



AIRMANSHIP 200

Facilitator's Handbook

2 AF/CMTO
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Why? (Change the Culture)

History

In April of 2019, a group of representatives from specialized units across the Air Force were asked to convene to determine how we improve the personal and professional development of the Airman as they complete Technical Training. During initial evaluation, it was determined that a broader problem existed:

The current evolution of Airmanship is not deliberately integrated and communicated. No single foundational definition exists that instills and embodies a core identity in all Airmen within the Total Force. This disconnected stair-step approach results in inconsistent development, application, and implementation across the continuum of learning.

There were many “Silos of Excellence” independently working to enhance the character of the Airman. Examples were found in Professional Military Education, Basic and Technical Training, Career Assistance Advisors, Profession of Arms Center of Excellence, and the operational Air Force units; but none worked in concert with any others. Identifying the problem helped to shape the focus on a standardized definition of Airmanship.

Airmanship

An Airman’s relentless mindset bound by our Air Force Core Values, forged through a culture of pride and professionalism, inspired by our innovative heritage, and exemplified through actions in defense of our nation.

Airmanship-200 is one of many waypoints along the continuum of development for an enlisted American Airman. Its development is based on feedback from the field in an effort to build upon lessons in Basic Military Training (Airmanship-100) in order to support continued development during time spent in their First Term Airman Center (Airmanship-300) and beyond. Progressive airmanship development during an Airman’s career into retirement, creates sustainment throughout the operational Air Force.

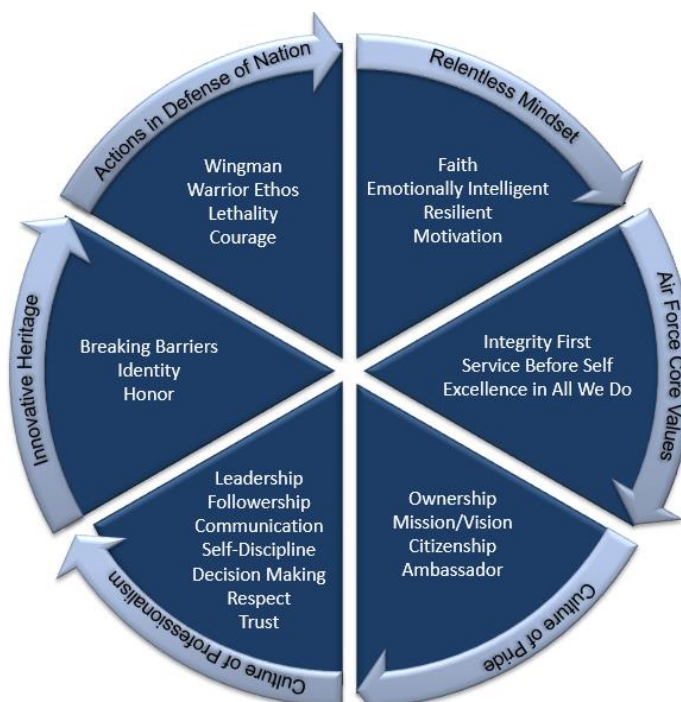


Goals and Desired Effect

Airmanship-200 is a focused effort to enhance the character and professional development of our Airmen. When facilitated correctly, the lessons will:

- Help each participant find their “why” earlier and remain connected to it
- Enhance professional development through guided discussion
- Help participants identify as an Airman first, then as a specialty
- Create visceral/affective ways of connecting with each Airman
- Strengthen the ability to connect Air Force Core Values with mission accomplishment
- Foster mental agility, adaptive behavior, and diversity of thought
- Foster habits of mind that lead to moral courage and ethical judgment

What? (Airmanship-200 Lesson Plans)



Introduction

This Airmanship-200 booklet has 25 lessons intended to develop the character of the participants. Each is a stand-alone lesson that may be presented in any order.

An Airmanship lesson is a guided discussion led by a facilitator, ideally with 10-30 participants. Fewer than 10 participants will provide inadequate variation in backgrounds/opinions to explore all perspectives effectively. More than 30 participants will not afford each individual an adequate opportunity to contribute. Each Airmanship lesson contains a topic page and lesson page(s).

The topic page contains the lesson plan name (the Airmanship attribute) as well as the Major Component it primarily belongs to, which is color coded for ease of reference. The objective of the lesson is clearly stated and should be the facilitator’s primary focus when steering the discussion. An outline of the lesson delivers perspective to the facilitator of the overall main

points (MP) and designed time. Links to external aids (videos, articles, etc.) are provided to use both during the session as well as provide the facilitator with a deeper understanding of the lesson.

