GAME CHANGERS GAMING SKILLS AND THE WORKPLACE

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE: VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Literacy Link South Central

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This facilitator guide is part of a series created for the course "Game Changers: Gaming Skills and the Workplace." Built in a modular fashion to allow for maximum flexibility, this course provides training on real-world skills that can be developed and practiced in a game-based environment. Using a combination of facilitated lessons, participatory activities, research, and games, this course will help teach a new generation of job seekers the 21st Century soft skills so critical to Canadian employers. Modules in this course include:

Why Gaming is Good
Verbal Communication
Non-verbal Communication
Observation Skills
Decision Making
Problem Solving
Teamwork
Flexibility and Adaptability
Work Ethic
Conflict Resolution
Resiliency
Who Do You Think You Are?
The Employment Game
Leveling Up

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A note for our Facilitators: The Game Changer curriculum (Facilitator Guides, Learner Playbooks, PowerPoint Presentations and supporting documentation) are available to download from Literacy Link South Central free of charge. We encourage you use these materials, but selling this curriculum or offering this training to clients for a fee is prohibited.

This course was designed for flexibility. It is divided into several modules, and many can be done in the order that suits your personal facilitation style and the timing of each session in your course. Participants also have an opportunity to provide input into the order of modules.

At the start of each module you will find a list of supplies required, along with recommended tasks and activities for facilitators to complete before the session begins. A set of companion playbooks are available for participants and should be used by participants throughout.

Each module also has an estimated time requirement, which may fluctuate depending on your number of participants, how in-depth group discussions become, and how long game-play takes. You may find that the estimated length of time required for a particular module does not align with the time allotted for individual sessions in the course you are facilitating. Please note that every module is separated into a series of lessons, activities, discussions and games, so you can review it in advance, plan for an appropriate time to break, and begin your next session where you left off.

Tip: if you break up modules in this fashion, we recommend you set that expectation with participants in advance, so you do not appear to have run out of time.

Curriculum Legend: Each module includes several key components, meant to keep the workshop moving and provide breaks between lecture-style elements. Please watch for the following symbols to identify each element of the module you are facilitating:

✐ Facilitator notes (a summary of what should happen during a session. Facilitator notes provide an overview, which the facilitator can customize to reflect the format of their workshop/course)

🗣 Lesson / presentation (facilitator-led teaching opportunities)

💬 Discussion (facilitator-led conversations, using provided questions. Facilitators are encouraged to respond to the conversation by adding their own questions whenever appropriate)

📚 Playbook (activities to be completed by participants in their curriculum work book. When a specific "right" answer is expected, an answer key is provided in your facilitator guide.)

🛠 Activity (interactive or independent activities not included in the participant playbook)

🎮 Game (interactive play-based opportunities, often using board games or digital games)

🎬 Video (video presentations to be viewed by the group)

❓ Debrief (a discussion following an activity, game or video. Includes guiding questions and topics, and key points to cover when applicable)

✎ Independent work / homework (handouts or activities provided in the playbook, which are intended to be completed by participants independently. Some are reviewed, while others are for the participants personal information.)

Estimated time to complete this module: 1 hour and 45 minutes, not including a break.

Supplies required for this module:
- Cue cards in two colours
- Tape or sticky tack
- Pens or markers
- The supplies to make a baloney sandwich. Recommended supplies would include a loaf of bread, a package of baloney, condiments of your choosing (mustard, mayonnaise, etc.), a plate and butter knife, scissors for opening packages, etc.
- A SmartBoard, or laptop connected to a projector and screen, with internet access
- The PowerPoint Presentation "Verbal Communication"
- Copies of the handout "Breaking through buzzwords" for each attendee
- The digital game "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes" in the format of your choice. Please contact Literacy Link South Central if you need to borrow a copy of this game for your course.

