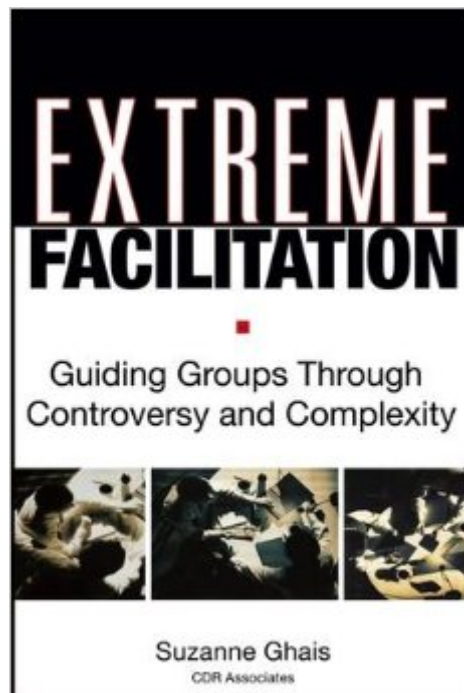


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# Extreme Facilitation: Guiding Groups Through Controversy And Complexity



## Synopsis

Extreme Facilitation picks up where other books on the topic leave off to present a revolutionary method that helps large, unwieldy, adversarial, and apparently dysfunctional groups achieve consensus and reach objectives on divisive and contentious issues no matter how long the group has been struggling. Throughout the book, expert facilitator Suzanne Ghais shows how extreme facilitation - which puts on the emphasis on creativity, flexibility, and customization - can change how group members interact with one another and how participants view the issues even in the most challenging and exceptionally difficult situations. Extreme Facilitation covers the preparatory phases of the process, including assessment, convening, and contracting. Ghais also offers vital information on process design and tips for handling situations that many facilitators find particularly challenging.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

You don't generally think of books like this as "page-turners", but I could not put it down. In Extreme Facilitation, Suzanne Ghais has moved away from the cookbook (techniques-based) view of facilitation found in many other books and training materials, and has captured the core principles that underlie successful facilitation in extreme situations. For example -- there are no "difficult" people in a group; rather "difficult" behaviors reflect needs or interests that have not yet been identified or adequately addressed. Once these needs or interests are understood by the group and dealt with, the "difficulty" usually passes. I started reading the book while stuck on a process design

for a complicated project. The book's direct and insightful approach unlocked my creativity and allowed me to trust my instincts -- ie, the book facilitated my own thinking in the same way that "extreme facilitation" empowers difficult groups to work together productively. Ms. Ghais' approach to the topic is transformative. Michele Straube, mediator/facilitator in Salt Lake City.

The author has produced an extremely comprehensive and well written book on facilitating in the most challenging situations. Such situations call for more depth, adaptability and strategy than is addressed in other books on facilitation; this book's aim is to provide powerful, highly focused guidelines for the toughest facilitation challenges. The author takes a situational-facilitation approach: the successful approach must be tailored to the unique nature of the facilitation challenges of the moment. Because the book focuses on the more contentious predicaments, conflict resolution is infused throughout this work. The profile of the extreme facilitator is one who is an architect of custom processes, has a deep understanding of the group, can draw on a wide knowledge base of possible techniques, has a strong personal presence, and is able to employ all of the group's capabilities. This book delves into the critical details, providing guidance on preparing for and conducting the facilitation process, focusing on each of a groups capabilities-physical, intellectual, emotional, initiative, creative, and spiritual. The book is filled with a wealth a good ideas, illustrative stories, and useful insights.

I love this book! I teach facilitation & have recommended Extreme Facilitation (EF) to my students. If you are an experienced facilitator, EF's insights will improve your practice; if you are a new facilitator or just thinking about learning the facilitator's skill set, EF will help you understand what the craft is all about; if you are a manager, or work with community/non-profit organizations, and have not used the services of a facilitator, EF will change your mind. Extreme Facilitation is important because once you know and use the facilitator's skills, you will save time, money & avoid a lot of the pain involved in getting two or more people to work out their differences & unite toward a common goal. Ms Ghais accurately demonstrates in words what a facilitator does and the benefits of using these skills. Her descriptions of the practice of facilitation, particularly of its role in conflict resolution, have a realness not found in many books.

While both the title and jacket description for this book emphasize working with groups, the book itself does not really discuss how ongoing meeting process and facilitation fit together with group development, especially in groups with long-lasting conflicts or dysfunction. The "facilitator" as

understood by the author is a professional, paid for and brought in by the group, but not part of it. While obviously professional facilitation is a valuable thing, the skill of facilitation also needs to be practiced by those working long-term with groups, and there's unfortunately little in this book for them. Furthermore, it seemed rather unsure about whether it was an introduction to facilitation for beginners or an in-depth examination for more advanced facilitators. One would expect a book on "extreme facilitation" to give more detailed consideration to process methods, but the attention to them here is quicker and less substantive than in many intro books. I did find the last two chapters helpful, in which the author considers the use of both one's personal spiritual resources and that of a group's in facilitation, and then finally breaks down her process with a given group more thoroughly. The latter was especially nice, given that the way examples are used throughout the rest of the book were too often quite vague, making them generally unmemorable and without the texture or detail to help one see how they could apply to one's own situations.

I highly suggest any facilitator, manager, mediator read this book! It gave me a new way of looking at facilitation and group dynamics. As an experienced OD professional, I was able to apply what I learned immediately. It's a must read for anyone who is looking to manage change.

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