

SELF-AWARE COMMUNICATION & PROFESSIONAL PRESENCE

Leading Up · Influence Without Formal Authority

A three-day intensive development program for Equal Opportunities Officers in a regional public-sector organization.

MY ROLE

Needs assessment · stakeholder alignment · program design · facilitation · transfer design · evaluation

ANONYMISED CLIENT CASE · PUBLIC SECTOR · GERMANY

Programme language: **German**

18

PARTICIPANTS

3

TRAINING DAYS

1

REGIONAL COHORT

Eirini Kapouniaridou

Transformational Learning Experiences

Consulting · Coaching · Facilitation

1 · Context & Challenge

From role ambiguity to visible, credible influence

CONTEXT

The participants were Equal Opportunities Officers from across a large region. They brought substantial professional experience, while some were still relatively new to the role. The role requires influence across organisational boundaries without relying on formal line authority.

THE CHALLENGE

Limited formal decision-making authority while needing to influence leaders and organisational priorities.

Recommendations and initiatives were sometimes treated as secondary to operational targets or not taken seriously in leadership settings.

Unclear role expectations occasionally led to their work being used as an extension of operational casework rather than as a strategic equality function.

Participants needed a stronger professional stance, clearer role identity and greater confidence in difficult conversations. Influence required not only good arguments, but presence, timing, stakeholder awareness, self-regulation and the ability to hold boundaries.

CORE DEVELOPMENT QUESTION

How do I lead up when I do not lead formally?

Role clarity · influence · presence · argumentation · boundaries · self-leadership

02 · Learning Architecture

A three-day journey from role clarity to influence and transfer

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
ROLE & SELF-AWARENESS	PRESENCE & COMMUNICATION	INFLUENCE & TRANSFER
<i>Know your role. Own your position.</i>	<i>Make your position visible.</i>	<i>Lead without formal authority.</i>
• Role identity & self-concept • Mandate, value and professional stance • Women, leadership & organizational culture • Status and power dynamics • Self-reflection & personal impact	• Professional presence & representative appearance • Voice, body language & facial expression • Communication strategy & argumentation • Questioning techniques, boundaries & saying no • Embodied regulation in stressful situations	• Leading Up: working effectively with senior stakeholders • Difficult conversations & conflict • Real-case simulations with leadership scenarios • Video/self-analysis & peer feedback • Personal action plans, peer buddies & transfer network

Learning design principle: reflect → practise → receive feedback → repeat → transfer

3 · Methodology & Practice

Psychologically informed, embodied and anchored in real work

METHOD MIX

- Experience exchange and standing reflection
- Short theory inputs linked directly to workplace situations
- Role plays and realistic case simulations
- Video/self-analysis and structured peer feedback
- Voice, body, facial expression and presence exercises
- Embodiment and body-centered regulation under stress
- Reflection, group work and facilitated sense-making

PRACTICE IN ACTION

SCENARIO 1

A BCA presents an idea in a leadership meeting, but operational performance targets dominate the conversation and the proposal receives little attention.

SCENARIO 2

A manager does not recognise the strategic value of the BCA role and assigns tasks that position the officer as an extension of operational casework.

SCENARIO 3

The participant needs to challenge a decision, set a boundary or advocate for an equality objective without damaging the working relationship.

TRANSFER BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

Personal action plans · workplace exercises · peer buddies · reflection prompts · handouts · a recurring BCA peer group for exchange, mutual positioning and collaboration.

04 · Evidence & Impact

What participants took with them

PARTICIPANT-REPORTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Greater confidence and willingness to take a clear position with leaders.
- Stronger pride in the role and a clearer understanding of its strategic value.
- Improved argumentation, professional presence and awareness of personal impact.
- More confidence in boundary-setting, difficult conversations and influence without formal authority.
- Practical tools for self-regulation, voice, body awareness and communication under pressure.

