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Training Using Actors Marcus Hamer

Letting delegates practice their new found people skills on each other in a role-play situation is akin to letting your parents teach you to drive. Fun at first but ultimately prone to tears, tantrums and possibly a new clutch.

It doesn't work and it constantly amazes me how many companies don't call in the professionals. They spend a fortune training their staff and expect them to instantly put all their embryonic skills into practice on real customers. They then wonder why they lose market share and their customers move to the competition.

"Company X were fantastic the other day. I talked to a really nice person, they really listened to me. I had a chat with this woman at a call centre the other day and she really made me feel confident about the product/company service. They're really good on the phone, such a personal service".

A common reaction to a customer service interaction?

"My boss really listens to me, I really feel he understands my situation. He puts himself in my shoes and coaches me in a way where I'm able to perform at my best."

A typical response from an employee about their boss?

"Even though it's a large corporation, the person I dealt with gave outstanding personal customer service. There was real rapport over the phone and I'd certainly recommend them to my family and friends."

A dream referral from a satisfied customer and one that all large companies would love to have.

What are they doing about it? Many large companies' bang on' about being customer driven, especially in their advertising, and then they refer you to a call centre facility that has been outsourced and we all know where that leads.

Conventional training, 'talk and chalk' may tick the training boxes but does it work?

Well, in some cases there is valuable learning that can be delivered by Power Point and flip chart however it can only ever take you so far. What about if you combined it with some muscle memory? This is happening in forward

thinking companies. Companies that value training and realize that their people are their biggest asset.

I'm sure all companies would love to get that sort of feedback from their customers. How many companies receive that sort of 1:1 feedback from real customers? Yes, they may send out forms to be filled and boxes to be ticked but does this get to the heart of their customer service?

How often does a manager receive feedback from an employee telling him/her how the appraisal *felt*? Imagine the boss receiving developmental feedback that he can use going forward.....perhaps pointing his finger at the staff doesn't yield the best results. What would be the affect of asking open questions or adopting a coaching style for a 1:1 ?

In conventional training, this is fairly basic stuff. Let's take the delegates through a GROW model and discuss Johari's window.

What about trying this stuff out?

Are we expecting delegates to take notes through their course and then suddenly turn into a fabulous people person equipped with all those wonderful people skills we've been talking about?

Ok, here's a manual on how to drive a car. Give it a read and then off you go! Possible? Well, maybe with an automatic although I wouldn't take my chances. Same goes for riding a bike, playing golf, riding a horse etc

Imagine having a real live customer/manager you could **'try out'** various forms of interaction on?

Well, now you can!

*"That's exactly what they would say!" ... "He sounded just like the real guy" ...
"I don't know how they do it"*

These are just some of the delegate quotes that we've saved from our courses over the years. The ability to inhabit someone else's persona with accuracy and lifelikeness is a skill that professional actors relish. Trained at drama school on voice, posture, character and speech they are the perfect 'crash test dummies' for a plethora of training. **Silvercube actors come equipped with feedback and facilitation skills honed from work in the corporate sector..**

Freelance trainers and training companies work with Silvercube to give them a competitive edge when pitching/tendering for work and they know that working with Silvercube will give their training a lifelike quality. They can spend **Day One** delivering the theories surrounding human interaction and management. **Day Two** consists of delegates road testing their new found skills on 'real' people. The longer we work with organizations, the better it gets. Actors are like sponges, soaking up the terminology and DNA of a particular company culture. It's the practice and series of actions committed to muscle memory that makes the difference. We learn by repetition and by doing.

The **doing** part is crucial. As is the role of feedback; emotional feedback from the actor delivered either in character or as themselves about how it **felt**.

How do you start the meeting? How do you greet an employee who's constantly late?

"How's the wife and kids?" doesn't segue easily into "Look John, you've turned up late three times this week. If this doesn't improve, we're going to have to let you go".

How do you calm down an aggressive customer on the phone so that she not only stays with you but also recommends you to her friends?

It's the use of muscle memory, the **doing** part, that sticks in the mind and the body. The experiential part of human interaction.

How did you know to ask that question? or What did it **feel** like to use silence at that point ?

Imagine a world where every person in a client/customer facing role had practiced their people skills on a real person in a safe training environment. **Next time you're planning a pitch or writing a programme, imagine the value that would be added by using a Silvercube Actor.**