
CELEBRATE 2010 ToP CHAMPIONS

Douglas Nonemaker | Hennepin County Facilitation Network



Consensus Workshop in action.

Doug Nonemaker, Coordinator, Hennepin County Facilitation Network (a partnership between Human Resources and Research, Planning and Development Departments of Hennepin County) was introduced to ToP facilitation approaches in 1999. It all started when he observed a co-worker using what he later realized was Focused Conversation – and she used it everywhere! He took the training,

and found that over time the approaches ‘seeped’ into all corners of his work.

Flash forward to 2009. Hennepin County faced a practical dilemma. Doug and his HR colleagues had been doing classical facilitation training for 10 years, it was time for a fresh look, new faces. Doug turned to Rebecca Gilgen, a Certified ToP Facilitator in Research, Planning and Development. They took the leap, proposed a 2–3 year plan to bring in ToP facilitation throughout the County. The results have been remarkable with quantitative survey stats and anecdotal testimonies reverberating across the county:

“Want to thank you for one of the best training opportunities I’ve attended in my 10 years at Hennepin. Really engaging with big impact on my work and the work of my unit/department.”

- Librarian

“As a trainer and facilitator, I have been to many ‘workshops’ and/or ‘trainings’ on facilitation and this one by far was the best I have been to. It’s great to see that Hennepin County is taking an interest in developing individuals into great facilitators.”

- Public Health

Doug comments “We’ve abandoned the generic facilitation training. The next wave will be moving ToP further into the organization, developing the county-wide Facilitation Network.”

Doug would like to acknowledge the role of leadership in the Departments of Research, Planning & Development: Sherrie Simpson, Mary Grahek, Kristine Martin, Rebecca Gilgen and in Human Resources, Rafé Viscasillas, Luanne Laurents and Kelly Tanzer for their pro-active and enthusiastic support of the ToP Facilitation Initiative.

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America's Byways Resource Center | Duluth, Minnesota



A recent action plan completed by the Byways Specialists.

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program is a grass-roots collaborative effort established to help recognize, preserve and enhance selected roads throughout the United States. The Byways Resource Center Specialists honored as 2010 ToP Champions are Michelle Johnson (Director), Curtis Pianalto, Wayne Gannaway, Rob Balmes, Duane Lula. This is their story.

Soon after Byways Resource Center staff were introduced to ToP Facilitation approaches in 2008, they realized that “the ToP facilitation process presented a way for all of the Byway Specialists to create a consistent approach to facilitation. In the past we had all done our own things with different processes. The ToP methods gave us a way to deliver something that could be repeatable, while still allowing for our own individual style within the process...and of course, it was effective. We were producing plans that were then implemented locally!”

To support their facilitation approach, Byways Specialists shifted many of their standard procedures. All Byway Specialists have been trained in ToP Facilitation Methods and Strategic Planning. The Director is now using ToP approaches for internal applications and all new hires will be expected to be trained and able to apply ToP methods. Finally, staff is proud to say “the ToP Action Planning Process helped us move forward on aspects of our current work plan.”

ToP approaches became a part of the Byways ‘branded approach’ recently with the creation of attractive visual handouts and a website page that describe their facilitation assistance, which begins as follows:

“The American’s Byways Resource Center supports byway organizations through a variety of meeting facilitation formats. For several years, Byway Specialists at the Resource Center have utilized the renowned Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) Technology of Participation (ToP®) facilitation methods. Based on the specific needs of a byway organization, the Resource Center offers four ToP® facilitation methods....”

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Ramsey County Anti-Racism Leadership Team | St. Paul, Minnesota



The team celebrates their strategic plan review.

The ARLT Facilitation Team supports the mandate to recognize racism in our institution and implement a transformational strategy for change. With 27 members, the Anti-Racism Leadership Team (ARLT) leads this effort across RCCHS. The Facilitation Team of Kathy Gilmore, Jonna Shelomith, Brian Theine has been

challenged to create inclusive processes to engage its participants in a democratic communication and decision-making process. ARLT members are asked to ‘leave their hat at the door’ including formal organizational leaders. Each member has an equal voice. To facilitate such communication, the ARLT facilitator group uses a variety of tools depending on the task at hand.

- **ToP Strategic Planning.** “Since its inception using ToP approaches, the ARLT has created two strategic plans and used a ToP planning process which allows for a large diverse group such as ours to create a common vision with input from all participants through a participative planning process.”
- Additional effective tools, used in tandem with ToP, include:
 - **Authentic Dialogue** is a process which fosters deep listening skills and allows participants to hold varying points of view, without judgment.
 - **Racial Identity Caucusing** is a communication process whereby group divides in to a person of color group and a white group. Each group addresses key discussion topic. The process allows group to identify and learn about identity dynamics which ‘manifest in a complex range of attitudes and behaviors’ and supports institutional racism to be dismantled.
 - **Consensus Decision-Making** through a fist-of-five consensus-building process, where all in group can support a decision. All don’t have to think it’s the best decision, but all agree to they can live with it.

These communication tools have allowed the team to create and implement two strategic plans, arrive at long-term goals for the overall initiative and key work areas. The processes enable the group to build trust, problem solve, learn and plan together.

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Waid Johnson | Paint The Elephant | Posthumously



Waid Johnson had over 20 years of experience facilitating groups around the world. He worked with many fortune 500 companies, including Carlson Companies, an earlier ToP Champion organization. Waid was active in our ToP Community of Practice, enthusiastically contributing to the problem solving and dialogue therein. He was in the Certification track, and an active promoter of ToP Methods in every environment. He held a Masters degree in Experiential Education from the University of Minnesota.

He went to school for a year and later worked in Tanzania, where he encountered diverse cultures, and individuals and where people helped him realize not only that there are many perspectives on any given issue, but also that there are solutions to address each of these perspectives. Facilitating such solutions became the basis of his work.

With a unique capacity to win people over, Waid was able to tackle the most challenging situations with a gentle, humorous tone. This positive communication style built on the energy in any group, leading to excited discoveries and lasting action.

Waid was service oriented, working for the YMCA, working as a counselor for at risk children, and in the last few years focusing his skills and energy on facilitating team building and planning in non-profit organizations using ToP Methods. His company name “Paint the Elephant” reflected the humor, exuberance and enthusiasm he brought to life and to his work.