

# BackStage



All the latest from CentreStage Partnership - Winter 2010

## A First for 'Sit Sell'

### CentreStage supports the UK's first ever Situational Selling® workshop

It was a first for CentreStage in November, working with development consultancy, Vadis, on the UK's first Situational Selling® workshop.

Vadis has been working with University of London Computer Centre for the last four years, helping them to become more commercially minded and turning a deficit into a significant financial contribution to the University of London.

In the first of a series of workshops designed to give staff more confidence in developing sales leads, Situational Selling® was used as the model alongside dramatic techniques such as forum theatre, in order to demonstrate how the theory looks in reality.

Situational Programmes are run under UK and Ireland license through Leadership Development - Situational Solutions. At its most basic, Situational Selling® applies the general concept of effective influence to the specific process of selling. Developed by Dr. Paul Hersey, Situational Selling® training focuses on three basic skills; diagnosing - being able to understand the situation you are trying to influence; adapting - being able to adapt your behaviour to meet the contingencies of the situation; and communicating - being able to communicate in a way that people can easily understand and accept.

Developing these key competencies - cognitive, behavioural and process - are at the foundation of achieving the programme's objectives; to increase understanding of the selling and buying process, develop the ability to assess a prospect's readiness to buy and select the matching selling style, develop a tactical plan for applying the ideas presented in the programme to a unique sales environment, and spur personal development through self-assessment and feedback.

Commenting on the success of the workshop, senior manager at ULCC, Steve Knibbs, said, "Since the programme, those who attended have reviewed their prospects, gone out and had sales meetings and converted them into sales."

Andy Maggs of Vadis added, "Further skills labs are planned every few months in 2010, using actors to help develop the commercial skills further at the heart of the organisation. This will include drama work on how to introduce and conduct self in prospect meetings, negotiation and closing, account management and customer servicing."



Andy Maggs (left) with senior manager at ULCC and sponsor of the initiative, Steve Knibbs

University of London Computer Centre  
ULCC has been providing IT services for over 40 years. Originally we served the University of London, then grew into a regional centre and later a national high performance computing centre. Services include: co-location and managed server hosting, podcasting, web development, desktop support, e-learning, digital preservation, video streaming and managed network services.  
[www.ulcc.ac.uk](http://www.ulcc.ac.uk)

## News

### Open Customer Care Course

Limited places are available on CentreStage's one-day customer care course, running on Tuesday 9 February 2010 at South Hill Park in Bracknell, Berkshire. We've run this highly successful programme for some of the most prestigious London hotels as well as the Royal College of Music, and this is an opportunity to book your place on this highly interactive, thought-provoking workshop. More details on page 2.

### The Real Business Club

CentreStage presented at the New Business Club in Wokingham in December. The New Business Club is specifically designed for those who are thinking of starting their own business, have just started in business or wish to take their business to the next level, and is unique in offering members the opportunity to book a 15 minute one-to-one consultation with a specialist associate within a friendly, informal and supportive environment.

The Real Business Club meets from 10am to 3pm on the second Monday of each month at TradeMark Windows, Fishponds Road, Wokingham in Berkshire. The event in December was themed '*Presentation and Selling Skills with a Twist*' and included useful micro seminars and one to one advice sessions. The first events of 2010 will be on 11 January and 8 February. For more information visit [www.therealbusinessclub.co.uk](http://www.therealbusinessclub.co.uk)

### Self-Management at Oracle

CentreStage is embarking on an ongoing development programme with Consultant, Andy Maggs, for Oracle. 'Self Management Matters' is a series of workshops across Europe exploring the sources of stress in the workplace (and outside it) and the coping mechanisms we have to handle it through a fictional Oracle employee played by a CentreStage actor, who delegates can interact with and advise throughout the workshop.

# North London Gas Alliance 'Board Treading'

We've been working with the lovely people at the Gas Alliance in North London. The Gas Alliance consists of four strategic partnerships working for National Grid to ensure the continued safety and reliability of the gas supply network across the country. In the North London area, Skanska is responsible for replacing all the existing cast iron gas mains over the next ten years. Quite a task!

