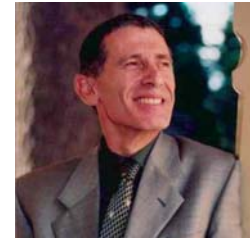


IAF CPF certification – a continuing journey of self-development – by Tom Schwarz CPF (IAF)



"I've always wanted to be a Facilitator - ever since I was a young chip of the block, a gleam in my parent's eye' !!..... a life calling that meant' taking on the challenges, ambiguities, tensions and paradox's of human dynamics - all held and worked with by the magic of facilitation wizardry' that lubricates a group' journey of discovery - to an end-vision outcome along a meandering and uncertain path. ...

Nice , a compelling ideal - but sadly not true

My 'Change'

I arrived at the Facilitator calling as a logical evolution path that started out as research scientist (physical chemistry - very data oriented), then through IT in many roles - that started at technical training and over decades ended up as strategic and future oriented, and mainly working with people and partnerships. My latter success was ONLY made possible by conscious facilitation of teamwork with external and internal people over whom I had no direct control or even influence...though I rarely called it 'facilitation'.

When I reflected at one point on 'what I enjoyed doing ..' - the answer came back to me -it was the working with people in ways that left them better off for the interaction - that made me want to get up eagerly in the morning ..

This translated into my 'jumping ship' from Corporate life to a small startup company in China who aimed to provide leadership to organizations and individuals by facilitating organizations, groups and individuals through change - to help clients focus clearly and act with courage. This mean't utilizing those core people-centric skills and knowledge I had acquired as supports to my more business focused endeavors.

Having made that move - I was then faced with a very real need to know if this was a sound life-decision for me - to 'chuck out' most overt components of several decade's of acquired

experience - and if 'yes' then to see what I needed to do to consciously develop and build a stronger capability in this area.

My Validation

What made sense to me then was to connect with an international peer organization - to benchmark where I was at, to provide me with feedback on where I might need development - via a clear process that looked objectively at the competences of successful and principled facilitators. The business side of me also asserted itself and looked for some external Marketing advantage that could be used to help clients in their decisions to engagement with me - a professional association's Certification that was globally recognized.

The IAF and it's CPF (Certified Professional Facilitator) certification processes fitted the bill exactly !

My CPF process - Phase 1

The 1st phase of the CPF process - the initial - 'is this you' process appeared to be daunting in it's requirements to document my experiences, and how they demonstrated the Foundational Facilitators competences. I must pay due acknowledgement to Cameron Fraser and Barry Brewster (then CPF process manager, and CPF assessor respectively) for the time they graciously gave to dialogue with me on my candidature.

Having passed the phase 1 go/no-go CPF hurdle and being accepted into the assessment program proper - I then spent some significant time in the assessment process dialoguing with my remote (UK based) CPF assessor and Client role play person - Dave Rees. From a simulation scenario that I chose from a list - he provided me with the 'in-role' dialogues to demonstrate a range of client engagement interactions - around determining client needs and requirements, and crafting a full-blown facilitation intervention around this. It was both intense and

amusing as we repeatedly switched between role-play and assessor-candidate modes - in the end I had the 'client' confirmed brief and accepted engagement framework.

I then chased down some client references to support my document facilitation history, packaged these together with my filled out CPF competences certification forms - and headed to Scottsdale, Arizona - talk about HOT physically and emotionally !!

My CPF process - Phase II

So it all came down to this day ... a full day of tension, dialogue, drama, fun, learning from my fellow candidates and peers - and then the decision.

At the start of the day - we are all gathered into a plenary - and were briefed as to how the flow of the day would happen - all the days' action and dialogues/interviews being designed to maximize your opportunities to demonstrate your Facilitation competences against the Foundational framework...

* an am interview with a pair of assessors (for me David plus another) to reflect on one's Facilitation documented histories and Q&A to clarify any questions arising around Facilitation in general (eg confusion of your facilitation with training or consulting roles).

* then groups of six candidates 'role playing' in turn 6 different scenario's - an element from each facilitation intervention that would show the range of Facilitation competences for each candidate being 'the facilitator'.

* a pm interview again with the assessor pair that provided opportunities to reflect on competences demonstrated, and further Q&A as to how you might

handle various scenarios - and to provide opportunities to address perceived issues with your competences matching.

All of this being overviewed by assessors of the assessors to ensure consistency of the assessment process - phew - a very transparent and professional, if somewhat rigid process.

The Outcome:

Candidates were called back a final time into their assessor pair interviews -and informed of the final reflections and outcome it appeared that I had passed the process - Yes !!!

The whole process itself gave me a renewed sense of confidence and reassurance - being affirmed by my peers - and also required me to stretch to demonstrate all the competencies - a strong sense of achievement followed. It was also a great chance to see other's in action 'close up' - and experience what it's like 'being facilitated' - have a strong sense of camaraderie with 'that group'..

There was a rare opportunity to be clear and conscious of my facilitation work - to examine it - and get frank, diverse and supportive feedback from my peers - to obtain a frank feedback of areas where I could benefit from development. This was gold for me!

So .. that's the start of my professional Facilitation tale - I'm looking forward to sharing your's ...

Go well

Dr. Tom Schwarz, CPF (IAF)

**AGAIN – A WONDERFUL CONFERENCE AND CPF
EVENT TO YOU ALL!**

I look forward to reconnecting in 2007. In the meantime, look for the friendly faces of Tom Schwarz, Keith Ryall and Stephen Thorpe at the AFN Conference Geelong.

Best wishes. Carla