

Examples of the kinds of people who find the “Skills with People” course useful

Here are some typical examples of people who come on the course. They may help you identify needs of your own.

1. **Very successful by his own efforts but not developing others**
Young managing director, better at solving problems than anyone else in his team, but the more he solved the longer was the queue at his door - people were too dependent on him. He needed to stop being a compulsive problem-solver and start being a coach. He had to shift the focus of his attention from solving it *himself* to finding out what was stopping *them* solve it - an entirely different way of listening.
2. **High flyer who wanted to understand her effect on others**
Manager on the fast track - no major difficulties but keen to develop her skills. She wanted to know what it felt like to be managed by her, to negotiate with her, criticise her, disagree with her, to be in meetings run by her. In most of these situations there was scope for her to achieve even better results by being more assertive and showing more empathy.
3. **Technically very sound but lacking persuasive power**
Chief engineer on a large site. Had difficulty winning directors’ support for his ideas - got into arguments. The more he argued the less receptive they became. He had to learn to stop arguing when people resisted, listen patiently, appreciate what was bothering them, reassure them, and not press his case until he had opened their minds - in other words, use more empathy.
4. **Flying high but unintentionally creating a tense atmosphere**
Senior executive, earmarked for the board, task oriented, analytical, always logical - secretly sensitive to atmosphere but uncomfortable when feelings were openly displayed. She knew she wasn’t getting the best out of her team and that some of them were unhappy, but she didn’t know how to tackle it. They needed her to tell them when she felt good or bad about their performance instead of leaving them guessing, and to show more interest in their feelings instead of seeming not to care.
5. **A very positive attitude masquerading as a negative one**
Rather gruff engineer who loved his job. He enjoyed helping people who came to him with requests for help - though he rarely showed it - instead, he would frown as he thought aloud about the difficulties he was going to have to overcome in order to solve the problem. To most people this gave the totally false signal that he was unwilling or unable to help. They needed to hear him say he was keen to help and confident he could deal with the request.
6. **Career going well in spite of not being very assertive**
Manager in R & D, highly regarded, soon to be promoted, wanted to brush up his skills. Didn’t like having to be firm with or critical of people. He was so aware of the risk of undermining them that he sometimes failed to do justice to the issue he wanted to raise. He needed to learn how to be clear and firm on the *issue* without attacking or undermining the *person* - in other words, how to be assertive without being aggressive.

7. **Forceful communicator who created friction**
Marketing director aiming to bring about a change of outlook in the company. She would argue her case and then get impatient if people didn't see reason. The way she argued made them feel attacked. She needed to stop saying "Yes, but" and listen to their concerns - in other words, change her approach from an adversarial one to one of mutual respect and understanding.
8. **Well intentioned manager who was demoralising his team**
Sales manager with reputation for inflexibility and intolerance - having difficulty retaining members of his team. He was modelling himself on the authoritarian style of his first manager as a young man. He needed to change the model and learn to listen with an open mind, criticise constructively and coach staff when they needed help.
9. **Respected specialist who was too quiet in meetings**
Accountant who was good at her job but lacked confidence at meetings - afraid people would be offended if she expressed her feelings and concerns. She needed to learn how to talk frankly without being aggressive - in other words, how to be assertive.
10. **Very logical person who didn't create enough rapport**
IT manager, clever but "a bit of a cold fish". When approached with a request he would say little and ask searching questions. It shocked him to find that he made people wary because he seemed to be contemptuous. He needed to learn how to be more supportive and to show more understanding of people's feelings.
11. **Lots of energy and ideas but little attention for his clients**
Capable accountant with plenty of energy and ideas, talked a great deal but didn't listen. He was losing clients because they had no confidence he appreciated their needs. He needed to learn to slow down, lay his own thoughts aside, and listen.
12. **Enormous enthusiasm but little sensitivity**
Extremely task oriented manager with a reputation for being "on a short fuse". When thwarted she would brush people aside in an apparently arrogant manner. So serious were the complaints about her that her job was in jeopardy. She needed to learn how to let off steam without being aggressive, and how to show she was aware of the feelings and needs of others.
13. **Couldn't communicate with non-technical people**
Electronics engineer on an advanced project, enormously enthusiastic about the project, but would get frustrated and be discouraged at meetings with production and marketing colleagues who had difficulty grasping his ideas. They said he was blinding them with science. He needed to learn how switch his mind from the detail of his project, tune in to their concerns and talk in their terms.