

Patricia Esslinger

Groupware Facilitator



In Pat's *technology-enabled* meetings, participants

- generate lots of ideas fast
- stick to the agenda and follow ground rules.
- participate frankly and fully with anonymous input
- quickly reach consensus--not railroading and surrender -- and extent of agreement is measured
- produce results with full documentation

Pat Esslinger specializes in facilitating **technology-enabled** meetings

Each participant in the meeting uses a computer with web-based meeting software. Participants may be together in the same room or working from their own offices.

Simultaneous keyed-in comments and electronic big screen displays replace one-at-a-time oral comments and facilitators' flip charts.

Examples of what Pat's meetings have accomplished, using collaborative meeting software

- Unit managers collectively planned for downsizing and restructuring, including identifying functions to cut or to reengineer to improve effectiveness.
- Staff offices, including HR offices, collected and assessed customer input and used that input to plan service improvements.
- Headquarters and regional managers developed mission, vision, and values statements, strategic plans, and tactical plans complete with tasks, measures, and milestones.
- Supervisors and line employees collectively developed competency models for key occupations in the agency.
- Through mutual learning about new corporate biotech capabilities and technical/business needs, scientists and managers developed a first cut of a vision for what the new technology could mean for the corporation--a list of new capabilities, with some description, explanation of value, and indication of priority.

- An agency-wide management group developed and built acceptance for a 5-year corporate recruitment strategy for key occupations to address major workforce gaps in critical skills and diversity as well as diminished success in recruiting from universities that were most prominent in the relevant fields of study

- Representatives of 12 partnerships between local governments and non-profits produced a partnership model that can be replicated in other communities

- Law enforcement staff developed an inventory of both best practices used by district offices and innovative ideas from field participants

- Cross-functional and inter-agency teams developed business plans for multi-year reinvention labs

A few reasons why you should have used Pat and groupware for your last meeting

- People were reluctant to be identified with their comments.
- "Groupthink" prevailed.
- Creativity was stifled because a few participants dominated the discussion.
- The best ideas came after the meeting from somebody who didn't speak up in the meeting.

Pat Esslinger is an independent groupware facilitator and technographer whose client list features government executives and managers. She combines expertise in meeting facilitation and use of collaborative technology with a background in executive level Federal human resources management.

Although Pat's clients are pleased with the results she gets in meetings on any topic, she does have special expertise in public personnel management. During her 25 years with the US Office of Personnel Management, Pat had assignments in various Federal human resources management specialties and held supervisory and management positions in both operations and policy development.

Pat received the William A. Jump Memorial Foundation certificate of recognition for noteworthy service in Public Administration in 1983. During her Federal career, she earned performance cash awards every year from when they were originally authorized by CSRA (1980) until her 1994 retirement. She attended the Federal Executive Institute program in Executive Leadership and Management and holds a degree in political science and English (cum laude) from Vassar College.

Pat Esslinger has been providing technology-enabled facilitation services in the Washington DC area since 1995. In the community of power users of collaborative meeting technology, she is a respected contributor and presenter.

She holds a security clearance at the Secret level.

Ms. Esslinger co-authored "Using Technology to Support ADR," published in *The Public Manager*, Summer 2000 vol. 29, no. 2, pages 29-31 and "Hash it Out in Half the Time," published in *Maryland Municipal*, July/August 2009, pages 15-16.

What Participants Have Said about Pat's Meetings

- *really the best I've ever seen! amazing. I've been a facilitator and this is wow!*
- *I loved the groupware*
- *It's like four days of ideas rolled into one.*
- *Anonymity was great*
- *We all had a chance to express ourselves. The technology equalized our "voices"*
- *Facilitator provided thoughtful and helpful assistance which got us out of traditional slumps*
- *Facilitator was very quick at grasping concepts*
- *The facilitator kept us on track and organized our plan.*
- *This was a great meeting. I felt that I was able to give my thoughts in the area. the meeting was well organized. The facilitator was great. good direction on the use of the computer and kept us on time.*
- *The best facilitator I've seen in my 40 years with the Government*

Pat's client list includes:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Defense
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Federal Aviation Administration
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
U.S. Internal Revenue Service
U.S. Department of Justice
National Academy of Public Administration
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
National Institutes of Health
National Transportation Safety Board
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office—
Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of State
Transportation Security Administration
U.S. Treasury Department
World Bank Group/International Finance Corporation

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