The lesson page is the primary work space for the Facilitator. The left hand column includes the designed Introduction, Main Points (MP) and Conclusion. It is important to note that each lesson plan provides only one pre-developed way to attain the objective. The facilitator will need to determine, based on participant responses and reactions, if minor deviations are in order. Facilitators are encouraged to augment the lesson plan with personal examples, external sources, and additional aids so long as each offers an enhancement to meet the objective. Lead off Questions (LOQ) help the facilitator get the conversation started. Follow-up Questions (FUQ) help enhance and deepen the discussion. The right-hand column of the lesson page contains common answers to the designed questions and additional facilitation notes. An Assessment Question is offered at the end of each lesson to help the Facilitator determine if the objective was met; the participants do not necessarily need to be asked the question.

Core Lessons

Core lesson plans, those that are presented at each level of Airmanship, are requisite and are marked at the top of the title page as “CORE.” *Identity, Ownership, Self-Discipline, and Decision Making* are the four Core lessons. There is no absolute order in which to deliver the lessons, so long as all lessons are delivered.

Time

Ideally, each lesson is intended to be delivered within a 45 to 60 minute span of time. Completing in less than 45 minutes can leave the participant questioning the value of the lesson; go over 60 minutes and you risk losing some of the audience. Time aside, gauge the participants to determine if the desired outcome has been met to determine if you need to offer more information. There is a wide gap between “having a group discussion” about any given topic and “leading a guided discussion” to a prescribed objective. Don’t be misled into believing that just getting everyone to talk for 60 minutes automatically results in completion of the desired outcome.

How? (Basic Principles of Facilitation)

Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator is the key to success of the discussion. As a facilitator, your role is to bring about a learning outcome by providing indirect or unobtrusive guidance to a small-group discussion. In

this role, you ask questions of the participants, encourage discussion between participants, and keep the participants on track toward the desired outcome.

Your role is NOT to be the dominant participant. If you find yourself speaking most of the time, you are lecturing, not facilitating. The Airmanship lessons are ineffective as a lesson plan for a lecture presentation. Remember, the ultimate outcome is to improve the participant's character as an airman. Simply telling them what or how to think will not be effective. They will need to find their own "why". As a facilitator, your role is to get them to their "why".

Role of the Participants

The most important participant role to encourage is honesty. You already know the schoolhouse answer to the discussion. If your participants are only contributing what they think you want to hear, you need to acknowledge that tactfully and reinforce that ALL the participants need to express their real opinions, experiences, and expectations. It is more detrimental to the participants to continue with a "fake" discussion than to not have one to begin with.

Facilitation as a Skill

Did you ever take a keyboarding class to learn how to 'touch type'? How about guitar lessons? If so, you learned a skill that you keep with you for your entire life. Facilitation is the same thing—a skill you learn, practice, and demonstrate in a wide variety of situations. If you do it well, other people will notice and call upon you to lead small groups in everything from program review sessions, strategic planning sessions, process review meetings, and more—there is always the need for a good facilitator, and the demand is growing in the workplace.

What follows is a brief discussion on the basic principles of facilitation as they apply to small-group discussions. This should be enough to get you started and hopefully convince you that facilitation is not just sitting in a small group and talking. Take your facilitator role seriously, and you will find it very rewarding.

Content versus Process

The first principle of facilitation is to understand the difference between content and process. The content of any meeting, lesson, etc., is *what* is being discussed: the main subject, the issue at hand, the problem to be solved. Most small group leaders focus almost exclusively on the content of a discussion with no regard to the process. The process is *how* things are discussed. What are the methods of discussion, the styles of interaction, the climate, and the group dynamics?

As a facilitator, you are in charge of the *process*. While you must remain unassertive about the content being discussed, you need to be very assertive in managing the process. This is the "master skill" of facilitation. Mastering the skill, will help the participants evaluate their own character and determine if change is needed.

At the same time, remember what you are there for. In your effort to remain neutral, don't allow bad decision making or a dominant participant to lead the group to an unethical, immoral, illegal, or unproductive discussion. There is a time to step in.

Core Practices

There are many facilitation practices and tools. The following five are Core Practices, in that, regardless of the type of discussion, a facilitator will always be employing these to guide and control the discussion. As a new facilitator, following these five Core Practices will enable you to lead an effective discussion.

Stay Neutral on Content

Staying neutral means not imposing your ideas or opinions on the group. By the nature of your role as the facilitator, your comments carry more weight than other members of the group. You CAN share your experiences and remain content neutral. You CANNOT, however, claim that the way you reacted was the right way or the only way to do something. Great facilitators let the participants reach the desired objective by asking the right questions.

Listen Actively

Listening actively begins with your posture. If you lean back and are too casual, the participants will be turned off before any conversation begins. Listening actively means the participants perceive you are engaged with them. Eye contact is very powerful, and you can use it to engage and redirect conversations. The other side of listening actively is paying attention to the body language and emotional expression of the participants, not just the words they say. Remember, a significant part of communication is nonverbal. Be attuned to this. And, of course, you have to listen to what your participants are saying.

