

<i>900 exercises for Vocational Communication</i>	Notes for teachers	E3 / 41
<i>General aim</i>	E: Evaluate a message	
<i>Level of difficulty</i>	3	
<i>Intermediate aim</i>	4: Pass judgement on a simple message	
<i>Operational aim</i>	1: Evaluate, assess, reject and criticise the ideas expressed in a message	
<i>Pre-requirements</i>	None	
<i>Number of exercises</i>	4	
<i>Summing-up exercise</i>	E3 / 41 – 1.4	
<i>Applications (examples)</i>		
<i>Comments</i>		

Chloe, a secretary, has this message waiting for her on the answering machine when she gets to work one morning:

Hello, this is David Owen here. I have a message for Joseph Smith. I'm calling from the States. I can't get back from the conference till Thursday. The plane was overbooked. Needless to say, I'm furious. Anyway, this means I won't be able to give that talk on management techniques on Tuesday. I was wondering if Ted couldn't get someone else to do the presentation. Maybe Valerie or John. I might be able to get a standby flight on Monday or Tuesday, but I really don't know. So obviously it would be better if Paul could ask someone else. Everything is ready. I've done the power point, it's all on my laptop. Ah, yes, of course, I've got my laptop on me here. Well, I did a print-out of it, which is sitting on my desk. They can take a look. It's in the file marked MT – Confidential. Of course, it isn't really confidential at all. I always write that on my files! And of course, I'll email the power point document to them, as soon as I find out who is going to do it for me. If it's Sophie, she should be great. She's already done that sort of thing. But John hasn't. So to confirm, I need someone to do the presentation for me on Monday and I'll be back for sure on Wednesday. Thanks very much. Bye.

Chloe had to listen to this message three times in order to understand it correctly. It is much too long. And as you can see, some of the information is contradictory. Unfortunately, there was no contact number, so she can't phone back.

Look at the message again. Try to decide what information is really necessary and what is totally unnecessary.

Find the incorrect information, that is, the points that are contradictory.

Do you think it is possible to act on the remaining information?

What would you do in Chloe's place?

LOOK AT THE SUGGESTED ANSWERS ON THE NEXT PAGE

There is quite a lot of unnecessary information.

David Owen talks of how angry he was because the plane was overbooked. We don't really need to know that.

He also talks of having his laptop with him. That has no influence on what he is asking, because he can email the information.

And we really don't need to know why he always writes "Confidential" on his files.

On the other hand, we do need to know when he will be back, who he wants to do the presentation and how they will receive the information.

The contradictory points are:

1. which day he is really coming back: is it Wednesday or Thursday?
2. who the message is for: is it for Joseph or Paul?
3. does he want Valerie or Sophie to do the presentation?
4. when is the presentation? Is it on Monday or Tuesday?

So we are left with the following information: we know David is stuck in the States. We know he can't do the presentation himself. We know the presentation is ready, and that the document is on his desk. And we know that the actual presentation can be sent by email.

Unfortunately, this is not enough to act on. Chloe needs more information.

Perhaps she could ask Ted and Phil if they have more information. They might also know whether to ask Valerie or Sophie. And who knows, they might even have a contact number for David Owen.

Jed and Phil are discussing the two delegates they have to vote for. Jed is planning to vote for Tony Marshall, and Phil wants to vote for Howard Cunningham.

***Jed:** So Phil, who are you going to vote for?*

***Phil:** Well, I'm pretty sure I'm going for Howard Cunningham. He's really good at his job, and he knows how to listen to his colleagues. What about you, Jed?*

***Jed:** I'm voting for Tony Marshall. I know he's right for the job. He really shouts down the bosses at all the meetings. And he can get his opponents into a corner, so they don't know how to get round him.*

***Phil:** Yeah, that's all very well, but shouting has never got us anywhere. How about the time Tony got us all a bad reputation for shouting and almost for bad behaviour. Howard would never do that sort of thing. He makes sure he knows his opponents, so he can play them at their own game. And he always speaks last, so people remember him.*

***Jed:** I don't think he's any good at all. You never see him arguing with the bosses. He always seems to be on their side.*

***Phil:** Yes, that's where he's so clever. He makes the bosses think he's on their side, and so he gets their confidence. Then they say things they wouldn't normally say to other delegates. And that's when he begins to act. And the bosses take him seriously. They really listen to him. They never listen to Tony Marshall. They just let him shout, and when he's finished they do what they were going to do anyway.*

***Jed:** Well, I still think Tony's the best. I'm not changing my mind now.*

***Phil:** You do as you like, Jed. My bet is on Howard.*

You meet Jed and Phil in the staff canteen. They ask you what you think and who you will be voting for.

Write down three arguments for and/or against each of the two candidates. Do you think they have equally good ideas? Are there any ideas you do not agree with? Are there any you find particularly interesting. Then say who you would vote for.

Look at the suggested answers on the next page.

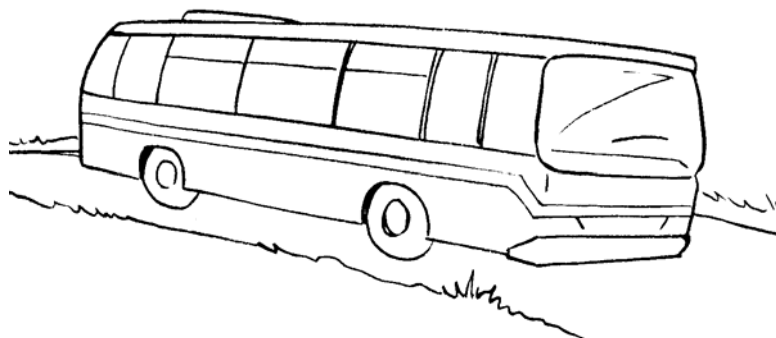
To give a general idea, here are some arguments for and against Tony Marshall and Howard Cunningham.

