



SUSTAINABLE KNOWLEDGE MODEL OF GROUP FACILITATION

Common Ground Negotiation Services bases its approach to group facilitation on the theory of sustainable knowledge. This is the core concept of sustainable development. What sustains community is the sharing of knowledge that improves life. Each generation builds on prior experience to teach the next the dangers to avoid. When a culture ceases to sustain and pass on this knowledge, the community is destroyed.

Group facilitation based on the skills of dialogue and negotiation, guides the process in uncovering and eliciting the shared wisdom of community members. By removing the obstacles that stand in the way, the group gains knowledge of itself, of its environment, its economics and its social issues.

In hierarchical social models, knowledge is owned and used by a select few. With the rise of middle class society and the growth of democratic forms of government, “public knowledge” emerged as a new form of knowledge. As technology has advanced, this form of knowledge has grown exponentially, re-named by social scientists, *networking* knowledge. While the research is still in its infancy, it is now recognized that common experience is the “indispensable prerequisite” of social knowledge.¹ Our complex communication systems filter information and transfer it. However, what is known by some is not necessarily made available to the community as a whole.

An approach that seeks sustainable knowledge means that community projects are created and developed with those who benefit from, and make use of, the “product”. Projects that are conceived in this way stand a far greater chance of having continued value. Knowledge is shared by all members of the community as the process takes place.

Defining community may include businesses, organizations, schools, families, nations, and the planet. Historically a community implied a broad range of relationships and interactions. As our world grows more complex, our worlds are growing smaller. Working in cubicles or alone at a computer has become a normal experience for many people. Learning skills of building community might be seen as the equivalent of teaching a child how to play. Sadly in many post-industrial cultures, the concepts and skills of collaboration in community are being lost. Reversing this evolutionary process may be essential for survival.

¹ “Informed Sustainability: Autonomy and Knowledge for Sustainable Development”, Thomas Christaller and Michael Pactau, Institute for Autonomous Intelligent Systems.