



**ESTIME**



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS TRAINING

**Guide to  
Stakeholder Interactions**

## INTRODUCTION



### **What makes stakeholder interactions special?**

My name is David Tebbutt and I'd like to help you create successful interactions with stakeholders, no matter how tense the reason for meeting them.

I was taught to teach while working for a major computer company. I'd taken two years out from the hurly burly of management to train others and, as it turned out, to improve my own management skills.

Apart from course development and training skills, I was also trained in interpersonal skills which I put into practice immediately and persistently. Without exaggeration, it transformed my life - both in work and outside. They could transform yours too.

This guide will show you what's possible. It covers:

- Meetings
- Verbal behaviour
- Personality
- Attitudes

If you'd like to take things further, I'd be delighted to run an online or face-to-face session for you.

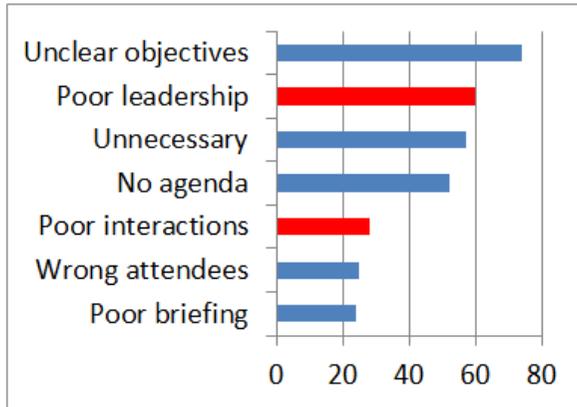
Please contact me at [david@estime.co.uk](mailto:david@estime.co.uk) or visit [estime.co.uk](http://estime.co.uk) for further information about ESTIME's Interpersonal Skills Training.

(Apart from this guide and another on media interactions, we also offer a free [Discover Yourself](#) personality assessment

## EFFECTIVE MEETINGS



As part of my research and writing work for a publication targeting CIOs, I asked the readers to respond to a quiz on problems in meetings. Without any further prompting, this is what over a hundred respondents had to say:



All but two of the issues (coloured red) are covered on conventional 'meeting management' courses. These usually concentrate on getting the mechanics of meetings right, but not the mechanics of behaviour.

Unless people - both leaders and participants - act positively and constructively, then meetings will continue to languish and lose any sense of direction.

Fortunately, anyone with an understanding of the mechanics of behaviour will be able to help steer the meeting to a better outcome.

## YOUR ROLE



Whether you're in charge or participating in someone else's meeting with stakeholders, the only way you can influence the outcome is by carefully selecting your most appropriate words, gestures and attitude at all times.

Whether the stakeholders are internal or external, they are usually stressed (perhaps a data breach has just been discovered).

**Insiders** - Board members, department heads and so on - need to understand the likely short-, medium- and long-term impacts on the company.

**Outsiders** - customers, suppliers, partners - want to know how the breach will affect their businesses.

You need to be sensitive to their individual moods and present the most up to date information while establishing a good rapport.

To the meeting participants, especially those you've never met before, you are the sum of your behaviours. They will respond to your behaviours with behaviours of their own. In stressful situations, they may indulge in inappropriate behaviour. It's your job to spot this and deal with it in a way that causes them to modify their approach to the meeting while retaining their dignity.

To the untrained, this can be an alarming prospect. To someone that understands behaviour and can use their own to influence others, it is a normal and controllable process.

The right attitude, words and gestures are your only tools for achieving this. ESTIME can help you learn how to use them wisely.

## THE EFFECT OF WORDS



The primary clues to people's outlook are in the words they use - their verbal behaviour.

Through many years of work in the business environment, psychologist Peter Honey settled on nine primary categories of verbal behaviour in meetings:

- Propose
- Suggest
- Seek ideas
- Seek clarification or information
- Build
- Support
- Clarify/Explain/Inform
- Difficulty state
- Disagree

By identifying the categories of words being used by speakers in a meeting, you can select an appropriate category to use yourself to either support or reshape their contributions.

In a breach reporting meeting, someone might Propose, "Sack the culprits". This is hardly constructive and the likely responses are: Difficulty State (39%); Support (25%); and Seek Clarification or Information (16%).

You can see what mayhem could result unless you can step in and get the meeting on the right track by selecting the most appropriate response from your own behavioural repertoire. It will be driven by reasonableness and will probably be a combination of Clarifying and Suggesting expressions.

## THE EFFECT OF BEHAVIOURS



Inside every one of us is a collection of 'ego states' built from our life experiences from childhood to the present day.

Whether consciously or not, we deploy one or other of these ego states whenever we interact with someone else.

When people interact, their words and body language can be classified into one of five elements. (Some psychologists further sub-divide them, but five is fine for most business and social contexts.)

The little icons above show the five: Critical Parent; Nurturing Parent; Adult; Free Child; and Adapted Child. You will always be using one or other of these 'ego states' when interacting with others.

Find your own behaviour profile at [estime.co.uk/discover-yourself](https://estime.co.uk/discover-yourself)

Each mode adopted by one person will trigger a responding behaviour from another. Depending on the modes chosen, they can lead conversations forward productively or kill progress completely.

### Example

A simple example might be someone saying, "Why are you always so negative?" perhaps accompanied by a sneer or a pointing finger. This could well trigger a "Don't be ridiculous" response which leads to "Who are you calling ridiculous?" and so on. This is entirely unproductive and one of them needs to break the cycle of negativity.

If the first respondent had replied, "Always?" that would force the first speaker into a different ego state and they might say, "Okay, 'always' was an exaggeration." Then the discussion can move to resolving the underlying issues. Or simply getting on with the job at hand.

## THE EFFECT OF ATTITUDES



At all times our instinctive attitudes to those around us will change, depending on who they are and how they tend to behave. Reasonably balanced people can replace an instinctive attitude with a more healthy one.

A long time ago, psychiatrist Thomas A Harris identified four 'life positions' which he popularised as *I'm OK, You're OK*. Here's a shorthand version. At tick is OK and a cross is NOT OK.

X✓	✓✓
XX	✓X

Each is an outlook based on your feelings of 'Okayness' at any time. If you're going to see the boss for a tricky interview, you might be feeling relatively 'Not OK' while considering the boss to be 'OK'. If you go in with this negative attitude, you set the scene to be walked over, if the boss so chooses.

An 'I'm OK, you're not OK' attitude is similarly unhelpful. In fact it is sometimes called 'the criminal position'. And the 'We're both not OK' is a 'wallowing in defeat' mentality.

The only healthy and productive position for you to hold, not surprisingly, is 'We're both OK.' You can do this by reminding yourself of the value you bring to the organisation, even if some temporary hiccup has brought you to this meeting.

## FINALLY...

To others, we are the behaviours they observe. And the same goes the other way round, we 'read' them through their behaviours.

If we analyse their behaviour and 'edit' our own, we can create constructive interactions out of the most unpromising beginnings.

We hope this guide has engendered some optimism that successful interaction outcomes are largely in your own hands.

If the leader or just one participant in a stakeholder meeting has these interpersonal skills, the meeting will be more effective.

### WHY USE ESTIME?

- The mechanics of meetings are widely understood
- Unfortunately, the mechanics of personal interactions are not
- Learn how to recognise and understand the behaviour of others
- Learn how to modify your behaviour to get others to change theirs

#### Testimonials:

*"Easy to follow, good mix of diagrams and exercises" - IT leader*

*"Simple and intuitive tools to understand and decode people's behaviours" – Graphical Designer*

If you'd like me to run a face-to-face or online workshop for you, please email me.

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