PARTICIPANT VOICES · ORIGINAL HANDWRITTEN FEEDBACK

Fehlkonzeptes anders sehen. Gute Übungen zum "Erdbe" von Voraussetzungen Vokabeln auflagen	Die offene Art Deiner Wissensvermittlung. Tolle Aufgaben / Praxisbeispiele
"Seeing error culture from a different perspective. Good exercises on 'leading' your manager. Building up useful vocabulary."	"Open way of sharing knowledge, great exercises and practical examples."
Alles Liebe und Gute. Kommen bitte zurück und gönne uns ein Seminar mit Dir. Wir warten auf Dein Buch!	Du bist auf einem ganz tollen Weg, um Menschen miteinander gemeinsam etwas zu verändern.
All the best. Please come back and treat us to another seminar with you! We're waiting for your book!	"You are on a wonderful path of bringing people along and creating change together."
Das hat mir gefallen... .. - tolle, authentisch, lebendige Art - sehr konkrete Beispiele / Übungen	- praktische Übungen - Umgang mit Fehlern - unterschiedliche Elemente (Input, Übungen)
"A great, authentic and lively style – very concrete examples and exercises."	"Practical exercises – dealing with mistakes – a variety of elements (input, exercises)."
Alle Inhalte sehr verständlich + bildlich überbracht. Für ein perfektes Klang feuert großes DANKE SCHÖN!!! Vielen Dank!	Das war neu und wichtig für mich..... • meine eigene Stimme finden → Selbstbewusst werden • Mensch sein können • alle Übungen
"All content was conveyed in a very clear and vivid way. You created a great atmosphere. A huge thank you!!!	"Finding my own voice → becoming more self-confident / being able to be myself / all the exercises."
evtl. noch mehr strategische Kommunikation üben - in Team kommen	du als Referentin die Impulse und Tipps
"Perhaps practice strategic communication even more – Taking action."	"You as the facilitator, and the impulses and tips you gave us."

Vertiefung $\Rightarrow$ eigene Strategie entwickeln	Sich immer wieder mit sich selbst zu beschäftigen und wie die Wirkung auf andere ist
"Deepening the learning $\rightarrow$ developing my own strategy."	"Continuously reflecting on oneself and on the impact one has on others."
Die Dozentin, die Inhalte, die Flexibilität in der Durchführung, die homogene Gruppe	Komfortzone verlassen, Kurzweiliger präsentieren, Hintergründe ~~...~~
"The facilitator, the content, the flexibility in delivery, and the well-matched group."	"Leaving my comfort zone, presenting a short input, understanding the background/context ..."

DESIGN SIGNAL FROM THE FEEDBACK

Several participants asked for more time and additional opportunities to practice. This feedback informed the further refinement of the program. The format was later requested again and adapted for other roles and organizational contexts.

COMMISSIONING STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Source: Structured post-program evaluation by the commissioning manager

1. How would you assess the initial scoping and needs clarification process with the Learning & Development Consultant, particularly regarding learning content and objectives? Was the process sufficiently tailored to your needs? Was anything missing?

"The scoping process was highly detailed, practice-oriented and excellently tailored to the individual needs of the participants. Requirements were addressed with great flexibility. Nothing was missing.

Original Quote: "Die konkrete Auftragsklärung war sehr detailliert, praxisnah und hervorragend auf die individuellen Bedarfe abgestimmt. Es wurde flexibel auf Anforderungen reagiert. Es hat nichts gefehlt."

2. What feedback did you receive from participants regarding the learning solutions delivered? How was their practical value assessed?

"Participant feedback was consistently positive. Particularly valuable was the development of realistic case simulations, which provided clear added value and could be integrated directly into day-to-day work. Overall, the programme had a very strong practical focus."

Original Quote: "Die Rückmeldungen der Teilnehmer*innen waren durchweg positiv. Besonders hervorzuheben sind die praxisnahen Fallübungen, die einen klaren Mehrwert boten und direkt in den Arbeitsalltag integriert werden konnten. Der Praxisbezug war insgesamt sehr gut gestaltet."

3. How would you assess the transparency of the process from planning through implementation? Do you see any areas for improvement?

“The planning process was highly transparent. Every step was presented clearly, comprehensively and in a way that was easy to follow. From my perspective, there is no need for improvement.”

Original Quote: „Die Transparenz im Planungsprozess war super. Alle Schritte wurden klar nachvollziehbar und umfassend dargestellt. Es besteht aus meiner Sicht kein Optimierungsbedarf.“

4. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Learning & Development Consulting service – from initial scoping through implementation? Scale: 1 = not satisfied at all · 10 = very satisfied

The commissioning client rated the program 10/10 overall.

5. Is there anything else you would like to add?

“We are extremely grateful for this service and will be very happy to collaborate with Eirini Kapouniaridou again in the future.”

Original Quote: „Wir sind für dieses Angebot außerordentlich dankbar und freuen uns sehr darauf, auch künftig wieder mit Frau Kapouniaridou zusammenzuarbeiten.“