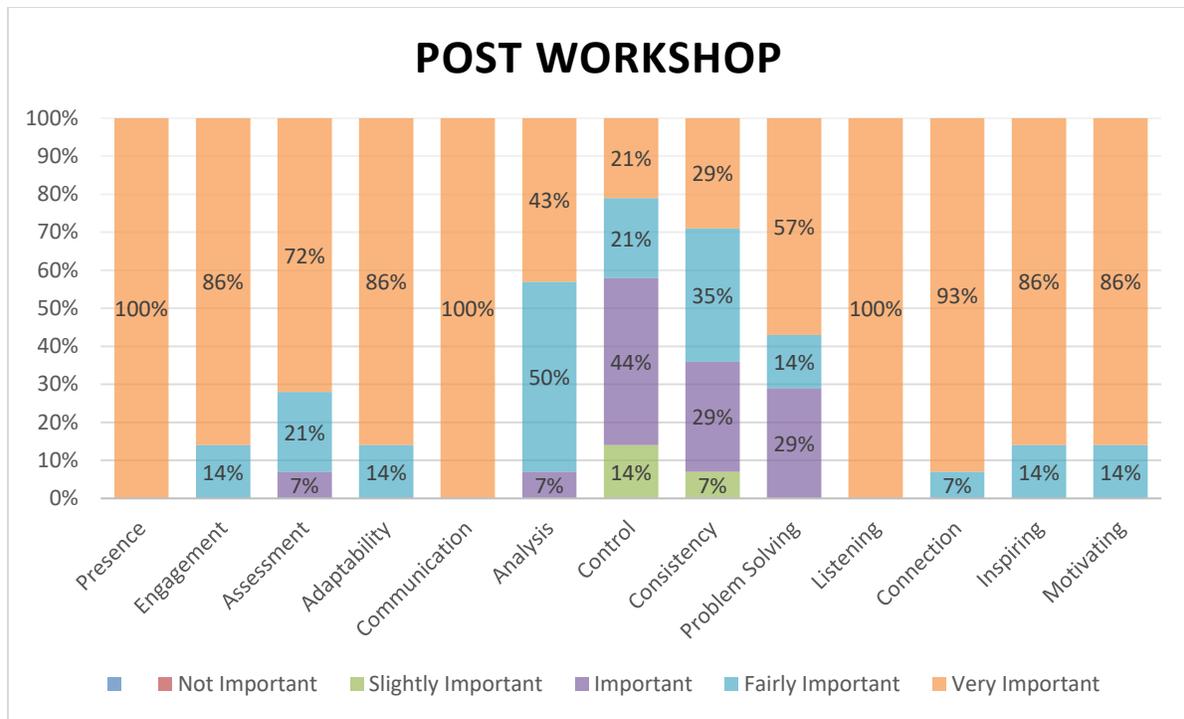

Table 1. Pre-workshop levels of importance

Table 2. Post-workshop levels of importance

Participants were also asked to rate their level of confidence in their personal facilitating skills. Pre-workshop survey results showed 9% rated themselves *not confident;* 18% rated themselves *slightly confident;* 64% rated themselves *confident;* 9% rated themselves *fairly confident;* and zero participants rated themselves *very confident.* The post-workshop survey results showed higher confidence level ratings with zero respondents rating themselves as *not confident* or *slightly confident* and only 35% rating themselves as *confident.* The increase came in the 35% rating in *fairly confident* and the 30% who rated themselves as *very confident.* Table 3 shows the comparison of the results.

Table 3. Self-rated confidence levels

The data shows that participants in these workshops felt that skills related to mindfulness were important in facilitation. The increased emphasis on the importance placed on being present and engaging, having good communication and listening skills, and connecting with the participants in a group facilitation conclude that mindfulness is valuable in successful facilitation.

The data also shows that personal confidence was increased after participants attended the workshop. Learning how to link leadership theories with practical application can support the ability to plan and prepare for situations that trigger nervousness for would-be facilitators. This type of preparation can diminish some of the uncertainty and nervousness the facilitator feels.

6.1 Limitations

There were some limitations of this project. After analyzing the results of the data, a more detailed and descriptive survey design would have provided more robust results. Single word skills sets can still be interpreted differently by individuals and detailed definitions of these skills would provide more specific data. Interviews would have provided detailed qualitative data in guiding the reason why specific skills were rated high or low.

