



Playing with Presence

a tailor-made programme for ESS Support Services Worldwide

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Why this might be relevant to you:

The techniques and approaches used by Play4Real in this project may be of interest to organisations facing one or more of these needs:

-  to help individuals, teams or departments to work in closer partnership with external stakeholders
-  to give managers who already excel operationally the additional tools they need in order to handle client relationships with excellence
-  to build managers' confidence in themselves as consultants, able to interact easily and successfully with their most senior-level colleagues and clients
-  to encourage account managers to be proactive in addressing their clients' strategic needs
-  to enable account managers to establish and maintain long-lasting client relationships that translate into longterm contracts
-  to bring teams together from geographically spread sites for a challenging and exciting experience of learning that takes them out of their comfort zone
-  to introduce managers and their teams to the power of lateral approaches to learning that are highly interactive - and great fun!

The Context

ESS is the world's largest provider of integrated support services to the defence, offshore and remote site sectors, often in difficult and hostile conditions.

At one time, interaction with the client was relatively low-level: there was certainly no expectation that ESS managers should influence the client's strategic thinking as part of their provision of services.

But a radical change of culture then took place: market awareness, and the ability to influence strategy, became essential aspects of the job of an ESS General Site Manager (GSM). Their operational skills had never been in doubt, but this shift placed new emphasis on the need for GSMs to maintain close interaction with the client at Financial Director level – a demand with which many GSMs were feeling ill-at-ease.

The Client Brief

ESS asked Play4Real for a customised, interactive learning & development course spanning 2 days to be delivered to all General Site Managers and their Support Team.

Every element of the course was to be underpinned by these specific objectives:

- ✿ to give participants new insights into the meaning of true partnership in practice
- ✿ to equip participants with new approaches to negotiation, influencing, relationship-building and strategic thinking
- ✿ to enable participants to value feeling 'safely unsafe' – comfortable about being taken out of their comfort zone as a way of boosting self-confidence
- ✿ to redefine participants' individual self-image so that they would see themselves as peers to their clients, and – no matter how senior the rank or daunting the behaviour – feel comfortable about sitting alongside them at Board meetings as the expert in their field
- ✿ to encourage participants to address strategy as well as tactics – with a particular eye to retaining ESS contracts longterm.

The Play4Real motto, 'fun is a serious business', needed to sit at the heart of an experience that would prove challenging, exhausting and stretching for all participants – as well as so much fun that learning would take place almost unconsciously. The course therefore needed to take a lateral approach which would encourage individuals to extrapolate for themselves the specific applications of the learning to their own business situations.

In a nutshell: course participants were already excellent in terms of operational expertise; our brief was to find a way of boosting their ability to step up to the challenge of placing that expertise at the heart of comfortable, egalitarian client relationships.

The Play4Real Response

In consultation with the client, we decided to put strong emphasis on the power of Story as a way of helping participants discover their true voice and message in the context of their client relationships.

Some Tools of the Trade

On Day 1, we introduced participants to some simple actors' techniques for:

-  developing awareness of physicality, voice, and other non-verbal communication tools
-  generating confidence
-  developing awareness of the effect of making assumptions and techniques for keeping an open mind
-  establishing rapport and maintaining empathy
-  creating and building upon a powerful first impression
-  developing flexibility and responsiveness by being 'in the moment'.

The Power of Storytelling

A specialist Storyteller from A Word In Edgeways (www.awordinedgeways.com) worked alongside us on Day 2 to build upon these foundations and help participants discover:

-  what makes a good story
-  how to tell their own stories

- ✿ the relationship between storytelling and physicality, through
 - ✿ working with masks
 - ✿ telling stories without words
- ✿ using story to think strategically
- ✿ presenting the same story in different ways to suit different audiences
- ✿ working as a team to tell a cohesive story with consistency and impact.

What People Said about the Course...

Thank you for a very enjoyable two days. With over 25 years as a Trainer/ Developer, I discovered you can teach an old dog new tricks!!

Paul Montrose, Senior General Manager, GKN

I loved the freedom the storytelling allowed! It was an experimental, practical experience in understanding and developing expression in a totally safe but fun way. Learn how to be a king without saying a word!

Emma White, Account Manager

Real fun with real people.

Allan Walton, Operations Support Manager

I already feel a great deal more confident and comfortable with myself. The penny has dropped! The facilitators did not apply pressure to perform. This was very beneficial for my own development and I feel that this will manifest itself in the way I structure my client relationships. Enjoyable, worthwhile, beneficial, valuable.

Dan Taylor, Facilities Manager

Allows you to recognise your strengths/weaknesses and understand others' – prepares you to be flexible and ready to adapt. Keeps it real and above all else, allows you to put some fun and enjoyment into your worklife.

Mark Scranney, Key Account Manager, British Sugar

I learned from the masks as a tool to increase self-confidence. I liked the knowing that although apprehensive, no-one could see my fear behind the mask. Going forward, I'll be remembering and practising the way that felt. I would most definitely recommend this course to others: very beneficial and worth the time for business benefits and professional development.

Liz Tinsley, Facilities Manager

It was all done in a thorough but fun way. The teaching methods were great! I would encourage others to try the course and remain open-minded in their approach.

Lee Johnson, Site Supervisor

It was a really enjoyable course, designed to bring you out of our shell and stretch your comfort zone, increasing your confidence.

Mark Hall, National Business Manager

Great course – good fun, excellent tutors! Experience it for yourself – it's mind-changing!

Gordon Yule, General Site Manager, Maersk Oil

I feel much more clarity around the power of body language, and more comfortable about not getting things wrong. The girls running the course were great! A clever interactive course which really teaches confidence.

Danny Bateson, Operations Manager

I think the duration, pace and content was great. A great learning experience and a must to all companies.

Tracey Williams, ESS Operational Co-ordinator

Innovative, fun, inspirational, organised, supportive, balanced.

Grant Stevenson, Operations Director, ESS UK