Harvard ManageMentor®

Leading with Generative AI Café Facilitation Guide

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A person holding a computer

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

### About Cafés

A *Harvard ManageMentor* Café is a moderated, interactive learning experience (approximately 1 hour), based on a *Harvard ManageMentor* Course.

* Participants who complete the *Harvard ManageMentor* course before attending the Café will benefit from the opportunity to review key concepts, ask questions, and gain greater insights into how to apply their learning to their daily role.
* You can also choose to invite participants who have not completed the course. After the Café session, learners can take the course for continued learning and practice.

### Materials

Thisfacilitator’s guide and the accompanying slide deck are designed to help you lead an engaging live session for a group of developing leaders.

* On the **Notes panel of each slide**, you’ll find **detailed** **suggested instructions**. You can use these as is or adapt them to fit your particular goals and context.
* See the **Customization** section of this document for suggestions on how to adapt the scenarios, activities, and ideas for your industry.
* See the **Café Communications** section of this document for a suggested communication plan and customizable templates you can use to organize the Café session.
* See the **Facilitation Tips and Best Practices** section of this document for general guidance.

### Customization

##### Customizing Examples, Scenarios, and Questions

Most Cafés include scenarios, examples, and discussion questions that help participants explore how to apply concepts in the real world. Consider tailoring these using details that are specific to your organization or to the group participating in the Café.

### Café Communications

##### Sample message to invite participants

Subject: Leading with Generative AI Café: An Interactive Discussion

Generative AI is reshaping industries and transforming how we work. Please join me for a *Harvard ManageMentor* Café — an interactive discussion session where we’ll discuss and practice strategies for how to leverage gen AI to transform your work, follow best practices to use the tools effectively, and manage potential risks.

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Meeting link or location:**

I look forward to a productive exchange of views and questions!

##### Sample follow-up message

Subject: Additional resources for Leading with Generative AI

Thank you for participating in the Café! To keep building your knowledge and skills, complete the *Harvard ManageMentor Leading with Generative AI* course. Try using the downloadable tools to help you plan your gen AI experiments, craft smart prompts, and evaluate AI-generated content.

[Add course completion deadline or other details that learners at your organization need to know about accessing and competing the course.]

### Preparing for a Café Session

Cafés are designed to be led by an individual with professional facilitation skills and experience, such as Human Resources or Learning and Development professionals. Café materials, especially facilitator notes, are optimized for virtual delivery but can be adapted by facilitators for delivery in a face-to-face or hybrid environment. Tips for virtual and face-to-face delivery are included later in this guide.

* **Consider interviewing an expert or a senior leader to gain insight about the value or importance of the Café topic to your organization or team.** These sample question starters can help you plan your conversation:
* What types of organizational challenges are linked to integrating generative AI into our work?
* How does generative AI tie into our overall strategy, mission, or values?
* What might be some cultural norms within our organization that make integrating generative AI challenging?
* What do you see our organization doing well in terms of prioritizing generative AI use?
* **Review the slide deck.** Customize slides and speaker notes as needed. Consider including stories or examples based on your own experience.
* **Practice going through the slide deck aloud.** Consider asking co-workers to listen to you run through the Café prior to the event. Ask for feedback and use any helpful comments to improve your approach to facilitating the Café.
* **At least one day prior to the Café, familiarize yourself with technical equipment** whether you are delivering virtually or face to face.

### Facilitation Tips and Best Practices

It can be challenging to lead an interactive learning session. **Spend time preparing and practicing what you’ll say and do.** Don’t memorize a script — you’ll lose participants’ attention if you’re reciting rather than speaking to them. But be sure you know the information well.

**Consider working with a co-facilitator**, particularly if you don’t have a lot of experience as a moderator. It's helpful to have another person who can answer questions, provide additional examples, troubleshoot technical issues, or step in if you’re unavailable. To enhance learning at your organization, create a community of facilitators if one doesn’t already exist. Work as a team to share best practices, examples, and anecdotes that resonate with people in your organization or industry.

**To increase engagement**, consider developing prizes, leaderboards, and opportunities for action-based learning following the Café session.

##### Facilitation Best Practices

Even the most experienced facilitators can benefit from a recap of general best practices:

* Consider your audience. As you prepare, think about the goals, needs, and interests of your participants.
* You are valued for your experience, so share your (relevant) stories.
* Consider inviting a guest speaker or program alum to add their perspective as well.
* Help connect the concepts to their use and importance in your organization.
* Respond to questions from the group to help them learn.
* Work to create an atmosphere of trust and sharing.
* Bridge and link points during the session.
* If it makes sense, include a business unit leader/SME to provide additional anecdotes and examples.
* Prepare your own answers to Café questions and scenarios ahead of time.
* Don’t speak too fast. Try to vary your pace and tone to keep participants engaged.

##### Facilitation Traps

* Looking at or speaking to only one person or one part of the room.
* Ignoring participant input via virtual communication tools such as hand raising and chatting.
* Talking too much/lecturing.
* Telling someone they asked a great question if you have not also told others their questions were great.
* Ignoring someone's point.
* Allowing one person to dominate the discussion.
* Allowing the conversation to get off track.
* Running out of time.

##### Tips for Engaging Participants Virtually

Conducting virtual learning sessions is challenging even for experienced facilitators. Facilitators of virtual Cafés need to focus on strategies for maintaining leaners’ engagement in an environment that poses numerous distractions, such as open workspace learning settings, email, and easy access to unrelated online activities.

Consider these tips to adapt your facilitation skills to a virtual setting:

* Familiarize yourself with the participants’ learning spaces and how that could affect ease of discussion. For example, if learners are participating from open workspaces, you may want to rely more on chat functions than requesting verbal responses via audio.
* Use a headset to improve audio quality for participants.
* Use your webcam if possible; seeing you helps participants feel engaged in the learning.
* Check your volume, so you don’t over-project.
* Vary your speaking pace, pitch, and pauses.
* Smile! Even if participants can’t see you, smiling will help you speak in a more engaging tone.

##### Adapting High-Level Design

Most Cafés include three skill focus areas. Though Cafés are designed to flow from one skill focus area to another, each Café skill focus area can also stand alone. Depending on the timing, organizational context, and/or group needs, facilitators should consider whether to focus on one or two rather than all three skill focus areas.

* A facilitator might opt to lead activities related to only one skill focus area for a variety of reasons:
* Use only one Café skill focus area in a larger blended learning program.
* Choose the one Café skill focus area that is most urgent given skill gaps.
* Support micro-learning by facilitating a single Café skill focus area in a short amount of time.
* A facilitator might adjust the time spent on each of the three skill focus areas.
* This would likely include eliminating certain activities in a less urgent skill focus area, and perhaps adding a discussion or activity for a higher priority skill.
* A facilitator might combine elements of multiple Cafés to support a business need.
* For example, in the case of a need to enhance employee engagement, select certain skill focus areas from the Leading People and Attracting and Cultivating Talent Cafés.

Also consider strengthening learning by adding a Café follow-up session after participants have had 90 days to work on their action plans. For example, the group could share their results and discuss plans going forward in small groups, and then share highlights with the larger group.