



Key communication skills for Auditors and Assurance professionals

Who should attend?

- Senior Auditors
- Audit Managers and those about to be appointed to that role
- Lead Auditors
- Compliance officers
- Health and Safety professionals
- Quality auditors
- Other Assurance professionals who need to enhance their skills

Course Level

- This is an intermediate level course and delegates should ideally have at least 12 months experience in Internal Audit (or other assurance roles) to attend.
- Delegates should have a good educational standard (Bachelor's degree or above) and/or a professional qualification
- No advance preparation is required
- Delivery method – Group-live (with exercises and case studies to provide practical application of the tools and techniques)
- A pre-course questionnaire will be sent out 2-3 weeks prior to the course date to obtain some information about the delegate's role and to provide an opportunity to indicate specific learning requirements

After completing this course you will be able to

- Deal with the communication challenges resulting from the enhanced assurance roles
- Negotiate with and influence management more effectively
- Enhance your influence with both senior and middle management
- Coach team members effectively to enhance overall performance
- Improve time management within the audit process
- Become a much better listener
- Improve your presentation skills and confidence in dealing with senior management and stakeholders

CPE credits

- Participants can will earn 30 CPE credits (24 in the Auditing field of study and 6 in the Management Advisory Services field of study)

Business Risk Management Ltd is registered with National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) as a sponsor of continuing professional education on the National Registry of CPE Sponsors.



Why you should attend

As internal auditors, you face difficult communications challenges. The aim is to provide assurance to the board and to senior management; and to generate improvements or changes if they are necessary.

- You have to be very clear if things in the organisation are not working - and provide sufficient support evidence.
- You have to reach a shared understanding with specialists and general managers of what needs to change - and why it matters.
- You have to find ways to convince experienced and powerful people to do things differently.

These responsibilities and challenges require a new set of skills, competencies and abilities.

Strong communication and presentation skills are essential in this highly challenging environment, whether this is facilitating workshops or negotiating with management or communicating your ideas in the form of reports.

This exciting new course features a series of case studies and practical exercises covering verbal, listening, written and other communication skills.

Day 1 The new communication challenges

The changing Assurance role

- How to ensure the roles are seen as value-adding
- New guidance and its implications
- The IA mission statement and the need for clear understanding
- Dealing with unacceptable risk – escalation with senior management
- Gathering information from multiple engagements
- Managing the expectations of senior management
- Relationship with the Board and the audit Committee
- Reviewing IT Governance
- The role within fraud risk management
- Evaluating ethics programmes

Exercise 1 – Dealing with the challenges of the wider assurance role

The importance of effective communication

- Research results from the IIA
- Why communication is inherently difficult
- Why internal auditors need to spend time planning their approach
- The need for regular and consistent communication
- Why communication is successful when the intended recipient takes the desired action.
- How to ensure success
- The need for many and varied communication channels
- The key aspects
 - Encoding – giving the ideas and facts as a message
 - Decoding - evaluating the message
 - Perception - Why the message received may not be the one intended
 - Filtering – picking out the key issues
 - Feedback – to achieve mutual understanding

Exercise 2 Chinese whispers

The benefits of good communication

- Any improvement in communication will improve the overall effectiveness of internal audit
- Stakeholders will better understand the role and responsibilities of internal audit.
- Audit managers and lead auditors will be able to manage engagements better
- Productivity and effectiveness should improve
- Auditors will reduce errors and problems in communications and therefore increase credibility
- The profile and value of the function will be enhanced

Exercise 3 - The bamboo pole

Characteristics of effective communication

- Why all communications should be :-
- Accurate providing facts and evidence
- Objective - fair, impartial, and unbiased
- Clear - using simple language; avoiding jargon and technical terms
- Concise - avoiding unnecessary information or too much detail
- Constructive - useful, positive, and well meaning
- Complete - including all significant and relevant information
- Timely
- Organised and structured
- Logically sequenced

Exercise 4 The communication dilemma

Day 2 Enhancing the Assurance skills

Interpersonal skills

- New IIA guidance paper
- Diplomacy
- Open -mindedness
- Persuasiveness
- Negotiation ability
- Self-motivation and self confidence
- Decision making ability
- Flexibility and ability to co-operate
- Time management
- Flexibility and ability to co-operate
- Self-control
- Practicality
- Results focus

Exercise 5 The jigsaw challenge

Influencing

- Influencing styles
 - Directive
 - Persuasive reasoning
 - Collaborative
 - Visionary
- Responses to influencing
 - The customer agrees with your views and commits to it
 - The customer agrees but only because they value the relationship
 - The customer agrees verbally but has no real buy-in
 - The customer opposes your views
- Dealing with the responses

Exercise 6 Influencing exercise

Coaching and mentoring

- The role of coaching and mentoring to develop internal auditors
- What is coaching?
- Development based on conversations between the coach and learner over a period of time
- Group coaching
- Difference between coaching and training
 - Coaching is through structured tasks, reflection and discussion
 - Skills training is By knowledge transfer from instructor to those learning
- The difference between coaching and mentoring

- Coaching is usually a trained professional from the same organization and based on structured tasks
- Mentoring usually a more experienced colleague or an experienced professional from another organization and is based on 'storytelling'
- One to one coaching for internal auditors
 - Helping competent technical internal auditors improve specific skills such as interviewing
 - Supporting an internal auditor who is moving into more senior position
- Team coaching
 - Supporting the internal audit team through a period of change
 - Improving team performance by revitalising existing teams
 - Developing specific team skills e.g. working together on engagements and managing differences between team members

Exercise 7 Coaching and mentoring exercise

Negotiation

- Why negotiation is much more than persuasion
- The need to reach agreement
- Negotiating during each audit phase
 - Planning
 - Fieldwork
 - Reporting
 - Follow up
- Trying to achieve a win-win situation
- The problems with win-lose situations
- Negotiation strategies
 - Dividing the 'pie'
 - Making 'the pie' bigger
- Determining the objectives
 - What are the boundaries?
 - How long do you have?
 - How will you open and close the negotiation?
 - What might the other party ask?
 - Is the other party empowered to make the decision?
 - What information do you need?

