

Put it into Writing

The Complete Communicator

Trainer's Guide

Every effort has been made to check the factual accuracy of the information given in this book at the time of publication, but it should not be regarded as a substitute for seeking appropriate professional advice as and when necessary. Video Arts Ltd, hereby disclaims any responsibility, and will not accept any liability, for any claim from any action based upon any information contained in this book. The opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of Video Arts Ltd.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, now known or hereafter invented, without the prior permission of Video Arts Ltd.

© Video Arts Ltd, 2003

1.	Introduction to the Series	
	About the subject.....	3
	Component parts.....	3
	Target audience.....	4
	Contents of the materials.....	4
	Using the materials.....	4
	Principles on which the courses are designed.....	5
2.	Introduction to Put it into Writing	
	Training objectives.....	7
	Resources needed.....	7
	Synopsis of the video Put it into Writing	8
	Learning points from the video.....	8
	Pre-course preparation.....	9
3.	Put it into Writing: The Workshop	
	Outline of the workshop.....	11
	Detailed programme – Day One	
	1. Laying the foundations.....	13
	2. Learning from the video.....	19
	3. Purpose.....	20
	4. Preparation.....	23
	5. Aspects of content.....	27
	6. Consolidating the day.....	35
	Detailed programme – Day Two	
	7. Review of previous day.....	37
	8. Application to given scenarios.....	38
	9. Looking around the organisation.....	40
	10. Application to work.....	42
	11. Action planning.....	44
4.	Handouts and OHTs	45
5.	Notes	66

About the subject

How we communicate with each other lies at the heart of all workplace activity. But what are we doing when we communicate? In most cases the aim is to influence the other person or people to gain a particular desired effect. Although personal power or status in the workplace may sometimes be the source of influence, the use of power is not an option for the majority of people. Influence is more likely to be a matter of persuasion. We achieve our goals through the words we speak, the way we write and the non-verbal signals we send out. Each of these three behaviours is the subject of a separate video, under the umbrella title of *The Complete Communicator*.

- **Put it into Writing** considers how to communicate clearly and persuasively in writing.
- **Feedback Day** explores how to give and receive both positive and critical feedback in a constructive way.
- **Communication Beyond Words** is about the power of our body language and non-verbal communication in affecting other people's behaviour.

Component parts

This training pack contains the following elements:

- a drama video
- a collection of 'Summary Scenes' at the end of the tape, capturing the key teaching points of the video
- Trainer's Guide
- Self-Study Workbook.

The same fictional company features in all three programmes. However, each video is self-contained and can be used without reference to the others.

Introduction to the Series

Target audience

The materials have been designed for use with all levels of staff, up to and including first line managers. They also provide different perspectives on the subject of using communication skills to influence.

Put it into Writing is designed as an introductory level course for people with limited experience of written communications.

Contents of the materials

Each Trainer's Guide contains all the materials needed for the facilitation of a one- or two-day workshop and includes:

- a workshop summary and detailed guide
- handouts
- OHTs.

The Trainer's Guide provides a comprehensive set of practical work-related activities, supplemented by background information, for trainers to draw on as needed.

The Self-Study Workbook in each pack enables independent learners to maximise the benefit they gain from watching the video. The contents prompt learners to make connections between their own experience and the drama, and to identify the new behaviours that they will implement in their work.

Using the materials

The contents of each Trainer's Guide offer a flexible resource that can be adapted to your particular needs. The activities have been organised into a logical sequence that also makes it easy to use the video effectively. However, if you are incorporating the materials into a workshop of your own design, then you may prefer to select the parts that are most relevant to your design.

The times given here are merely guidelines. The actual times will depend on the needs of your participants and on your judgement about what is important at any particular time.

The content of the training programmes relates only to the subject matter. For example, no detailed opening session is included because it is assumed that you will have your own preferred ways of welcoming participants, breaking the ice and dealing with administrative details. No start or finish times are indicated, though the individual activities do have a guide time attached to them. Similarly, break times are left to the discretion of the trainer.

Much of the work on the course is done in small groups. It helps to set these up at the beginning of each half-day, so that participants know who they are going to be working with and also work with different people. The seating should then be arranged so that the group can work as a whole or split up without having to move chairs. A convenient way of setting this up is for each work group to sit round its own small table, whilst still being able to see the OHTs and the trainer when necessary.

Principles on which the courses are designed

The pre-course work and the trainer's inputs and explanations of activities make clear the reason for the particular piece of course content, and how participants might benefit from it. This ensures that participants can answer the question: 'What's in it for me?', which is important for their learning.

If participants are to acquire new skills, they need opportunities to put into practice the insights they gain from the video, the trainer and from analysis of their own material. For this reason, the course contains many practical activities that are based on participants' own material.

Because participants work with material that they themselves have generated or that the trainer has gathered from within the organisation, the content of the course has real meaning and relevance. In some cases, the content chosen for Day Two will reflect actual issues that participants are facing in their jobs. Working on these issues will ensure that there is a transfer of learning between the course and their work.

