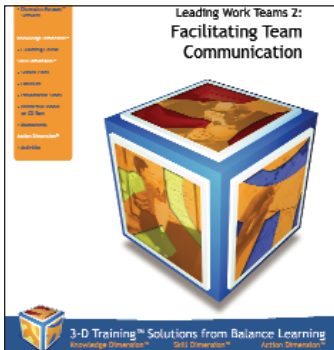# RATINGS

Series: Facilitating Team Communication

Online/live/print
Balance Learning, 2004
978.745.2553
www.balancelearning.com
US$5500 for one-year license for 16 participants, including print materials; video; Power-Point slides; and hosting of online learning, surveys, assessments, student communications, and reporting

Includes

● trainer guide and course overview
● learning outcomes
● activities and handouts
● assessments
● CD containing PowerPoint, video, and documentation in electronic form

Recommendation

Any organization that wants to provide its leaders with robust learning on facilitating team communication effectively should consider investing in this product. The learning model is sound, and the materials can accommodate a wide range of learning needs.

Reviewed by
Donna Walsh

Blended Learning Done Well

At a time when most organizations are expected to do more with less, managers need to build and sustain teams that are flexible, creative, and high performance. Teams of this caliber can be developed with products such as Facilitating Team Communication from Balance Learning. The offering is more than just content: The company's core product is a learning process that integrates online media with traditional instructional approaches.

A three-part model

Facilitating Team Communication is part of the Leading Work Teams series. It employs a variety of media according to each type's strengths in a three-part training strategy (deemed the "3-D Training Solution"):

● Learn (the knowledge dimension). The how and why of a skill or an idea are taught through online assessments and instruction.
● Practice (the skills dimension). Learners try out the new skills in a low-risk environment— a one-day intensive workshop.
● Do (the action dimension). Learners use the skills back on the job through activities that Balance Learning sends each participant.

The course is designed to help supervisors, managers, and team leaders improve team communication skills, relationships, and problem-solving and decision-making abilities. It's also designed to increase the effectiveness of team meetings and help people learn to handle difficult situations and resolve conflict effectively.

The product roadmap takes a little time to understand. In the standard Balance Learning model, learner surveys, pre-assessment, and instruction are delivered online as prerequisites for the second step, a one-day workshop. The workshop can be devoted almost entirely to practice because participants have studied the concepts prior to the classroom event. The third step supports on-the-job applications through various means.

We liked...

● the blended learning approach
● the learn-practice-do strategy, which reinforces content to increase retention
● the extensive learning resources.

The Balance model takes advantage of research indicating that reinforcement of content at specified intervals can dramatically improve retention of knowledge and, presumably, provide a better foundation for the skills. The offerings can be confusing, however, because of their flexibility. (That may be the curse of operating outside the usual genre categories.) A Balance course can be delivered entirely via print or, in modified form, entirely as an online event. Do you want more possibilities? Custom content is easily inserted into every course according to customer need and budget.

The scaffolding

The Facilitating Team Communication Trainer Pack is an inclusive and practical resource. It provides varied, useful learning resources including handouts, step-by-step instructions, and additional information for the trainer such as tips for running sessions and workshop scripts.

The video scenarios provided on the CD or online are especially helpful. These brief, professionally done vignettes provide terrific examples of meetings that are well run and not well run, as well as situations in which conflict is handled effectively and ineffectively. The scenarios are incorporated in the workshop materials and provide many worthwhile opportunities for discussion and learning—as well as laughter. The sense of humor shown in the clips isn't superfluous; it helps tie the scenarios to real work experience.

The online component of the program has three sections. The first is a pre-assessment that enables the participant to customize his or her learning path and determine personal goals. The pre-assessment scores can be compared to the results from the posttest (section three) to measure the skills developed from completing the course. Only the participant and the trainer can see the scores. The pre-assessments also give trainers a baseline of participants' subject knowledge before beginning the course to help ensure the appropriate training focus.

The second section is an online course that's available whenever a student wants to access it and takes approximately two to three hours to complete. It consists of two modules: Facilitating Team Meetings and Facilitating Team Relationships. More than 30 drill-down pages are offered to provide thorough, in-depth information. Three video-based case studies offer participants opportunities to analyze and evaluate their learning as they proceed. The online component is well designed and easy to navigate, and provides value to the offering.

The cost of Facilitating Team Communication may seem daunting for the solo practitioner or small company. But the product is high-quality and delivers a bundle of resources and services that would be hard to equal for the price if they were purchased or created separately.

Donna Walsh *is a performance consultant, trainer, and coach focused on teambuilding, leadership, organization development, and performance improvement. She is the principal and founder of RedShoes Solutions, a company committed to helping individuals and teams maximize potential, overcome obstacles, and achieve goals; donna@redshoes.biz.*

Could be better...
The flexibility of the product is both an advantage and a disadvantage. At times, it can be confusing.

Facilitating Team Communication
product rating

Ease of navigation	👍👍👍👍
Holds viewer interest	👍👍👍
Acting/Presenting	👍👍👍
Production quality	👍👍👍
Interactivity	👍👍👍👍
Instructional value	👍👍👍.5
Value of content	👍👍👍.5
Value for the money	👍👍👍
Overall rating	👍👍👍

KEY	poor	satisfactory	good	excellent
	👎	👍👍	👍👍👍	👍👍👍👍