At first sight, Tony Marshall is good at arguing. He can usually get the last word, and often places his opponents in a difficult position. For this reason alone, he has the confidence of his colleagues. However, he does have a bad reputation, and a lot of people, especially on the management side, think he does nothing but shout. They don't always take much notice of him.

Howard Cunningham seems a very reasonable man who knows how to argue his point. He has the confidence of both his fellow workers and the bosses. It is obvious he likes the job of delegate for all the right reasons: he cares about what happens at the work place and he maintains good relations with the management.

However, he has to be careful, as some employees might think he is too much on the side of the management. He therefore risks losing the confidence of these workers.

Now say who you would vote for...



You are on the bus going to your technical college with two friends, Fred and Vicky. You are talking about school. Your friends ask you for your opinion. Answer them.

Fred: *You look worried, Vicky...*

Vicky: *Oh, I'm just a bit bothered because my little brother Adam wants to leave school. He's 16, isn't getting on at all well in class, and he wants to get a job. But what sort of job can he find if he hasn't got a single diploma to his name?*

Fred: *Oh, I wouldn't worry, diplomas today don't seem to mean much! Just look at my cousin Eva. She's got a post-graduate degree and she's on the dole! Wouldn't you agree?*

You:

Vicky: *Adam says that what he is supposed to be learning at school is of no use whatsoever in real life or at work. What's the point of learning about the battle of Waterloo or what happened in China under Mao?*

Fred: *Ah well! That's general knowledge. It can always come in handy... Don't you think so?*

You:

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Vicky: *That's all very well, but when you see what the pupils learn in computer classes – that is if there are any! – and what they have to know in just about any job. Tell me who can get by without a computer nowadays!*

Fred: *Yes, but you can learn that sort of thing as and when you need it on the job. The skills aren't the same for consulting a stock list or using a word processor. What do you think about it?*

You:

Vicky: *And on a more general note, in the classroom, you don't really learn to work in a team. There's always competition, rivalry, marks, class positions, first is always best, individualism, every man for himself...*

Fred : *Ok, ok, we get it. And you reckon that in real life it's different?*

Vicky: *Well it shouldn't be like that! And it's at school that they should start changing that attitude! I'm right, aren't I? Don't' you agree with me?*

You:

Show your work to the teacher.

You are working in a fast-food restaurant during the summer holidays. Every month, the manager holds a meeting that all the staff are expected to attend. Nobody really appreciates these meetings, as they are very long. He expects decisions to be made, but never does the preparation beforehand. Basically, they are a waste of everyone's time. After one particularly ineffectual meeting, you are talking to two colleagues during the afternoon break. They have both been working there for longer than you. Inevitably, the conversation turns to the morning's meeting. Your colleagues ask you what you think. Answer them, giving your opinion.

Grace: *Oh, I really wish we didn't have to go to those things. They're so boring! And why is there a meeting every month? Why not just two a year?*

Gary: *Well, in theory, it could be quite useful. It's good to see how everyone is doing. And if there's a problem, we can solve it before it gets too serious.*

Grace: *And what do you think of all this? You're fairly new here. It would be good to get some fresh ideas.*

You:

Gary: *If only we had a more efficient manager. Even I'd do better than that! And I haven't got half his qualifications.*

Grace: *Anyway, do you think it's really necessary to have qualifications to be a manager?*

Gary: *Not at all, anyone can set themselves up as a manager. All you have to do is give orders!*

Grace: *Hmm, I'm not so sure: What do you think about that? Can anyone become a manager, or do you need special qualifications?*

You:

Gary: *Well, I can tell you one thing. The manager we have here is useless. He never takes any decisions. He just leaves it up to us. And we don't know everything that happens here. We can only talk about our little section. How should I know where we order stuff, and why deliveries aren't on time? It's nothing to do with me!*

Continued on the next page.

Grace: *Maybe, but at least it involves you in the whole process. In theory, it would be a good idea for all the staff to know what goes on in the different sections. Of course, in practice, that's not exactly the case. Sometimes I feel that the manager himself doesn't know what's going on. What do you reckon? Should we all know what's happening in the whole restaurant?*

You:

Grace: *For me, the worst thing is when he expects us to vote on something when he hasn't given us the right documents. This morning, for instance, we had to vote on the new customer policy. What was it? The different ways of greeting them, how to smile in exactly the right way. That sort of thing. In itself, a load of rubbish! And then, he didn't give us the latest version. So we couldn't take a vote.*

Gary: *Well, I think a new customer policy is a good idea. This is a very competitive business, you know. Basically, the food is always the same. So the only difference is our attitude to the customers. But it was supposed to be voted today, and now we have to start all over again. Probably with a new meeting! What a waste of time! What do you think about that?*

You.

Grace: *Well, all I can say is I'm not going to work here all my life, and now I know the sort of manager I do not want to work for.*

Gary: *Yes, and I know the sort of manager I'm not going to be!*

Grace: *Ah, because you want to be a manager, do you?*

Gary: *Of course! Even if I have to start my own company.*

Grace: *Well, I'll come and work for you, Gary! What about you? What do you think of his idea?*

You:

Show your work to the teacher