

The Benefits of Drama Techniques

At first glance actors and business people do not share much in common. Actors and directors have a reputation for being “arty” and “luvvie” whilst the corporate image of “men in suits with briefcases” is hard to live down. There is no denying that these stereotypes exist within the acting and business communities but it is harder to convince people that the actor and the business person can learn a lot from each other.

Most working actors treat themselves and their career as a business. They actively seek new contracts, produce literature and stationary to use as marketing tools, network and market themselves and their services and maintain their level of training to enable them to adapt to the ever changing needs of their role.

However, many businesses cannot see the value in using acting techniques to improve and enhance the skills they already have. An actor's job is to convey a variety of messages to an audience. It is to communicate with them and to do this they are often called upon to create a character, using the material provided by the writer and/or by developing aspects of their own personality and emotional history. This journey gives an actor a good insight into what makes people tick. Games and exercises have been developed over the years by various practitioners to enable actors to easily access these skills and these same tools can be used to development interpersonal skills in any business environment.

Improvisation/Role-Play

The acting profession has developed effective techniques which help actors to understand what is happening in any situation and to react in a positive, appropriate way. For a business person, having the opportunity to practice this skill in the safety of a training environment will increase one's level of success in dealing with whatever our business, or indeed, life, throws at us. Individuals can usually participate at whichever level they feel most comfortable with, so some may prefer to direct the situation to a win-win conclusion whilst others like to roll up their sleeves and get into the action. This form of training, particularly forum theatre, where real actors work alongside the “audience”, is particularly successful when used in training for mediation, performance management and all kinds of customer service issues.

Breathing/Vocal Techniques

For the executive who needs to deliver a keynote speech at the company's AGM, exercises in breath control help to relax and promote calmness. Unnecessary tension is wasted energy and all vocal exercises are designed to help eliminate tension and “free” the voice from the limitations we give it. Tension and limitations come from a lack of trust in oneself – being over anxious to communicate a message, present the correct image or persuade an “audience”. Vocal coaching and training that deals with body language and posture will help the executive deliver a speech that is clear, audible and ensures the correct message is out there. The same can be applied to anyone who carries out a majority of their business on the telephone, where the only tool available is the voice.

Sales, Customer Service, Negotiation & Mediation, Team Building, Creative Meetings are just a few of the core business areas that can benefit using these acting techniques. The general principles learnt can be applied to any situation because using acting techniques in staff training allows delegates to see things from different perspectives and discover ways to deal with the issues that affect the business on a daily basis. It also encourages a learning environment which is fun, leading to better retention of learning outcomes.

Understanding how people interact is at the core of drama. Surely, ultimately, it is also at the heart of every business?

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