

Effective Communication to Support Learners: 'The Learning Line'

Purpose:

- (i) To emphasise the importance of effective communication
- (ii) To introduce a specific technique (the Learning Line) to aid communication
- (iii) To consider how this might assist individuals in their coaching role

Materials: Marker pens and flip chart paper

Time required for session: 40 minutes

Introduction to the participants:

The art of communication hinges on the ability to get your message across.

This is done in many ways and various media are often used to help us do this.

As this programme is about the coaching relationship and supporting learners, i.e. one-to-one or small group settings, we need to ensure that our communication techniques are well-suited to this situation.

Activity

Introduction (10 mins)

Begin the session as a whole group discussion. Ask what people they think are important principles of good communication. The facilitator writes these on the flipchart.

Summarise these contributions (adding more as necessary) to ensure that the group understand that communication must be:

Clear – use appropriate language, understandable by all concerned, ensuring that the purpose or point of the communication is understood

Concise – get to the point, don't embellish or confuse with unnecessary information

Checked – when passing information to a group, go over the key message(s) more than once, (*say what you're going to say; say it; say what you just said*), invite questions, remember to listen actively!

The coaching relationship is more about listening than telling people things so it is important that the learners you support can communicate well with you. Much of this will depend on your own listening skills but here is technique that will also aid communication.

Introduce the *learning or motivation line* by drawing the line on a flipchart:

+
OK _____
-

Draw another line in a different colour representing a learner's emotions/feelings over a training programme talking this through with the group as you go. Be sure to cross the OK line a few times (see the example in the handout and try to add one or two different examples).

Now ask the participants to work in pairs (and a three if necessary) to draw their own motivation lines. They can either draw a line from a programme of learning that is still fresh enough in their mind or draw the start of a line indicating their feelings throughout the first (almost) eight hours of contact time on this Smart Business Coaching programme.

Ask them to introduce this idea to their learners as soon as possible and report back to the group on how the idea was received by different learners.

NB If you are interested in following up this approach, Kerry Boffey, the author of the original article on which the handout is based, is available to run workshops on the technique. For more information on training workshops and free guidance notes email: kerry@alin.org.uk or visit the website www.alin.org.uk.