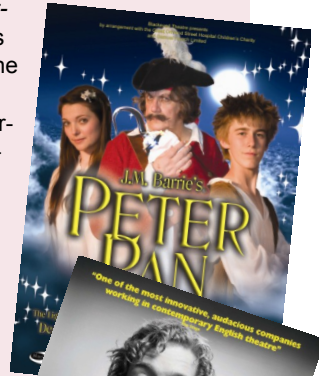
Having previously assisted with a series of culture development and customer care workshops for the Alliance, this recent programme focused on enhancing the organisation's reputation for excellence in both customer care and safety. "Think safe, act safe, be safe" was the message, with delegates spending quality time learning about the safety aspects of manual handling and deep excavation.

In order to ensure CentreStage's contribution fitted with the objectives of the programme, we were commissioned to write a script in which two characters talk directly to the audience about themselves and their experiences. The first, a customer, talks about the emotional effects of being on the wrong end of poor customer care. The second, a gas

engineer, talks about challenges facing him at work and at home. By listening to both sides of the same story, delegates see how messages that are well-intentioned are not always perceived in the same way. And by hearing their own frustrations acknowledged in the monologues, there is much more willingness to buy into the messages.

Jayne Burder, Customer Service Manager for the North London Gas Alliance, said "When organising a major new campaign to get the "Customer Message" across to 1000 employees, it was the obvious choice once again to use the amazing skills of CentreStage. Using a real-life customer experience, CentreStage actors Luke and Angela portrayed the affects of our work not only from the customer's point of view but also the employee's. The message was powerful and very well received. Humour, roleplay and forum theatre are great tools in getting an important message across, and always succeed in achieving greater interaction with the delegates. The feedback was great. Our thanks once again to CentreStage and here's to a massive rise in our customer satisfaction scores!"

CentreStage director Julian Hirst is making something of a habit of playing the comedy villain. And no we're not talking about roleplay now. Following his performance last year as the miserly Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*, Julian spent this festive season doing what he does best once again - in other words being silly, scaring small children and committing general tom-foolery! This year he rejoined CentreStage's sister company, Blackeyed Theatre to play the dastardly Captain Hook in *Peter Pan* at theatres in Andover, Didcot and Henley-on-Thames. Meanwhile, Blackeyed Theatre's next production is a national tour of *Alfie* (yes, as in the Michael Caine movie), directed by our very own Adrian McDougall. Opening in Bracknell on 20 January, it travels far and wide until May. More details and a full tour schedule can be found at [www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk](http://www.blackeyedtheatre.co.uk)



## Customer Care - Open Workshop

We have limited places available on our hugely successful customer care workshop, running in Bracknell on Tuesday 9 February.

CentreStage has a proven track record in delivering truly effective customer care development, using drama-based techniques to explore in depth what great customer care really looks like and how behaviours can make all the difference. Our one-day interactive customer care workshop combines live acted scenes performed by professional actors, plenary discussions, interactive exercises, theory input and forum theatre, making it extremely practical, memorable and fun.

### Course content

**Customer Care:** What do customers want, what are the causes of bad service. How do you delight your customers? how do you create the right image?

**Communication Skills:** Communication theory, questioning skills, active listening, the power of body language and dealing with 'difficult' customer situations.

**Internal Customer Care:** What is an internal customer and why are they important?

**Managing Stress:** Where does stress come from, what are the effects of stress and how do you deal with it?



### Objectives

At the end of one day you will be able to describe what customer care is and why it is essential to your business. You will be able to demonstrate a high level of listening and questioning skills and an ability to solve problems, deal with complaints, and handle aggression. All this in a calm, positive and courteous manner.

### Facilitator

The course is facilitated by Julian Hirst, a director of CentreStage with over twenty years experience in learning and development as a trainer in the areas of customer service, diversity and management development.

Cost: £300 + vat per person (includes lunch and refreshments throughout the day)

**Date:** Tuesday 9 February 2010

**Times:** 9.30am - 5pm

**Venue:** South Hill Park, Bracknell, Berkshire

To book or find out more Contact us on 01344 876800 or email [gerri@centrestage-roleplay.com](mailto:gerri@centrestage-roleplay.com).



