

BackStage



All the latest from CentreStage Partnership - Spring 2008

Alex Hospital

We were delighted to be asked by our friends at Banana Park to provide roleplay services for a series of development centres for nurses at the Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Brighton recently.

designed building in the heart of Brighton, offering 24-hour emergency care service for children and an improved range of medical and surgical services, meaning far fewer youngsters will have to travel out of the county for treatment.

One feature of the new hospital is that every inpatient bed is matched with its own pull-out carer bed so parents can be close to their children throughout their stay. Meanwhile, there is a range of dedicated family accommodation consisting of en-suite bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms and terraces.

But the best thing about The Alex is that it's designed for young people by young people. Indeed it is thanks to the creative input of many current and former patients that the hospital is bright, friendly, colourful and...well not at all like a hospital.

In fact young patients are often reluctant to leave, and you can see why, particularly when among the features on offer are toys galore, an ice-cream machine and a wandering clown!

However, that is probably to overlook the real reason for the Alex's world-class service. And that's the people who work there.

The development centres delivered by Banana Park offered those nurses recognised as high achievers a one-day development programme designed to give them practice in handling difficult situations and an insight into their own behaviours and motivations.

As well as group coaching sessions and personality profiling, delegates were asked to handle three difficult situations in simulated meetings with CentreStage roleplayers. The characters included an anxious mother, a de-motivated colleague and a rather officious senior consultant.

And while the roleplay element clearly represented a challenge for the delegates—many of them quite young and new to development centres like this—huge benefit came from simply having a go and being stretched beyond their comfort zones.

Banana Park is a creative consultancy that works with CEOs, Directors and Senior Managers to unlock their potential as leaders and awaken the talent of their people to succeed beyond their own - and their customers' - expectations. They help to pinpoint the performance issues affecting individuals, teams or the entire organisation and develop novel ways of addressing them.

Contact Banana Park on 01306 644916 or chris@bananaparkconsulting.com

'The Alex': A centre of excellence, designed for young people by young people



The Hospital – affectionately known as 'The Alex' – was officially opened in 1881 by their Royal Highnesses the Prince and Princess of Wales, but in June 2007 the new hospital opened on the Royal Sussex County Hospital site which has won an international design award and continues offering pioneering paediatric care.

It's an amazing place—a state-of-the-art ten storey, custom-

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Lane 4 — London Underground

We recently provided roleplay services for leading performance development consultancy, Lane4, as part of a development programme for London Underground. The roleplay sessions offered managers at London Underground the chance to practise handling a range of difficult situations unique to their roles.



Lane4 is a leading Global Performance Development Consultancy with a unique heritage based on elite sporting and commercial achievement, combined with an unparalleled understanding of the psychology of human performance. Our consultants are an outstanding team of experts comprising Olympic performers, internationally-renowned performance psycholo-

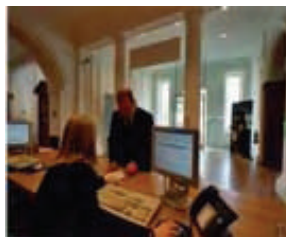
gists and leading-edge organisational development practitioners.

Lane4 derives its name from the lane in which Adrian Moorhouse (the company's co-founder) won his Gold Medal at the Seoul Olympic Games. The fourth lane is the one allocated to the fastest recorded time in the heats and therefore most likely to produce champions. To find out more about Lane4, you can visit www.lane4performance.co.uk.

South Hill Park Seat Appeal

As one of the largest and most enterprising arts facilities in the country for the last thirty years, South Hill Park in Bracknell provides a massive range of artistic opportunities for the surrounding community and further afield through workshops, performances and exhibitions.

The centre is currently trying to raise £50,000 to replace the seating in its main Theatre, and in a bid to help them achieve this goal Cen-



treStage ran sessions for the box office and reception staff with the aim of building the confidence and assertiveness needed when asking customers for donations. Using discussion and roleplay we explored how to handle objections and ensure consistent responses.

For more information about the appeal go to www.southhillpark.org.uk.

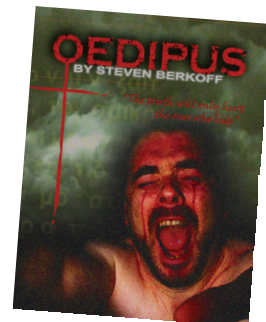
Berkoff World Premiere

CentreStage director Adrian McDougall is spending February and March touring the UK with the world premiere of Oedipus by Steven Berkoff. Despite being published in 2000 the play has never been performed so it's quite a coup for Blackeyed Theatre Company.

As well as being in the show, he is also the producer. Should be an active few months then!

Oedipus opens at the Wilde Theatre, Bracknell, on 13th February. For more information, see

www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk.



