



**PLAY4 REAL**

## **Making the Most of Meetings**

**a tailor-made programme for**

**The Housing Corporation  
([www.housingcorp.gov.uk](http://www.housingcorp.gov.uk))**

in association with Ci: Creative intelligence  
([www.creativeintelligence.uk.com](http://www.creativeintelligence.uk.com))

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **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 transform meetings that are typically boring, overlong and unproductive into fully engaging, productive – and even enjoyable – experiences
-  to understand and respond effectively to the ‘games people play’ in meetings - patterns of behaviour that can obstruct the meeting flow and pull proceedings off course
-  to calm or circumvent conflict in the context of a meeting
-  to determine and manage meetings agendas and timings more efficiently
-  to ensure that everyone present feels involved and encouraged to contribute throughout
-  to develop more effective chairing skills
-  to encourage everyone present to take proactive responsibility for the effectiveness of a meeting, whether internal or external, from start to finish.

## The Context

As is the case in many large organisations, the working day for many Housing Corporation employees revolves around regular meetings - particularly internal ones. But staff and management weren't necessarily finding these the most efficient or enjoyable ways of interacting with their colleagues and stakeholders...

The Learning and Development team wanted to provide an opportunity to improve skill in Speaking at Meetings. Play4Real was originally asked to work in association with Ci: Creative intelligence to design and deliver a 1-day course that covered both personal impact and group efficiency in a meetings context.

Although the response from participants to this initial course was very positive, further consultation with the client highlighted the need for a longer, more in-depth workshop to explore Getting the Best out of Meetings (GBM) as a separate entity from Presentation and Personal Impact (PPI).

As an associate of Ci, Play4Real now regularly delivers GBM as a 1-day course to groups of Housing Corporation delegates from a mix of roles, including administrators, investment officers and regulation analysts.

## The Client Brief

Based on responses to the original Speaking at Meetings course, the GBM course needed to complement and build on the basics of effective personal impact explored during the PPI course. Specific techniques to be explored included ways of:

- ✎ starting a meeting off well
- ✎ creating an atmosphere in which everyone has space to speak and be listened to
- ✎ overcoming anxieties about being 'put on the spot'
- ✎ contributing with confidence and clarity
- ✎ sustaining energy levels and keeping everyone engaged throughout
- ✎ taking responsibility for keeping the meeting on track – whether or not you're in the chair
- ✎ summarising and concluding in a way that clarifies and acknowledges everyone's input.

👉 simulating the politics of ‘nightmare meetings’ in which individuals adopt roles and tactics that may not reflect their behaviour elsewhere, in order to recognise and respond to them appropriately.

## The Play4Real Response

### Course Content

The course is designed to enable participants to rehearse simple ways of Getting the Best out of Meetings, punctuated with moments of group brainstorming or private reflection on new ideas and learnings.

Specific exercises are varied to suit the needs of the particular group, but the day is based upon a sequence of practical exercises that explore:

- 👉 what you bring as an individual to a meeting
- 👉 sharing responsibility for the flow of the meeting (whether chairing it or not)
- 👉 influencing the meeting non-verbally: effective and ineffective body language
- 👉 setting up a meeting room: spatial relationships and use of tables vs. sitting in a circle
- 👉 establishing and maintaining appropriate energy levels around the table
- 👉 ways of building confidence in order to have your say or respond well to a challenge
- 👉 useful phrases for avoiding or calming conflict
- 👉 the games people play – unhelpful behaviour from others and what to do about it
- 👉 alternative formats for meetings
- 👉 ‘nightmare scenarios’: putting all the techniques together in reality-based simulations, followed by feedback and coaching for the group and individuals.

### Keeping the Content Relevant

Prior to the course each time, participants are invited to respond to a brief questionnaire that describes their own ‘nightmare meeting’. This ensures that the course content remains tailor-made to the individuals attending on each occasion (there may be more need for a particular group to focus on internal than external meetings, for example).

Opportunity is then created at the end of the day for volunteers to re-enact their 'nightmares' – or rehearse dreaded forthcoming meetings – as a focal point for the whole group as they put together the day's various techniques in roleplay.

Simulations of 'generic' meetings (discussing issues of general, rather than specific concern to the Corporation) are also included as an alternative, should these prove more appropriate for the group.

## **What People Have Said about the Course...**

The whole day was very positive. I found the roleplay very interesting and now I need lots of practice. The trainer was very good. I have had the best course ever – this is what I needed.

**Marion Lowden, Receptionist/Telephonist**

Lin made it seem so easy. I felt I drew on her confidence – she made me feel I could believe in myself.

**Doreen Lake, Corporate Support Manager**

I'll be able to attend more meetings and enjoy them rather than finding them a chore. An enjoyable day which helped me to feel more confident. Thank you.

**Jenny Jackman, Corporate Support Assistant**

I felt it a very useful and insightful training day.

**Nicole Singh, Financial Analyst**

It's opened my eyes to different types of behaviours within a meeting and looking at ways to manage these behaviours.

**Kim Stanislas, Team Administrator**

Very well put together and facilitated. Good mix of theory and having a go. Lots to think about and take forward. Very enjoyable - thanks.

**Peter Brown, Regulation Support Advisor**