Pre-session preparation:
- Consider any take-away activities or "homework" you may have assigned at the end of the last session, so you can review them before starting this module.
- Review the instructions for the game "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes," and if possible, play a round of the game with coworkers, friends or family to become familiar with it.
- Decide how you would like to have the group choose the topic for the next session and prepare any supplies you need.

Introduction:

✏ Begin by welcoming participants and outlining the timing (including any breaks) for the session. Then, share the agenda. Note that the agenda is also in the participant playbooks for reference.

Agenda:
1. What is verbal communication?
2. Activity: What a Bunch of Baloney
3. Registers of Language
4. Simplifying Complicated Language
5. Business as a Second Language
6. Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes
7. Selecting the next session's topic
8. Wrap-up and take-away

Before you begin the first item on the agenda, take up or discuss any activities you may have asked participants to do between the last session and this one. They may be sharing observations from their life outside of class, letting you know what they learned from something you asked them to read, or describing an interaction they had with someone else.

Estimated time to complete: 5 minutes

What is Verbal Communication?

✍ Explain that communication skills are considered among the most important soft skills. They don't refer just to a person's ability to effectively get their point across to others, but also their ability to listen to and effectively interpret what other people are trying to communicate.

The tone of voice we use, our choice of words, how loudly or softly we speak all make up the package of **verbal communication**. They are combined with things like body language and facial expression (non-verbal communication) whenever we communicate with others in-person.

🗨 Ask: What would indicate that someone has good verbal communication skills? Answers could include that people understand what they are saying, that they are direct and stay on topic, that they can speak to a large group of people, etc. Stress that being able to identify what good verbal communication looks like is a great step towards being a good verbal communicator yourself.

🗨 Ask: What forms of communication involve only verbal communication? The answer will likely be when talking on the phone. Reinforce the importance of tone of voice in a telephone conversation, and that since the person on the other end can't see you, it's harder for them to know if you're listening and understanding what they say.

🗨 Ask: If you're in a position where verbal communication is all you have, how can you demonstrate listening or understanding – something we might normally do by nodding our head. Answers may include occasionally saying "mm hmm" or similar, or rephrasing back to the other person what they said.

✍ Mentioned written communication removes both verbal and non-verbal, leaving the focus on the choice of words themselves. This is where writing skills come into play – when sending an email, for example. Good writing skills are more of a "hard skill" than a soft skill, but the thought process it takes to choose the words you write is a soft skill. They're deeply intertwined.

Estimated time to complete: 5 minutes

⚒ What a Bunch of Baloney

✐ Explain that we're going to do a class activity where only verbal communication can be used. Provide one of the colours of cue cards, tape or sticky tack, and pens or markers to the group. Show them the ingredients, and instruct the group work collaboratively to write step-by-step instructions for making a baloney sandwich on the cue cards. Once they've written the cards, have them hang them on a wall in the order the instructions are meant to be followed.

Ask participants to read the instructions to you starting at the beginning. Attempt to follow those instructions (and only those instructions) to actually make the baloney sandwich. If any steps are missed, or more explicit instructions need to be added, stop making the sandwich. Participants will need to figure out what the missing instructions are, and add them to the wall using the second colour of cue cards, before you can continue.

❓ Debrief: Talk about how many additional instructions were added, if any. Connect this with assumptions that people make when communicating with others, and how difficult it can be to accomplish a task if you don't have all the information you need.

💬 Ask: aside from verbal communication, what other soft skills were practiced / used during this activity? Answers may include teamwork, listening skills, thinking, and planning ahead.

Estimated time to complete: 20 minutes

Registers of Language

🎙 Facilitate the lesson "Registers of Language." Facilitator instructions and scripting are both included in this Facilitator Guide, and also in the "notes" section of the PowerPoint presentation.

✎ If you are comfortable with this material, the scripting does not need to be used word-for-word. It is there as a guide and to be referenced to assist you in this lesson as needed.

📚 The participant playbook contains accompanying information and places to record notes for this lesson.

