



Communication Skills for Assurance providers

Energised by the need to provide broader assurance, many functions find they need to perform a much more comprehensive spectrum of reviews than ever before – whilst still providing comfort and reassurance that the basics are being managed well. Practitioners have now to expand their role as facilitators and advisors at the same time demonstrating that they are adding measurable added value.

These responsibilities and challenges require a new set of skills, competencies and abilities. Strong communication and presentation skills are essential in this highly challenging environment, whether this is facilitating control self- assessment workshops or negotiating with management or communicating your ideas in writing. Ask yourself a few questions: -

- Do you communicate as effectively as you would like?
- Do your interpersonal skills motivate and drive the audit team?
- Do you feel that your presentations and discussions with management could benefit from some constructive criticism to improve their impact?

Attending this highly practical 2-day seminar will provide the opportunity to improve your interpersonal communication and presentational skills in order to make a substantial difference to the way you interact with colleagues and senior management.

The seminar features a series of case studies and exercises covering verbal, listening, written and other communication skills, culminating in a presentation to Senior Management. Using video and peer review, you will have the opportunity to learn from fellow professionals as well as benefiting from the wide experience of your seminar leader Phil Griffiths.

Course Outline

Day 1 - The Art Of Effective Communication

Exercise 1 - the Bamboo Cane

- Assurance providers primary roles, objectives and challenges
- What are the keys to success?
- Expressing yourself effectively
- Do you have clients, auditees or customers?
- The need to manage the customer relationship
- Creating rapport with your customers – tips and techniques
- The 4 management styles – Activists, Reflectors, Theorists and Pragmatists - and the implications for auditors
- Personal drivers and success

Exercise 2 – management styles - *working in small groups delegates are asked to determine and compare individual management styles and personal drivers*

- Language and impact
- Simple and Complex language
- The use of 'powerwords' in your communications
- How to get on the same wavelength as your customer
- Phone conversations – how to make the right impression
- The use of humour
- Business Communication techniques
- Facilitation – the key skills
- Communication in writing – the do's and don'ts
- What management expects
- Active listening
- Meetings and how to manage them – the 5 P's
- Body language and how to interpret it
- How to tell if you are not getting the true picture
- The secret of effective presentations

Exercise 4 – making a short presentation (with video)

- The Competency framework
- Persuasion and negotiation
- Preparing for an assignment
- Objectives and risk
- Areas to cover
- Getting management input
- Explaining the approach to staff of the function being reviewed
- Treating your customers with respect

- Deciding who to interview
- Interview techniques
- Walk through tests
- Fieldwork Techniques (compliance, transactional, analytical review, sampling etc)
- How to decide the depth of testing required
- The clearance meeting

Exercise 5 –meeting with an Executive – role play

3 Practical exercises with analysis and feedback – series of linked tasks requiring clear communication and understanding

- The final straw
- Building rapport
- The puzzle
- 5 minute presentations on the experience (video and feedback)
- The skills inventory – issues to concentrate on

All the following skills will be incorporated today:

- Diplomacy
- Open -mindedness
- Communication Skills – written, verbal, auditory, facilitation and presentation
- Persuasiveness
- Negotiation ability
- Self motivation and self confidence
- Decision making ability
- Flexibility and ability to co-operate
- Time management
- Judgement
- Analytical skills
- Self control
- Practicality
- Results orientation

Day 2 - Communicating with Senior Management

Communicating in writing

- Challenges of reporting
- Who are the reports really for?
- How do you know a good report when you see one?
- What Management expect – recent survey of chief executives
- The need for reports with impact

Exercise 7 : What are the factors that distinguish an excellent report from the rest?

- 35 questions about your reports
- The psychological problem with reports
- Why assurance reports are taken as a criticism of management
- What are the factors preventing the achievement of these best practice measures
- Tips, techniques and ideas to help you score 35 out of 35
- Discussion of the implications
- How to exceed management expectations
- Advice and guidance to help you achieve best practice
- Explanation of a proven method to evaluate your own reports

Exercise 8 : Analysis of 2 actual assurance reports

- Key requirements of the report of the future
- How to draft a report with impact – discussion of banner headlines and their relative impact
- Highlighting the issues that matter
- How to get recipients to react positively
- How to write balanced reports
- How to get 95% of your recommendations actioned
- Title pages and indexes
- The Executive Summary –the benefits of writing the Executive summary before the main report.
- Influence and Persuasion

Exercise 9 : Writing an effective summary

- Discussion of the implications – how to reflect the key issues in the Executive Summary
- Messages rather than content
- Outcomes rather than output
- Solutions not problems
- Words and phrases to avoid
- Best practice format
- Reducing the number of words
- The power of pictures and graphics
- The need to relate the issues to objectives and risk
- How to deal with sensitive issues in the report.
- Recommendations and actions
- Management Comments
- Action plans
- Examples of effective assurance reports will be shared

Presentation skills

- **The need for impact**
- **Deciding the form of presentation**
- **Use of visual aids**
- **How many notes should you use**
- **Use of humour – is this a good idea?**
- **Education or decision seeking – the different techniques**
- **How to deliver a successful presentation**
- **How to combat nerves**
- **Keeping in control**
- **How to deal with questions**
- **Keeping the flow**
- **The need not to over prepare**
- **Use of simple language**
- **How to keep the audience's interest**
- **Use of props**
- **Anticipating the questions**
- **Considering what the audience will expect**
- **Assessing the results**
- **Getting feedback**

Exercise 9 The Presentation

- **Delegates work in teams to prepare a 10 minute presentation to Top management (which they must all participate in)**
- **The presentations will be video-taped**
- **Evaluation and feedback**
- **Learning points discussed**
- **Personal action plans**