The hot seat

We've been working with Kinnarps UK, providing roleplay services as part of the ongoing development of their sales team.

Kinnarps is Europe's 3rd largest office furniture manufacturer. Founded over 60 years ago, its Swedish origins have helped develop a culture where ergonomics, quality and care for the environment are a natural part of everyday life. Kinnarps prides itself on being far more than just an office furniture company. And while listening to goals, challenging constraints and presenting inspired space-planning ideas are central to its work, that's just part of the story.

Crucially Kinnarps' focus is on people, creating environments that inspire, motivate and care for their well-being. To do this effectively requires a lot of skill, particularly in terms of face-to-face contact with customers. Say, for instance, a potential customer is interested in an ergonomically-advanced chair and they schedule

a meeting to discuss cost. While all they may want to know is what the chair costs, there may be a whole raft of issues underlying the need for an ergonomically-advanced chair that may unearth potentially far-greater business and solve more of their problems.

In that situation it's all too tempting to list your company's credentials and product lines and wax lyrical about what fantastic value they represent. However by asking the right questions and listening to the answers a sales person can paint a clearer picture of a customer's needs and provide a far more effective — and longer-term — solution.

To that end, Kinnarps instils in its sales team the importance of a coaching approach and on a recent development day used CentreStage roleplayers in simulated sales meetings. Delegates were faced with a buyer — played by a CentreStage actor — interested in making a small order,

Handle it well and they would uncover a catalogue of internal issues and the opportunity to pitch for a large pan-European contract. Handle it not-so-well and they might sell a chair or two! The exercise was fun and a valuable opportunity for participants to practise in a risk-free environment.

www.kinnarps.co.uk



Graham Broughton

In the spotlight

Graham Broughton

Kinnarps UK

What's your role at Kinnarps?

I'm Sales Coach. I'm responsible for improvement - ie the way we develop our business, how we interact with and deliver value to our customers and, of course, the way the sales team performs.

What do you do on a day to day basis?

I meet with sales people on a one-to-one basis all the time, discussing areas that can be improved and developing programmes to help the team improve as a whole. In addition my brief includes personal and career development. My counterpart is our Sales Director, whose focus is more quantitative – so if you like she is interested in how many meetings someone schedules and the value of business potential discovered or developed while I'm interested in the behaviours they exhibit in those meetings and their effectiveness.

Would it be fair to say you're a shoulder to cry on?

Actually, no. There are three people supporting the sales team. Me, the Sales Director and the third is a mentor, who is there as a personal support. As a coach, I'm there to draw out development needs and focus on how I can help them bring in more business.

So how do you deal with those who are less proactive? It must be tempting to adopt a 'tell' approach.

No, I try never to be prescriptive. If someone purports to have no requirement to improve, I can always take the conversation to and account level. I have been in 'sales' long enough to have a menu of questions which will always reach a 'don't know'.....and of course we should know!

What's the most challenging part of your role?

The number of people I'm coaching. I'd like to spend more time with each individual.

And how do you deal with that?

I set priorities and work on those with the greatest need. Having said that, there's an old adage that getting an over-performer to improve by a further 5% adds a lot more to the bottom line than helping an under-performer improve by 5%.

How do you reconcile that?

That's central. I focus on identifying 'the gaps' in competencies and prioritize accordingly. I'm also involved with the recruitment process and we are very clear as to where the levels should be when people join the team.

How did you get to become a sales coach?

I'm a career sales person. I was lucky enough to be trained by some of the best sales organisations in the world, among them Rank Xerox and Kodak. Arguably the toughest standards were at Memorex-Telex who competed in the IBM market place – so everything we did had to be better, smarter, more professional than Big Blue. That became a crusade – almost obsessive and fantastic fun. I was actually at Kinnarps when the role of Sales Coach was first suggested as part of a restructure. The new MD at the time wanted Kinnarps to be inclusive and contacted the sales team and asked, if they could have a Sales Coach who would it be? All bar one put my name.

What makes you a good sales coach?

Good training and a track record of 'having done it', a passion for being the best and a range of ideas as to how to achieve that. It's also about how you are with people. I've always believed you should treat people with respect, and that as long as they are working towards 'being the best' themselves, then we can have fun along the way.

You do acting in your spare time. Does it help you in your job?

Yes, immensely. On an individual level, it gives me the confidence to speak to groups of people. People know I enjoy acting, and I find it gives me an automatic perceived credential as a communicator.

Why is it people have that preconception?

Rightly or wrongly, people think to get on a stage and perform in front of lots of people and remember lots of lines is mind-bogglingly frightening. I can confirm that they are right!

You would expect most sales people to be extroverts, wouldn't you?