Limited time is also a factor in this project. The capstone experience will garner varying levels of commitment. For graduate students, attention to dedicate to the capstone project competes with the course assignments of other academic classes and the demands of any work or family expectations that a student carries. Graduate students carry not only an academic load, but according to a report published by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, 76 percent of graduate students work at least 30 hours a week. (Carnevale, Smith, Melton, & Price, 2015) This author is one of those students who had multiple responsibilities vying for my time and attention while working on this project. More dedicated time may provide more significant outcomes in the project.

7: Conclusion

Providing would-be facilitators with the knowledge and training to link mindful and adaptive leadership theories with practical application and the best practices of successful facilitation can positively affect confidence levels.

Practical implications include: (i) organizations should provide new and would-be facilitators with foundational workshops and training opportunities to prepare them for facilitating small and large groups; and (ii) organizations who value and understand the practice of mindfulness can train and the implement some of those practices to help cultivate skills that foster successful facilitation.

Theoretical implications include: (i) measuring facilitator performance after working with small and large groups; (ii) more understanding in how mindfulness skills would help in different facilitation scenarios; and (iii) more robust data is needed to measure the importance of specific skills needed for successful facilitation.

This workshop is only the first step in what could be the creation of a pathway for new and would-be facilitators to learn valuable skills for successful facilitation. Even if one is not formally facilitating a group, facilitation *techniques* such as active listening, empathizing and finding connection, can be used in many everyday situations for educators, parents, business managers, CEOs, etc. These skills are valuable in one-to-one or group dynamic communications. The workshop is only one way to present and link leadership theory to successful facilitation.

I envision a formal workshop design that can be available to nonprofit organizations that want to train volunteers, businesses to help emerging leaders and facilitators and academic institutions that want to train students who have an interest in cultivating their communication skills.

As leaders, emerging or established, we hold the power to make positive change. A mindfulness leadership and facilitation practice will help us lead that change with compassion and selflessness to create a more tolerant, peaceful, happier world.

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9: Appendices

<u>**Appendix A**</u>

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Appendix B

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Appendix C

Facilitation Workshop Survey **PRE-WORKSHOP**

1) Have you ever facilitated a group before this workshop?   Y / N

2) Please explain what a facilitator does in 1 – 3 sentences.

3) How important are the following skills to achieving a successful facilitated session?
   (1 – not; 2 – slightly; 3 – important; 4- fairly; 5 – very)

   - Presence   1   2   3   4   5

   - Engagement   1   2   3   4   5

   - Assessment   1   2   3   4   5

   - Adaptability   1   2   3   4   5

   - Communication   1   2   3   4   5

   - Analysis   1   2   3   4   5

   - Control   1   2   3   4   5

   - Consistency   1   2   3   4   5

   - Problem Solving   1   2   3   4   5

   - Listening   1   2   3   4   5

   - Connection   1   2   3   4   5

   - Inspiring   1   2   3   4   5

   - Motivating   1   2   3   4   5

4) How confident are you about your facilitation skills?
   (1 – not; 2 – slightly; 3 – confident; 4- fairly; 5 – very)

   1   2   3   4   5

Appendix D

Facilitation Workshop Survey **POST-WORKSHOP**

1) Please explain what a facilitator does in 1 – 3 sentences.

2) How important are the following skills to achieving a successful facilitated session?

   (1 – not; 2 – slightly; 3 – important; 4- fairly; 5 – very)

   - Presence   1   2   3   4   5
   - Engagement   1   2   3   4   5
   - Assessment   1   2   3   4   5
   - Adaptability   1   2   3   4   5
   - Communication   1   2   3   4   5
   - Analysis   1   2   3   4   5
   - Control   1   2   3   4   5
   - Consistency   1   2   3   4   5
   - Problem Solving 1   2   3   4   5
   - Listening   1   2   3   4   5
   - Connection   1   2   3   4   5
   - Inspiring   1   2   3   4   5
   - Motivating   1   2   3   4   5

3) After participating in this workshop and learning about mindful facilitation, how confident are you about your facilitation skills?
   (1 – not; 2 – slightly; 3 – confident; 4- fairly; 5 – very)

   1   2   3   4   5