

TRAINER'S BACKGROUNDER HOW TO CONDUCT A VALUABLE AND MOTIVATIONAL VIDEO ROLE PLAY SESSION

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1. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Skills practice is best conducted in a cooperative and low risk environment. Participants need to be encouraged to critique their own performance and to make constructive comments for the benefit of their colleagues. The best coaching approach is therefore one of open questions to prompt self-analysis, rather than “*spoon-feeding*” the participants with the opinions of the tutor.

It is also important to give credit where it is due, and to provide positive encouragement. The best coaches start and end a coaching session with genuine praise and encouragement, whilst the analysis, critique and suggested solutions occur in the middle of the session. This gives rise to the common phrase “*praise sandwich*”:

- *sincere praise for something done well*
- *open questions to prompt self-analysis*
- *telling faults/solutions only when necessary*
- *summary, praise and encouragement*

A critical part of the leader's role is to manage the comments made by the group. Many people have been “*scarred*” by insensitive comments in previous practice sessions, and will already be apprehensive about the dreaded “*Role Play*”. So it is important to set the correct “*frame*” around how the process will be followed and the nature of allowed comments. For example:

*“...and if you have a critical comment to make, please be ready to say how **you** would have handled it – ie, have a **positive** suggestion ready to put into it's place, OK?”*

This puts the onus on the observers to be specific and solution-oriented in their critique.

2. LOGISTICS

It is important to set yourself up well for a role playing session; the last thing you need is distractions from equipment which is not performing properly! Organise the layout of the main room in the way shown in the figure below, ensuring that you (as the tutor) are well positioned to observe:

- *the video screen itself*
- *the tape counter on the VCR*
- *the participants (for their reactions)*

You will need to keep an accurate log of what occurs during the role play session, using a format similar to the one at the end of this backgrounder. Try to avoid simply writing

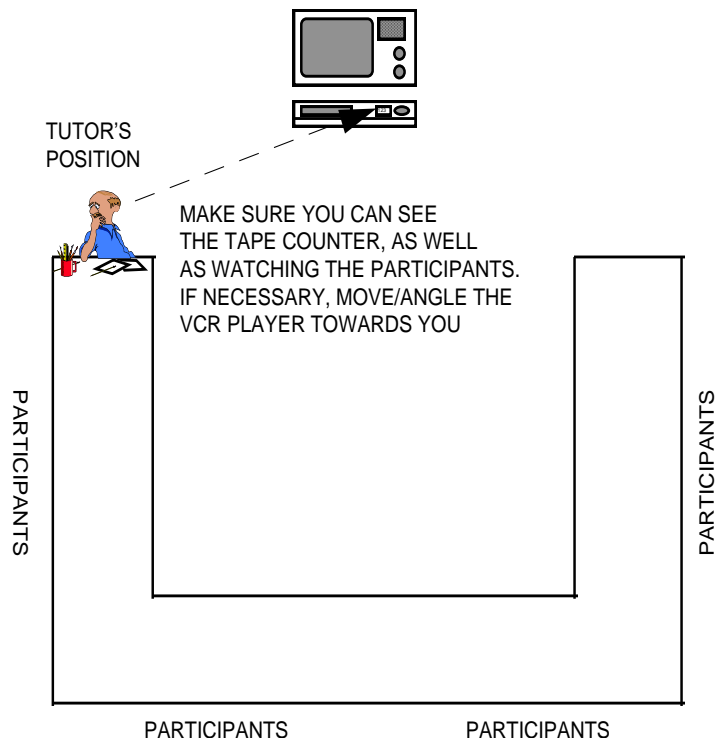
“*verbatim*” comments as they come up on the video, or you will simply find yourself writing a full script!

Instead, it is best to restrict your comments to particular skills which you may wish to draw attention to in the critique session, for example:

- *attempted conditional close, buyer resists*
- *introduces new element, not on list*
- *discount offered without anything in return*
- *emotional pressure - buyer uses threat*

If you record your comments and the tape counter relatively accurately, you will be able to access particular points fairly quickly during the feedback session. This will avoid long sections of video tape being shown, which is somewhat boring for the observers, who have already seen the interview once. However, please ensure that some video is shown on every role play conducted, because the role players will be keen to see themselves.

Once you have finished with a particular interview, rewind the tape and record the next role play directly over the previous one. At the end of the session, please wipe the tape clean, and let the participants know that you are doing this.



3. PROCESS

There are some very clear success factors for the correct process of role play and its critique.

Before the role play, make sure that the two participants are fully prepared, and that they are both working on the same basis, i.e. who requested the meeting, where is the meeting being held, what has happened prior to this meeting, how well the two people know each other, etc. Focus the attention of the observers on the role play in question, and strongly discourage them from worrying about their own role play, later in the session. This is important, since you need the observers’ comments.

Encourage the observers to make notes, and direct their attention to the checklist provided in the video role play brief. If you wish, it is often helpful to allocate particular aspects of the interview to different people, by asking individuals to complete a particular section of the checklist.

During the interview, make your own notes, and ensure that the participants are attentive.

The debrief session should follow the following process:

- *thank and praise the role players for a job well done*
- *give specific positive feedback on an aspect handled well by the “seller”*
- *prompt the “seller”, who must be given the opportunity to make the opening comments.*
- *use an open ended question such as:*
 - *how do you feel it went?*
 - *what might you do differently?*
 - *how closely did it go according to your plan?*
- *ask the “buyer” to give their comments on the interview*
- *invite open comments from the observers*
- *direct discussion towards particular aspects by using your own notes*
- *show relevant sections of the video and ask questions about the key points*
- *make your own observations as and when necessary*
- *close and summarise key points and praising role players once again*

It is useful to keep a record of the main learning points which emerge during the session. This can be done on a flipchart, or on an overhead.

4. SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR RECORDING COMMENTS

Counter	Seller	Buyer