Ask Questions

Effective questioning is THE most fundamental facilitation skill. Questioning is how you guide the group toward the objective: In this case, the character objective of the lesson. Asking open-ended questions allows you to reveal hidden assumptions, challenge explanations, press self-reflection, and more.

A closed-ended question is, "Have you ever experienced something like this before?" An open-ended question is, "When something like this happened to you, how did you handle it?" In this way, effective facilitators ask questions that serve as a catalyst to facilitate dialogue and results. Effective facilitators do not ask closed questions (those that require a yes or no answer or one-word answer.)

Rather than asking an open-ended question like, "Can you explain that?", ask thought-provoking questions pertinent to where you want the discussion to go. This can move a group forward when it is stuck, uncover real issues, and open the door to an unspoken conflict that needs to be resolved.

Paraphrase Answers

Paraphrasing has two benefits. First, it acknowledges the input, rewarding the participant for speaking up. Second, often when a participant offers an opinion or makes a point, there is no assurance that everyone in the group understood the message. By paraphrasing and confirming, you build assurance that everyone has reached the same understanding, and you can move on to the next discussion point.

Summarize Discussions

Knowing when to summarize is a key skill in managing the conversation. If the discussion is going off topic, you can summarize the last significant point as a transition to move on without shutting down a participant. If the discussion stalls, a summary can focus the point and spark a new discussion. After you conclude a main point and at the end of the discussion, a good summary is an effective way to restate the bottom line and to identify the most important take-away from the discussion.

Top 5 Tips for Handling Small-Group Discussion Pitfalls

Be Credible

Gain credibility through a manner that commands attention and portrays confidence. An effective facilitator grabs the room, commands attention, and exudes a purposeful and confident presence. If you don't take it seriously, your participants will not either. To gain and keep credibility as a facilitator, be prepared in advance, understand the desired learning outcome, pay attention to posture and tone of voice, and think of the participants as peers.

Don't Dominate the Discussion

You may feel an urge to talk after each participant's comment. Don't fall victim to this trap. If you do, invariably the participants will address YOU with every comment rather than the group in general. A way to combat this feeling is to avoid eye contact with the person speaking. They will naturally look for someone else who is making eye contact with them and this, in turn, may cause that person to respond instead of you.

Participants Don't Say Anything

Don't put quiet participants on the spot. Make eye contact as much as possible to remind them you would like to hear from them. Look for nonverbal clues that they may be ready to speak and give them the opportunity. When they make a comment, however brief, encourage the behavior by conveying a genuine interest and asking for more information. Others will see this and feel more comfortable to participate.

Talkative Person Dominates the Discussion

It will be easy to identify this participant. It is important early in the discussion to set limits for this individual. You may remind the group that you expect participation from everyone with a comment like, “Let’s hear from someone who hasn’t had a chance to talk yet.” Ask a referral question of someone else in the group. “Bill, how was your experience different from (talkative person)?” If necessary, talk to the individual outside of the group discussion and explain the importance of having everyone contribute.

Participants Wander Off-topic

The attributes presented, along with the participants’ personal examples, can easily lead to long “there I was” stories that can quickly get off topic. This is one of your biggest challenges in facilitating lessons. How do you get the discussion back on track without shutting down an individual or the group? Start with soft questions like, “We’re a little off topic right now; let’s focus on the fundamental issue.” Or, “We are wandering off the main point, and I’d like to give others a chance to speak.” If these soft questions are not effective, you have to be firmer: “OK, let’s save the rest of that story for another time. Our focus here is...” Most of the time this will work, but there is one exception. If a participant is engaged in a personally emotional story, such as the loss of a child, a suicide, or something similar, you must be careful about cutting them off. They may never have spoken about this in public before, and it may be more important to allow the conversation to continue. You must decide.

Prepare Yourself

To successfully facilitate a lesson, you need to review the lesson plan ahead of time, be familiar with each main point, what it is intending to achieve and know what personal examples you may want to use. Having the participants achieve the primary objective is the most important task. There are many ways to attain the objective, and it is okay to deviate a bit from the main points so long as the objective is met.

Prepare the Environment

Equipment: Make sure that you have the equipment/facilitation aids/videos set up and ops checked prior to the facilitation period.

Space: Set up the small-group discussion area in such a way that you are PART OF the group, not in front or in back, like a lecture. If sitting around a table, do not sit at the head. If using a circle of chairs around the room, you should be part of the circle. Everyone must be able to see and hear video clips, if used. The space chosen should be the one that compliments the material best. An indoor conference room or briefing room may not always be best. Explore alternative options such as going outdoors or to a specific landmark if one is available.

Prepare the Participants

To achieve any measure of success, your participants **MUST** be comfortable speaking with and in front of one another. If the participants are new to each other, it may be best to conduct an icebreaking exercise prior to starting the lesson if time allows. Set the rules for discussion: **HONESTY**, participation, acceptance, non-judgmental comments, etc.