Lynn Lilley

# In the Spotlight

Lynn Lilley is a tutor at Ashridge Business School. Ashridge Business School is ranked number one in the UK for tailored executive education in the 2009 Financial Times rankings for the third year running, and it's been a place of executive learning and development for almost 50 years, having been founded in 1959 by visionary leaders from organisations including Shell, Guinness and Unilever. Ashridge has always been a renowned seat of learning. It originated as a monastic order called the 'College of Bonhommes' in 1283 and returned to education in the twentieth century. The current building dates from the early 19th century and was designed by the architect James Wyatt. [www.ashridge.org.uk](http://www.ashridge.org.uk)

## What do you do?

I have two roles. My title is 'Director- Tailored Business'. In that role I lead a team of business developers who respond to requests for tailored development, but I'm also a senior faculty member, which involves building relationships with clients and designing and delivering development programmes for them.

## How have you come to work at Ashridge?

From industry originally. I worked in manufacturing at Cadbury's, then in pharmaceuticals and then retail. My roles included production management, recruitment, development and HR. Before that I studied Classics at University.

## That's an interesting progression. Why Classics?

I could do it at school, so I continued! The advice I got from careers advisors was that I'd be an archivist or librarian or a lawyer: none of those appealed!! I certainly wasn't trained for industry, but I got the chance to retrain in organisational psychology in London, moved into a senior lecturer role in higher education and then worked in a management college..

## How has that variety of roles helped you?

It's given me a broad understanding of different sectors and an appreciation of the huge challenges - and opportunities - facing managers.

## And what are the biggest challenges at the moment?

Demonstrating value for money, doing more with less. There's also huge focus on minimising risk. In our world, customers are looking for shorter, sharper interventions with a harder edge and a business-focused design. It feels like there's less time for reflection and that the pace has 'hotted up'.

## Is that a recent thing?

It's probably been most noticeable since early 2008. Clients are more demanding in terms of selection of partners for development. They're looking for more time, effort and evidence of good thinking from us, before they buy; and we're happy to offer all of these.

## Why do you think there is this change?

The economic situation. People are feeling a need to demonstrate value. They're being scrutinised, and they in turn scrutinise us. And in their shoes I'd do the same. But that plays to our strength. We know how to weave together business, learning and application for consistently high quality development; that's why

we're so successful in tailored executive education

## So what makes Ashridge special?

We see ourselves as unique in the business school world. We talk about 'good theory applied well'. So on the one hand we do great, relevant research, for example 'what has the greatest impact on transfer of learning back to the workplace?'. But equally we're all practitioners, we've all sat on the other side of fence, so we know what it's like to be a practising manager and we understand what it's like to have to demonstrate usefulness and relevance as far as training and development goes. I'd say we are very 'application-focused', - we're great at ensuring managers can apply approaches, concepts and practices they try out on programmes back in the workplace.

## You mentioned the research around transfer of learning and impact of programmes. What were the findings?

It showed the importance of infrastructure within an organisation, as well as shared responsibility. It pointed to the importance of involving the client as a partner when developing learning solutions, encouraging them to drive the objectives and the measures of success - business outcomes and learning outputs. We have developed a number of ways in which we can follow up participants after development and examine with them and their colleagues the usefulness and value of the learning.

## Within learning and development, what trends are you seeing at the moment?

Clients are looking for creative and innovative ways of approaching development. They want high quality, rigorous solutions that deal with their particular business issues but don't have the budgets for extensive pre-design research or elongated diagnosis. They're looking for shorter, high impact modules and are keen to do more virtually. So there's a greater demand for blended solutions supported by - in Ashridge's case - state of the art virtual learning resources.

## What's does the future hold for face-to-face work, do you think?

I think it has an important place in development but it's changing. Our research says that although face-to-face work helps in building a group dynamic and group cohesion even that is being questioned. It's one of many approaches these days, and more than ever it's certainly not the only one.

## What makes you passionate about your job?

For me it's about exploring how we stay resilient after setbacks. What does it mean to lead teams through turbulence and how do we stay in good shape? What's the difference between those leaders and teams that do and those that

don't?

## So how does one remain resilient?

There's something in the way we explain failure to others, how far we account for problems as a catastrophe or as an opportunity to learn. We all have different capacities for being pessimistic or optimistic and that makes a huge difference to teams. Resilience is also about being self aware, managing ourselves and our emotions, especially under pressure and /or in change and building recovery time around times of peak performance.