Training objectives

By the end of the course, participants will:

- have analysed the purpose, content and style of their own recent written output
- be aware of how careful preparation can help overcome 'writer's block'
- understand the importance of clarifying the desired outcomes of their written communications
- have practised writing in a persuasive way
- have applied their insights to their own work requirements.

Resources needed

The workshop requires:

- a flip chart for the trainer and one for each small group
- an overhead projector
- handouts (included in this Trainer's Guide)
- OHTs (included in this Trainer's Guide)
- writing materials for participants.

Plenary sessions and group work should both be done in the same room. This will facilitate discussion and feedback within and between the small groups. It also makes it easy to allocate short activities to the small groups, and for them to feed back their thoughts to the whole group.

The training room should therefore be big enough to allow participants to work in small groups without the discussions of one group interfering with the work of another.

Introduction to Put it into Writing

Synopsis of the video *Put it into Writing*

Nisha and her colleagues, Marcus and Alan, are Business Development Managers, working for Talkwave Communications. Part of the company's business activity is to hire out mobile phones.

Whilst Nisha finds it easy to communicate in writing, both Marcus and Alan face considerable obstacles, not least in getting started.

Nisha helps them both to decide what it is they want to say, and to produce clear, fluent output that conveys the right message to the recipient. She advises them to start by considering the purpose of their communication and follows this with a technique for mapping out the content. She then draws their attention to the tone of their writing, and the effect this could have on the reader. Finally, after considering style and layout, she recommends that they check their work carefully for spelling and grammatical errors.

As a result of her tuition, Marcus and Alan feel more confident about their ability to achieve the effects they want in their written communications.

The summary scenes at the end of the drama are about:

- establishing the purpose of a communication
- using a spider diagram to map out ideas
- establishing the right tone
- laying out a piece of text so that it is easy to read
- checking for ambiguities, spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.

Learning points from the video

- Poor writing is unlikely to be persuasive writing.
- Many people share the same difficulties in putting words onto paper.
- The written word is potentially an influential means of communication.
- Establishing the purpose of a piece of writing, and the desired outcomes, is helpful in getting started.
- A spider diagram is a useful technique for mapping out the contents of what needs to be said. It also enables the writer to decide on a logical order for the points.

- Careful preparation includes collecting all the relevant information before beginning to write.
- The tone of a letter, which is conveyed in the language used, is an important factor in achieving the outcomes that the writer wants.
- A well laid-out letter can help the reader to take in the information. Solid blocks of text and long sentences are not easy to read.
- It's important to check written work carefully, to avoid ambiguities and grammatical and spelling errors.

Pre-course preparation

For participants

The success of this course depends on the materials that participants work with. It is important that they:

- develop their awareness of their own approach to writing
- assess critically work that they have already written
- apply their learning to tasks that they will do in the near future.

They will gain most benefit from using their own material as far as possible. At least two weeks before the course, therefore, you should give them the following instructions.

1. Collect some typical examples of your written communications and bring them to the course. A representative sample might include short memos and letters to colleagues in your own department or other departments, and/or letters to customers and suppliers. Longer reports are outside the scope of this course. Don't try to choose only your best pieces of work. You will learn more by improving work that you are less satisfied with.
2. Keep a record for a week or so of each piece of writing that you do. Use the outline provided.

These instructions are reproduced in the preparatory handout entitled 'Pre-course preparation'.

Introduction to Put it into Writing

For trainers

It is also important that participants learn from examples of other people's work. It would therefore be useful for you, as the trainer, to develop your own library of well-written communications collected from the organisation.

If you can't find sufficient suitable examples, then take what is available and improve on it, so that you can present it as a good model. Company memos and e-mails to all employees often provide useful source material.

You may need to make minor amendments to the text to preserve confidentiality, even if you are using good material.

If you want to use poorly drafted material as an example of how not to write persuasively, then try to collect material from outside the organisation, and render it unattributable to an individual or to another company. It would be insensitive to use poorly drafted in-company material from an identifiable source.

Outline of the Workshop

Day One

1. Laying the foundations

- a. About the course
- b. Establishing a starting point
- c. Setting up working groups
- d. Collating materials gathered before the course
- e. Favourite strategies

2. Learning from the video

- a. What can the video teach us?

3. Purpose

- a. Establishing the purpose

4. Preparation

- a. Introducing spider diagrams
- b. Putting things in a logical order to make a persuasive case

5. Aspects of content

- a. Language that gets in the way
- b. Readability
- c. Tone
- d. The active versus the passive voice

Put it into Writing: The Workshop

6. Consolidating the day

- a. Consolidating the day

Day Two

7. Review of the previous day

- a. Review

8. Application to given scenarios

- a. Practice in writing persuasive documents

9. Looking around the organisation

- a. Looking around the organisation

10. Application to work

- a. Application to work

11. Action planning

- a. Action planning