Exercise 8 Practical negotiation

Day 3 Other key skills

Listening – the most important audit skill?

- Why listening does not just involve the ears
- The 6 elements of listening (The Hurier model)
 - Hearing
 - Understanding

- Remembering
- Interpreting
- Evaluating
- Responding
- Types of listening
 - Comprehensive (getting as close as possible to the intended meaning)
 - Paying close attention to all the information
 - The words spoken
 - The tone of the voice
 - The body language
 - Critical (forming judgements about what was said)
 - Distinguishing between facts and opinions
 - Evaluating the basis of statements
 - Assessing the logic of arguments
 - Relationship (to help improve the relationship)

Exercise 9 Listening exercise

The need for enhanced IT skills

- What can be done without specialist IT 'audit' resources
- Global Technology Audit Guides (GTAG's)
 - Information Technology Controls
 - Management of IT Auditing
 - Managing and Auditing IT Vulnerabilities
 - Auditing Application Controls
 - Information Technology Outsourcing
 - Identity and Access Management
 - Change and Patch Management Controls
 - Managing and Auditing Privacy Risks
 - Developing the IT Audit Plan
- New paper on automated transaction testing
- The need to determine the boundaries
- Defining the IT audit universe
 - Focus on high risk areas
 - Assess IT vulnerabilities
- Target areas where you are focusing on process rather than technical aspects
- Use of audit frameworks such as Cob IT and ISO 27000
- Risk based audit of general controls (GAIT)
- Reviewing ISO 27000
- **An ISO 27000 audit checklist will be shared**

Exercise 10 – Communication challenges with IT professionals

Time management

- The barriers to effective time management for auditors
- Not receiving information in a timely manner
- Managers not available to meet you
- Trying to cover too much
- Being side tracked by issues identified during the audit

- Unrealistic fieldwork schedule
- Staff lacking experience
- Dealing with the issues – tips and advice

Exercise 11 Time management exercise

The need to fully understanding controls

- Business process analysis techniques
- Process objectives and risk
- The need to understand the business objectives
- Developing a process to reflect these objectives
- Determining process components
- The link between objectives and risk
- The link between risks and controls
- The link between inputs and outputs
- Trigger events

Exercise 12 – Comparing actual versus perceived controls

Day 4 Working with management and stakeholders

The need to engage senior management

- Senior management are extremely busy
- Risks and controls may not be top of their agenda.
- The tone at the top will influence everyone else
- The need to demonstrate the positive benefits of managing risk and having effective controls
- Present the benefits of better risk management in ways which management can identify.
- Hold a meeting with the CEO and influential members of the Board (with a clear but short agenda).
- Go prepared with a succinct presentation and some practical recommendations.
- Use the opportunity to argue for the importance of tone from the top.
- Point out the key risks facing the organization, and show how a well-designed control structure can help
- Don't expect everything to be achieved with just one meeting.
- Be prepared to keep going back with the same messages until they are not only accepted, but also acted on.

Exercise 13 The senior management meeting (role play)

The importance of working with your stakeholders

- The benefits of face to face meetings
- How to ensure stakeholders want to meet with you
- Internal and external stakeholders

- Developing an induction programme for new audit committee members, senior managers and external stakeholders.
- Earmark sessions during audit committee meetings to provide updates and relevant information
- Put together an intranet site that contains useful and relevant information for stakeholders
- Prepare and issue an internal audit newsletter or brochure containing information about the service.
- Prepare short guides relating to the internal audit process, internal audit involvement in projects etc
- Schedule periodic meetings with key stakeholders, even when there is no direct engagement activity in their area
- Knowing what's important to stakeholders.

Exercise 14 Effective stakeholder meetings

How to deal with unfamiliar areas of the business

- Paper with step by step guide will be provided
- The danger of making assumptions – and what can be done
- Speaking to the experts
- Asking about surprises
- Not being overconfident
- Acting with diplomacy
- How to take the pulse of the business
- Asking about the 3 levels of control
- Case study of an audit planning process will be shared

Exercise 15 Tackling unfamiliar assignments

Getting commitment to action

- The psychological dilemma with reports
- Why reports are taken as a criticism of management
- What causes attitudes to change
- Wording and layout ideas
- How to get 95% of your recommendations actioned
- The executive summary – do's and don'ts
- The main issues for the report
- Audit opinions – how to express them
- Following up recommendations
- Presenting results
- Tips and techniques for success

Exercise 16 – Management commitment to action

Day 5 Convincing Management by making effective presentations

- A new paper on engaging senior management will be shared
- 20 questions directors should ask
- The need for effective presentations by senior audit management
- Determining the audience and preparing an appropriate approach
- The need for impact
- Deciding the form of presentation
- Use of visual aids
- How many notes should you use
- Use of humour – is this a good idea?
- Education or decision seeking – the different techniques

Delivering a presentation

- How to combat nerves
- Keeping in control
- How to deal with questions
- Keeping the flow
- The need not to over prepare
- Use of simple language
- How to keep the audience's interest
- Use of props
- Anticipating the questions
- Considering what the audience will expect
- Assessing the results
- Getting feedback

Exercise 17 Delegates will prepare and present a 3 minute presentation on a current business issue

- Evaluation and feedback from the group

Open forum

- An open forum will be held to discuss any topic of interest. A number of topics will be tabled – you can highlight the issues you would like to discuss on the day