Estimated time to complete: 15 minutes

✎ Have you ever noticed that the way people speak changes based on where they are, or who they are with? If you change the way you speak depending on the situation, you're changing what's called your register of language. There are different registers of language, two of which we're going to look at today: formal, and informal.

Formal Register
- Full sentences
- Professional sounding words
- Polite
- Calm

A formal register may sound very "proper," and often includes full sentences with thoughtfully chosen, professional sounding words. A formal register often sounds polite and calm.

🗣 Ask: When might this be the best register of language to use? Answers could include when speaking to someone important, at a job interview, when talking to a grandparent, etc.

Informal Register
- Casual
- Fewer rules
- Using contractions
- Slang or swearing more accepted
- Can express more emotion

An informal register is more casual, relies less on the rules of grammar and sentence structure, and might include contractions and slang words. Emotions and swearing might be included in a conversation using an informal register as well.

🗣 Ask: When might this be the best register of language to use? Answers could include when you're at home or with friends.

Choosing a Register

✏ Point out that you aren't saying one style of language is right, while the other is wrong – simply that they are different, and that there's a time and place where each is acceptable.

One way to figure out which register of language is the most appropriate is to observe other people in the same environment. We've all heard the phrase "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," and that's really what we're referring to here.

How formal or informal is the communication around you? If the person or people you're with are speaking very casually, it may be okay for you to speak casually too. If they're communicating with a more formal register, it's a good idea for you to communicate that way as well.

If you're somewhere new and aren't sure yet, it's often best to fall on a more formal register until you have the opportunity to observe others and make a decision.

People can surprise us, and that's why watching how they communicate (and how others communicate with them) is such a great learning tool.

We suggested earlier that it might be appropriate to use a formal register with someone important or powerful. But what if that person is using extremely informal language themselves? What if the rich, powerful person you meet swears like Samuel L. Jackson in Snakes on a Plane or Pulp Fiction? Would you choose a more casual style of communication with them?

On the flip side, what if someone you hang out with socially struggles to understand casual language, or isn't comfortable with things like slang or swearing. Would you modify your language so they feel comfortable and understand what you're saying?
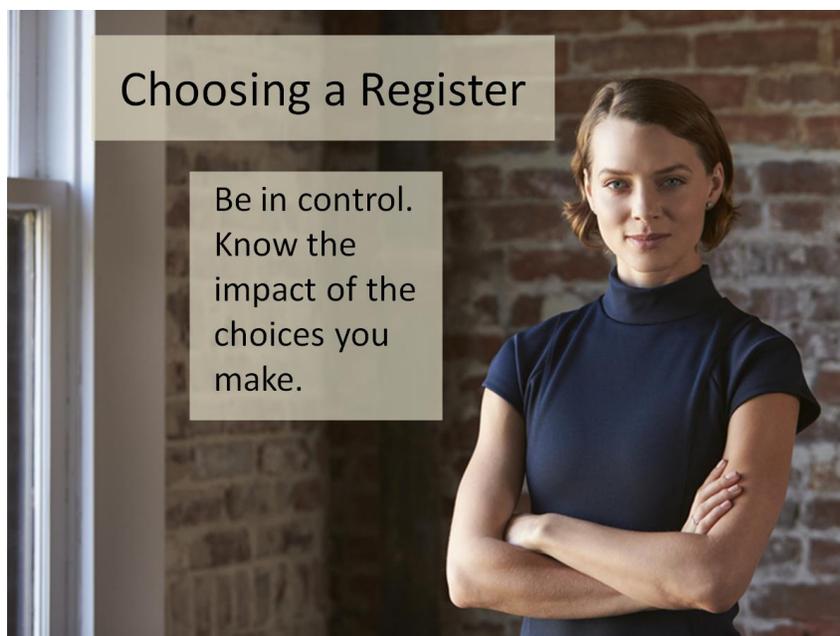
We also have to consider what you're telling people with your register of language. People can make judgements based on how you speak – whether it's formally, or informally. Your words and tone subtly tell a story about who you are, and choosing your tone means you get to be in charge of that story.

