

## **How to run a successful roleplay exercise.**

Your team members can benefit from this exercise as long as they set aside their preconceptions, stay away from work/ project related details, and avoid 'fixing' the situation at this meeting.

### Steps

- 1: Introductions
- 2: Set the Scene
- 3: Role-Play Conversation
- 4: Constructive Feedback
- 5: Coaching

### Step 1: Introductions

Begin by welcoming the participants and setting the tone for the session. Explain that you'll be facilitating a roleplay exercise to help everyone practice their communication skills in a safe, supportive environment. Let them know how long each person will have to practice and receive coaching, divide your time equally among all the participants in your room. Encourage everyone to approach the activity with an open mind and a willingness to step outside their comfort zone.

Next, introduce yourself, and your intention to support everyone to practice and receive useful coaching. Invite each person to briefly introduce themselves and share one communication challenge they hope to improve through this exercise. This helps build rapport and gives insight into their specific needs, and what to reflect on in the feedback.

### Step 2: Set the Scene

Divide your learners into small groups of up to 4 people. Provide a realistic scenario they might encounter in their work or personal life, such as having a difficult conversation with a subordinate or colleague, providing challenging feedback, or delivering bad news. Give them a little backstory for the scenario. Emphasize that they should aim to make the roleplay as authentic as possible, drawing from their own experiences and considering their outcome, but staying away from trying to 'fix' the person or problem.

### Step 3: Role-Play the Conversation

Decide who is going to be leading the conversation first: the 'participant', and who will be the receiver of the conversation; this person will respond appropriately in character, according to how the message is delivered and will be open to be changed/ persuaded and led if the message is delivered effectively. This could be you, an actor, or one of the others in the group.

Other group members will be observers, noticing what worked and what was not as effective. Encourage the rest of the group to observe attentively, taking notes on the communication techniques they notice, whether that's verbal or non-verbal cues.

Invite the first person to begin their roleplay. Play it out until it either reaches a natural conclusion, this could be just scheduling another meeting or gaining a commitment to an action or change of approach.

Or, after several minutes, call "time" and thank the participant for their vulnerability. It's challenging to go first, so recognise that.

### Step 4. Constructive Feedback

These 3 parts can be led in whichever order you feel is most beneficial:

A: Give your own impressions, using this AWE model:

- 1. Acknowledge at least one thing which was effective first, and how you felt.**
- 2. What Wasn't effective, and why/ how you felt.**
- 3. Effective suggestion, give at least one great coaching idea, something tangible, a practical, doable skill or technique, and how the recipient would feel.**

B. Invite the observers to share their feedback, focusing on what worked well, describing it specifically, and then where there might be room for improvement.

Guide the discussion by asking thought-provoking questions:

- What non-verbal cues did you notice which had a positive effect?
- What questions were asked which helped to flesh out the situation?
- How much space or pausing was used to give time to respond?

Emphasize that the goal is to provide constructive feedback, not criticism. Help the group identify specific communication skills to reinforce or develop further.

### C. Self- Reflection

Ask the participant 'what went well?

And then...

What was something you might have done differently?

Make sure that they recognize the strengths which they already have. That's important as we all tend to focus on what's wrong first, but to build confidence we need to acknowledge that we are already doing some things well, that we have innate strengths and abilities. Only then can we be open to knowing our learning opportunities, and what needs to be practiced; the skills which can make us better human beings and more empowered leaders.

### Step 5: Coaching

This is where you focus on what specific behaviours could help your participant to develop the skills discussed earlier, how to practice being more grounded and open physically, how to prepare for the conversation, consider your outcome, craft your message, and/ or how to use your voice, including tone, pace and pausing, and how to ask open and closed questions. If time allows, invite them to redo a part of the conversation, with these skills in mind.

After step 5., Invite another participant to practice the same or a different scenario and repeat the process. Allow each person in the group to be the participant, the focus of the exercise, while their colleagues support and encourage them to do well.

Conclude the exercise by asking your group to share their key takeaways.

Encourage everyone to continue practicing these skills in their daily lives. Remind them that effective communication takes time and effort to develop, but the rewards are well worth it.

By guiding your team through this structured roleplay exercise, you'll help them build confidence, gain practical experience, and develop the communication skills needed to succeed in their personal and professional lives.

*To find out more contact Peers and Players.*