## What does drama bring to the table?

It's the closest we can get to reality in a professional way. I worry when we set people up to roleplay with each other because it's just not as effective. A good professional roleplayer will have prepared well, they will know the background and the language, but equally they will be detached enough to run the roleplays respectfully and professionally. I find the feedback CentreStage roleplayers give particularly useful and intelligent. It challenges participants to consider how they do things. CentreStage roleplayers have helped me design scenarios and roleplays, both in terms of content and approaches, which goes back to what I said earlier about shared responsibility. They don't just turn up to be handed a brief...though I must say on occasions when I have made last minute design changes they are more than capable of improvising. I guess it's all been part of their training!!

## Some people hate roleplay. What's your view on that?

Well it's not reality, of course, but it's often as close as we can get when we aren't actually in the workplace. Participants sometimes say "I wouldn't do that in real life", but that's sometimes a way of keeping feedback at arm's length. For me roleplay practice gives participants tools to take back to the workplace. And then there's forum theatre, which is very involving and really powerful, so there's lots of things that drama can bring.

## How do you see the next few years?

I don't think it will be easy for any provider. We'll continue to develop innovative programmes and processes for clients that demonstrate great value. I think it will 'sort the men from the boys'. In fact we're already seeing that. If people are going to spend money they're going to be very demanding, which will push a lot of the standard solution providers out of the market. Thankfully our strength is in tailoring so we'll continue to make sure we listen to as well as challenge our clients and so deliver high quality, innovative development with its focus on application back at the ranch.

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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

# Getting more from your 360° Surveys – much more!

Chris Martin, a partner at Banana Park Consulting, believes that 360° can be used more creatively and powerfully as a performance measurement tool than is perhaps realised. Here are Chris's top three tips for making this happen...

## As a measure for “Culture Change”

Organisational culture is defined by a series of often unspoken (and sometimes unconscious) rules which everyone just accepts. If you are seeking to change that set of rules or to take the positive ones to a conscious level, 360° can be a great tool for driving and measuring the changes you are seeking. By pin pointing the behaviours used in your 360 to match the culture you are seeking to create, the feedback reports can be used to highlight the discrepancy between where you are and where you want to be. At an individual level this is a great way of opening an individual's eyes to the impact that the current organisational culture is having on their effectiveness and the contribution they can make to the desired cultural shift. We then collate the feedback given to a specific peer group, and reveal where you need to be prioritising your behavioural change agenda.

## As a measure of talent

Research into the relative accuracy of 360° feedback from different respondent groups indicates that the most accurate responses usually come from direct reports or junior colleagues. In contrast the least accurate come from the line manager or boss. Despite this most talent management prac-

esses are more influenced by senior managers or the person's boss than any other group. 360° surveys, with careful planning and positioning, can therefore provide very valuable data to enrich talent identification and development. This is because respondents give their ratings based on frequent contact through observing their colleagues in a real rather than artificial assessment environment. This makes the information provided during 360° feedback amongst the most accurate and well observed within the workplace, and so a great source of data to feed into Talent Management.

## As a measure of success

Whether you're a psychologist, OD specialist or change manager a common problem we all face is how to tangibly measure success or outcomes. 360° feedback when used with a group can be remarkably effective at achieving this particularly if it is used as a before and after measure. However, this will only work if the behaviours measured are those which you have identified are intrinsically linked to the change you were looking to deliver. If you are able to achieve this and are confident that the behaviours measured correlate to success then your 360 becomes an effective measure of business and OD success.

So we see 360 as a “forensic” performance measurement tool with the added bonus that it encourages the individual to take ownership for their own development – quickly and with immediate effect on the results they deliver in the workplace.



Chris Martin

Chris is an occupational psychologist and performance development advisor experienced in initiating and facilitating performance improvement in private and public sector organisations. Primarily supports organisations to differentiate themselves through leading edge assessment, appraisal and performance management solutions, the appointment and retention of talented staff and by creating a culture of learning and continuous improvement.

Banana Park works with CEOs, Directors and Senior Managers to unlock their potential as leaders and bring out the best from their people to succeed beyond their own - and their customers' - expectations.

Banana Park unravel performance issues and work with customers to develop novel solutions for them.

Its services fall into three main areas relating to performance – consulting, assessment and development. In practice many of its assignments are a blend of services drawn from all three areas – the whole banana!

[www.bananaparkconsulting.com](http://www.bananaparkconsulting.com)