🗩 Ask: If you were in a group of people who only speak casually and you communicate with them using just a formal register, what assumptions might they make about you? Answers might include that you're stuck up or think you're too good for them. Mention that this is particularly challenging if the people we're referring to here are family members. If all the communication in your home is at an extremely informal register, and you begin communicating very formally, it can be interpreted as rejecting or trying to distance yourself from your family members.

🗩 Ask: If you were in a more professional setting where a formal register is expected, and you communicate very casually, what assumptions might they make about you? Answers could include that you're not very educated, or that you're not going to fit into that work environment. Mention that this can create a big challenge if you're perfectly capable of doing a job, but project something that tells the person in charge of hiring that you're not. You may never get the chance to show them what a great employee you would be.

✐ This concludes the lesson.

📚 Direct participants to their playbook and ask them to complete the two exercises about registers of language (shown below.) When they are done, take up the answers as a group, and discuss why they answered the way they did.

Would you be more likely to use a formal or informal register in each of the following situations?

- Ordering a coffee
- Meeting your girlfriend or boyfriends' boss
- Giving a stranger directions
- Applying for a car loan
- Attending a job interview
- Talking to a friend about your day
- Asking a parent or grandparent for a favour
- Teaching someone the rules of a game

How would you say each of the following things using an informal register, and a formal register?

- Ask for a refill on a cup of coffee
- Tell someone not to talk
- Apologize for being late
- Introduce yourself
- Ask someone to contact you

Estimated time to complete: 15 minutes

Simplifying Complicated Language

✍ Mention that we've talked about registers of language and how they impact word choice, but it's worth noting that sometimes people take the idea of formal register a bit far. There can be some very complicated ways of saying simple things. It may be a result of the speaker having an academic background that required that type of communication, or that legally required language is being used. It may also be, however, that the speaker wants either themselves or the thing they're talking about to sound more important than it really is.

🗩 Ask: What happens if the words people choose to use are unnecessarily overly complicated? Answers could include that people don't actually understand what they're saying, or that they sound pompous.

✍ Mention that there seems to have been a trend in overcomplicated language related to the workplace. Job titles have changed (Garbage Collectors are now Waste Management Professionals, for example) and those changes in language can leave people confused.

📚 Continuing in the participant playbook, ask the group to take a few minutes to try and "uncomplicate" the phrases on the following page. Take this exercise up with the group, asking for different ways to rephrase the sentence in a clearer and easier-to-understand way. An example of a clarified version appears for your reference.

Make it CLEAR

Complicated: In the event of an unanticipated security alarm, all exterior doors will be remotely secured until such time as the alarm has been fully investigated and its validity is determined.

Clear: If an alarm goes off unexpectedly, the exit doors lock automatically. They unlock when we find out what caused the alarm.

Complicated: Participants of the Province of Ontario's Transportation Review Committee are requested to review the minutes of the inaugural meeting as provided by the Committee Secretary. Please ensure full comprehension of the contents in advance of the next meeting, scheduled for July 21 commencing at 7:00 pm.

Clear: Please read the minutes from the last Transportation Review Committee meeting before we meet again on July 21 at 7:00 pm.

Complicated: Compensation is reflective of an employee's job proficiency, quantifiable client feedback, and their tenure.

Clear: Your pay is based on how quickly you do your job, how well you do on client surveys, and how long you've worked here.

Complicated: If the language used in oral communication is challenging to comprehend, the intended audience may be unable to grasp its primary meaning. Experts recommend not subscribing to the use of complex linguistics so as to avoid losing the discussions significance altogether.

Clear: If you use complicated language, people may not understand what you're trying to say.

