



Running a Guided Role Play

As a rule, most delegates hate doing role plays. There are many reasons for this, including they don't feel realistic and the pressures of being under the spotlight. The guided role-play offers all the benefits of traditional triad-based role-play, with virtually none of the problems. In fact delegates can get far more learning from taking the guided approach as they are encouraged to come out of their comfort zone, but are fully supported as they do. Guided role plays can be run as a relay which also helps to take away the fear and engage people in learning for longer.

Preparation

Split the group into three. One group will be the manager/coach/interviewer etc, one group will be the person being coached/interviewed etc and the other group are the observers.

If the group is small, just split them into two and don't have any dedicated observers.

Give the groups the relevant brief and allow them to discuss how they will play it: the issues they will raise, the approach they will take and so on. Encourage the group playing the manager/coach/ interviewer to decide how they will open the meeting and the sorts of questions they will use.

Allow 10 min or so for preparation.

The Rules

Explain that:

- Everyone will take a turn at representing the group and playing the role assigned to them.
- They are essentially acting out what the group think they should do.
- We will periodically stop the action to discuss what's happening.
- Team-mates can interrupt and offer advice at any point if they feel things aren't going well.
- The people in the hotseat can ask for 'timeout' and ask their team members for advice about how to respond.
- If things go wrong, we can stop, rewind, and try again.

The Facilitators Role

Your role in this guided role-play, is to:

- notice and highlight examples of good practice
- give encouragement
- pause the action when it seems to be going off-track
- use questions to help the group to identify why things are going off-track
- use questions to help the group to decide what might work better
- ensure that everybody plays an active role, whether they are in the hotseat or not



- keep it realistic (often role-plays descended into farce if they aren't properly managed)
- make notes about what people said and did
- facilitate the details debrief at the end

Starting the Role-Play

Ask each group to nominate someone to take the first 'leg'.

- Remind them that they are simply representing the group – if things go wrong this is not a reflection on themselves
- Allow the role-play to run for a few minutes.
- Keep an eye out for a good place to pause. Typically this will be at a natural part of the conversation, an example of good practice that can be discussed, where things are starting to go wrong, or when either of the players starts to look uncomfortable.

Swapping Players

- Allow the players in the hotseat to request a swap whenever they like (as long as they have at least tried for a short while)
- Ask for a volunteer to take over the hot seat
- Alternatively if you notice one person is offering lots of good suggestions about what to do next, suggest that they take the hotseat for the next section
- Summarise where we are up to before the new players continue the action.
- Take care not to swap too frequently (things will become too disjointed) or too infrequently (people may start to feel pressured or not have the opportunity to get directly involved)

Ending the role-play

- Generally, the role-play will end at a natural point. If you have managed it well, all delegates will have had the opportunity to practice some of the skills.
- If this hasn't been the case, you may wish to go back to a particular point in the role-play and ask how else it may have been handled. This gives you an opportunity to involve anyone else who has so far missed out, and explore other learning opportunities.
- Facilitate the debrief in the normal way, making full use of the observers if you have them, or reverting back to your notes you don't.
- Remember to always ask the players what they think worked well, and what could have been done differently (and why) before you offer your own opinions.
- Summarise by drawing out key learning points relating to your topic.