



## **Developing Communication and Ensuring Impact with Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity**

*Karen Glossop*

Approaching communication in a sophisticated way is key for organisations if they are to make the most of their internal and external relationships. While identifying the right messages to put across is important, there are further elements that determine how these messages are received. Communication involves emotion, physical presence, voice, and intelligent managing of space and timing. Recruiting individuals with personal charisma isn't enough. The organisation needs to promote and reinforce ways of making the right impact.

Creating a culture of thoughtful preparation and flexibility-in-the-moment is a shared endeavour. These are learnable skills that require regular review and updating. If available across teams and departments, and supported by senior managers, a great training programme sows the seeds of a common language in which to work through challenges. For the future, it also enables individuals to form reciprocal relationships, where they understand each other's strengths, and support each other's continual development with feedback.

### ***The Issue***

Great Ormond Street Hospital Children's Charity (GOSHCC) is a well-known brand within the charity sector. It is dedicated to raising funds to enable the world-famous hospital to continue to provide the very best care for its young patients and their families. GOSHCC is staffed by enthusiastic and committed people who deal with a wide-range of stakeholders.

Often they need to act as ambassadors for GOSHCC. This can involve inspiring high net-worth individuals to give; managing the expectations of generous bereaved families; or persuading senior executives of FTSE 100 organisations to partner GOSHCC in fundraising campaigns. This work requires a combination of innovation, thoroughness and sensitivity.

GOSHCC recognised that they also needed their people to be excellent communicators who could make a positive personal impact, no matter how exalted the stakeholders. The need to project *gravitas* emerged as a key ingredient for influencing others.

### ***Our Approach***

Having established a need for better influencing and personal impact, we designed two highly interactive training programmes under the title *Gravitas and Impact*. Entry Level, aimed at new starters and less experienced staff; and Level 2, aimed at more experienced, senior staff.



Entry Level was a half-day workshop that plunged the participants into some interactive exercises and games, where they discovered how to be more flexible with body-language and physical presence so that they could better manage when to assert themselves – or to defer to others – to get the outcomes they wanted from their presentations, meetings, or informal conversations.

Level 2 was a programme of three interconnected half-day workshops, which built their learning incrementally.

Session 1 explored how effective planning of the message can secure the best outcome. Without the confidence that comes with preparation, it's hard to maintain credibility in informal as well as formal situations. We considered what “below the radar” factors could affect the impact – like environment, or timing; how to structure the message persuasively; and how to tailor the approach to the other person.

Session 2 explored the interrelated elements of power dynamics, physical presence, and dealing with issues that get in the way of relaxed, effective communication – like nerves and tension. This was a highly experiential session where the participants played with changing their body language to adjust their levels of *gravitas*, deference and rapport.

Session 3 was an opportunity to consolidate all the learning and test it out with scenarios that were relevant for the participants. Each participant brought a current situation where they needed to make the right impact on another person. These ranged from conducting a hospital visit with various parties, to pinning down a senior executive to commit to implementing an agreed plan. The participants took turns playing different roles within the scenarios and observing the communication from the outside. This was an opportunity to gather tips on how to handle difficult individuals and to share best practice. The content of the scenarios was treated as confidential so participants could explore the challenges safely and openly.

Altogether, approximately 40 GOSHCC staff across different departments took part in the training across 15 half-day sessions. It was decided that for Level 2, numbers for sessions 2 and 3 should be capped to 6 participants per group, so there was plenty opportunity for each participant to receive extensive feedback and recommendations.

As both programmes mixed participants from different departments across the organisation, there was the additional benefit of mutual learning about each other's expertise and diverse challenges.

All the training was based on an assessment of people's current strengths and areas for improvement. They also had guidance on how to continue their development between sessions and beyond the end of the programme.

## ***The Outcome***

The training programme was well received by the participants.

*Level 2:*



“Really refreshing. It was great to have it spread over 3 sessions so that you could try out the techniques, and pause and reflect. Very practical, so it made you think!”

“Good and very interesting, and I feel that I have learned things I can apply in my job.”

“I really enjoyed the course and would recommend it. Applies to all teams.”

*Entry Level:*

“Good, interesting content and lots of practical advice”.

“Very positive. I’ve learned a lot more about myself than I expected! I also found it helpful that the group was (accidentally) all female. There were interesting discussion points around female behaviour.”

“I found the course really valuable. It really resonated with me and I look forward to applying the techniques both at work and outside of work.”

**The view from the organisation:**

“We were fortunate to receive a recommendation to work with Karen Glossop on quite a significant programme for us that was to be rolled out and made available to all employees that were not at a senior management level. The insight for the programme was derived through consultation with the senior management team when exploring what the requirements were for learning and development for individuals for the year ahead. Through the research that was carried out there was certainly a common theme which was “impact and gravitas”. Karen was there to pull it all together to create an incredibly bespoke, unique programme which she worked tirelessly at fine tuning to ensure that it was not only fit for purpose but that it would reach out to all of the delegates. To ensure that she got this right pre-work was sent to each of them which she then examined down to the granular detail which helped not only in the delivery but to reach out to each and every one of the individuals on the programme. Karen’s approach is not only distinctive it is unforgettable, and whilst there were some comfort zones that went on a journey throughout the programme we are so grateful that we had the opportunity of working with her. “

**Jilly Hurley, HR Manager, GOSHCC**