Estimated time to complete: 10 minutes

Business as a Second Language

There are some very common workplace sayings that aren't exactly overcomplicated in terms of language, but may still be a challenge to understand. They're usually much wordier ways of saying things that they need to be, but they may also be used to avoid saying something that might be considered too direct.

✍ Share the handout "Breaking through buzzwords" which is available in the supporting documents for this course, and ask participants to review it. Explain that the third column is mostly in fun.

🗩 Ask: What other buzzwords have you heard? Discuss those suggested by the group, and ask what people really mean when they say that word or phrase. Then, ask the group how to simplify the language so it's clearer.

Estimated time to complete: 5 minutes

"Let's not bale the ocean on this one..."

Verbal Communication Under Pressure

💬 Ask: has anyone in the group heard of or played the video game "Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes" before? If they have, ask for their help in explaining the rules of the game to the group. Note that the document "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes" contains instructions and is available for reference if needed.

🎬 Before playing the game, share the 8-minute video "Real Bomb Squad Defuses A Bomb In Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes," available using this link: https://youtu.be/BYunaBkn9Ng

✍ Note that while the players in the video were using a VR (virtual reality) headset, the game is available on tablets, smart phones, gaming systems and desktop computers. Tell the group which version you will be using.

✍ Ask for a volunteer Bomb Defuser, and several Experts. Provide a printed copy of the "Bomb Defusal Manual" to the Experts, and give them time to review it while you provide the device or controller to the Bomb Defuser. Direct anyone not in the role of Expert or Defuser to make notes about what they observe during the game, because you will ask for their feedback on how the game went at the end.

🎮 Begin the game "Keep Talking And Nobody Explodes." As it progresses, make notes about the choice of verbal communication that the player use. When did they communicate well? When did they struggle?

❓ Debrief: Ask group about the experience of playing the game. What was the hardest part? What would make that difficult task easier? Ask those not actively playing the game what they noticed while watching it. Ask the Bomb Defuser whether hearing the timer made it harder to concentrate on what the Experts were telling them to do? Ask the Experts whether it was harder to choose what words to say because of the time pressure as well. What did they take from watching the two actual bomb squad members successfully disarming 3 different bombs?

Remind participants that communicating verbally can be challenging, but when you're under pressure and time is short, you need to pick your words wisely. Let them know that this game is a great way to practice making clear, concise word choices no matter what the situation.

Estimated time to complete: 20 minutes, but note that this activity offers opportunities for flexibility in terms of timing. Game play may naturally run long, or short – depending in your time requirements, you can have the group(s) play the game several times, rotating Experts, viewers, and Bomb Defuser. This will give the group an opportunity to build upon what they learned from earlier games and see if they are more successful in later ones.

Selecting the next session's topic

✎ Thank the group for choosing today's topic, and let them know it's time to pick the focus for the next session. Share the list of remaining topics as shown below.

1. Verbal communication
2. Non-verbal communication
3. Observation skills
4. Decision making
5. Problem solving
6. Teamwork
7. Flexibility and adaptability
8. Work ethic
9. Conflict resolution
10. Resiliency

⚒ Take a poll: which of these topics would the group like to look at next? This poll should be done in the same format as the poll completed in the first session. A full list of possible polling options can be found in the Game Changers Course Facilitator Guide if needed.

✎ When the poll results are in, prepare for the topic chosen by reviewing that module.

Estimated time to complete: 5 minutes

Wrap-up and take-away

✑ Remind the group that one of the topics we discussed in this module was registers of language, and let them know that by the next session, you'd like them to complete a short challenge. Think about one phrase or word that you know would be considered "informal register" and turn it into an equivalent formal language word or phrase. Let them know you'll be asking for their answer at the start of the next session.

✑ Ask for questions or comments about today's session. Thank the group for participating, and remind them of the date and time of the next session. Please make a note of the homework assigned during this session, so you can review it during the session that follows.

Estimated time to complete: 5 minutes

✑ This concludes the module "Verbal Communication".