Many do get their energy from the external world – the people around them and they do exhibit 'bottle' every time they risk rejection when pitching for new business - so by many commonly understood definitions they are 'extrovert'. In reality though, many salespeople do a great deal of internalising. Most prefer one to one dialogues or small groups rather than speaking to larger audiences.

And what does make a good sales person?

Those who investigate thoroughly, apply a structured questioning process to ensure that a comprehensive picture is always received, they know how to ask about a customer's problems and listen to and are interested in the answers. They then need a combination of creativity and organisation to manage the development of a solution to fit and that often includes leadership of a pitch team, briefing, delegation and presentation skills.

You approached CentreStage recently to support your team's development. What did roleplay add to it?

When the sales people realised they would be applying their questioning skills with a stranger, the ante was raised immediately. Here was someone who was essentially a customer they were meeting for the first time. The seriousness of the exercise was underpinned by that. It was as close to reality as you can get in a training environment. And as a result delegates thought the exercise was useful, realistic and an extremely effective forum to practise in.

Visit Kinnarps online at www.kinnarps.co.uk

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Ever get the feeling the time and money you invest in your people isn't quite hitting the mark?

We believe that a person's development should be many things, but *hit and miss* isn't one of them.

CentreStage is a leading learning and development consultancy based in Ascot, Berkshire. We design and deliver innovative drama-based development solutions that identify and respond to the learning needs and realise the potential of your organisation's most valuable asset: its people. We challenge preconceptions, change moods and inject that all-important sense of fun. We do it using roleplay, forum theatre and other interactive performance techniques.

**“What we have to learn to do,
we learn by doing”**

Aristotle

Symbian

Recently, we got a call from our friends at specialist development consultancy, HRworkbench, who provide development solutions for leading software licensing company, Symbian.

Symbian develops and licenses Symbian OS — the market-leading open operating system for advanced, data-enabled mobile phones known as smartphones — to the world's leading handset manufacturers.

To give you an idea of the scale of its business, by 30 September 2007, 165 million Symbian smartphones had been sold worldwide to over 250 major network operators, over 20 million of those within the previous three months alone.

Symbian places people at the centre of its business and the management development centres designed by HRWorkbench seek to help participants not only enhance the way they communicate and people manage but also learn about themselves and how they are perceived by others.

One of the ways HR Workbench encourages this sort of self-assessment is by recording delegates doing live roleplay sessions. They are then able to watch the session back and draw their own conclusion as to what helped and what hindered the interaction.

By using live roleplay as part of the programme, Symbian and HRworkbench also give delegates the chance to put their communication skills to the test. The scenarios include managing change, peer group coaching and managing conflict. One involves two actors at loggerheads over an internal matter, requiring the dele-

gate to mediate. By handling the dispute sensitively, they will hopefully help both parties to acknowledge each other's point-of-view and accept the need to reach a compromise.

The use of professional roleplayers from CentreStage adds value on many levels. First of all, it adds realism and believability to a format that may otherwise seem false and awkward. It also brings a level of consistency which allows a delegate's progress and development needs to be measured against their colleagues'. And then there's the understanding of the key competencies being assessed and tested. Professional roleplayers challenge without over-challenging, and use 'hook lines' to put key competencies to the test.

CentreStage will continue working with HRworkbench on the programme throughout the year.

HRworkbench

HRworkbench is unique in blending years of HR experience and practical market knowledge with online technology. The company uses an in-depth understanding of a customer's environment to provide automated measurement and development solutions that compliment and extend existing good practice. Its platforms allow companies to concentrate on the work of performance improvement and eliminate administration hassles and end-user barriers. Find out more at www.hrworkbench.com.

www.symbian.com

National School of Government

How do you influence someone three grades above you? It's a challenge that faces so many these days, but one that remains extremely difficult to overcome.

We were delighted to work with the National School of Government recently, supplying roleplayers for a project for senior managers at the Department of Work and Pensions. The course, entitled 'Consulting with Integrity', covered a range of topics such as change management (focusing on people aspects), process improvement, facilitation, organisation culture, mind mapping and coaching skills. One part of the programme focused on personalities and behaviours, with a particular focus on handling resistance, influencing and managing upwards, and that's where we came in.

Delegates were asked to assume a role in a roleplay session. As part of the scenario they had to challenge their manager (played by the actor) about an aspect of their work they feel uncomfortable about. Easier said than done of course, particularly when the manager is defensive and quick to pull rank! But during the sessions, it became clear that certain techniques worked better than others. Those who had most success in challenging their manager tended to build a rapport, remain calm, state the consequences, stick to their guns and be assertive throughout. Although working one to one with the actor, delegates could stop the action at any time and consult with the rest of their team as to the best way forward when things got a bit tricky.