



Desmond Harney

## Tell me “Why?”

### The importance of explaining “Why” when communicating

The ability to explain “Why” could well prove to be your most valuable super-power. A recent Harvard Business Review article<sup>1</sup> claimed that good leadership is about doing precisely this, particularly in a crisis. How very topical! Although it seemed to lean quite heavily on the essence of Simon Sinek’s best-selling 2011 self-help title, ‘Start With Why’<sup>2</sup>.



What’s YOUR super power?<sup>6</sup>

At GPB, we wouldn’t disagree with that principle, but our own advice goes much further. Whether during a crisis, after one, or at any other time, we’re convinced almost all successful, persuasive communication involves explaining “Why”. Whether you’re a leader or not. Reflecting that belief, I’ll now explain why, in the hope you’ll find some of our advice and thinking helpful.

In the seminal Negotiation text ‘Getting to Yes’<sup>3</sup>, Harvard University’s Ury and Fisher observe: *‘to accomplish our work and meet our needs, we often have to rely on dozens, hundreds, perhaps thousands of individuals and organisations over whom we exercise no direct control. We simply cannot rely on giving orders - even when we are dealing with employees’.*

Empowered audiences naturally ask themselves “Why?”, when asked to act or think differently. From a positive perspective, this at least means they’re engaged: proactively searching for answers, explanations, or a rationale.

This presents opportunities to provide answers and disarm potential challenges, which might otherwise undermine your persuasiveness. Communicators sometimes fail to explain “Why” because they think the answers are self-evident (certainly to themselves, ‘obviously!’). That they’re so apparent, no further clarification is necessary. But typically it is needed.

For maximum persuasive impact, we should ensure our messages - including the reason(s) “Why” - are Clear, Concise, Complete and Candid (the Four Cs).



The Village People dance the “Y” in the video for their 1978 hit, ‘YMCA’.<sup>7</sup>

They should also be constructed to be, and to appear to be, credible, logical, and ethical – because you’ll probably want to be believed, understood, and approved of.

Ask yourself: why do you need to

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In this edition:

**Tell me “Why?”**  
By Desmond Harney  
Desmond looks at the importance of explaining ‘Why’ when communicating persuasively.

**Resolving Conflict - at home and at work**  
By Lynda Russell-Whitaker  
Lynda looks at a couple of well-tested communication methods for managing conflict.

**Half-time oranges in a slow start year**  
By Ewan Pearson  
Ewan reviews the slow progress in the trade deal negotiations between the UK and the EU and other key counterparties.

**GPB continues to trade successfully online**  
We have published a handout with some tips on how to optimise the effectiveness of online communication in that space.



## Tell me “Why?” Cont...

communicate? What action or change in thinking do you require? Your answers should help you start selecting and building the best, most relevant possible communication content. Remember that the answer to “Why?” normally starts with “because...”

Most people do things for their own reasons, not for yours. So, to persuade them, it’s important to give good reasons they can align with, and maybe even consider to have been their own.

As Daniel Kahneman, the Nobel laureate noted for his work on the psychology of judgment, decision-making, and behavioural economics, says: “*the remembering self composes stories and keeps them for future reference... we all care intensely for the narrative of our own life*”.<sup>4</sup> We have a chance to help construct and illustrate people’s personal narratives for them.

If you compose clear and complete stories, whilst providing strong reasons “Why”, you make it much easier for your audience to accommodate and remember your request/requirement.



Jimmy Somerville’s unanswered 1984 question<sup>8</sup>

You helpfully reduce the cognitive load demanded by thinking things through and deciding whether or not to agree.

By contrast, for instance, if you rely instead on your leadership position (on your authority, status or power) then, although you might seem to get the actions or answers you want, you’re likely to be gaining only the appearance of agreement and conformity.

Reluctant participation can create resentments – delivering sub-optimal, mixed results and storing up potential trouble for later. While persuasively explaining “Why” can help avoid such difficulties and achieve several other aims, too.



Yankee Stadium’s ground staff also dance the “Y” – just don’t ask “why?”<sup>9</sup>

Doing so can make you appear more ethical and likeable. These are important factors in being persuasive. Taking pains to explain and give good reasons for your own thinking gains you credit. Giving powerful messages as to “Why” makes your communication more memorable – “stickier”.

Answering the “Why” well should involve providing the best evidence you can muster. Your strongest possible argument is likely to be formed by a combination of several different types of evidence, since this will appeal to the widest interests of the audience. If you know them well, however, you might even weight the use of specific evidence to best suit your audience.

Wherever possible, use supporting evidence that suits your personality. Don’t stray out of character. You should use a combination of: *Facts, Data, Statistics, Examples, Images and/or Quotations*. Whatever material you choose, your factual evidence must as far as possible be correct, authoritative and verifiable.

Carry out solid research to ensure your evidence is accurate. Don’t get anything wrong which might leave you open to challenge. For instance, be sure any supportive quotes from relevant famous people are correctly attributed - like the one I’ve used from Kahneman!

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# Tell me “Why?” Cont...

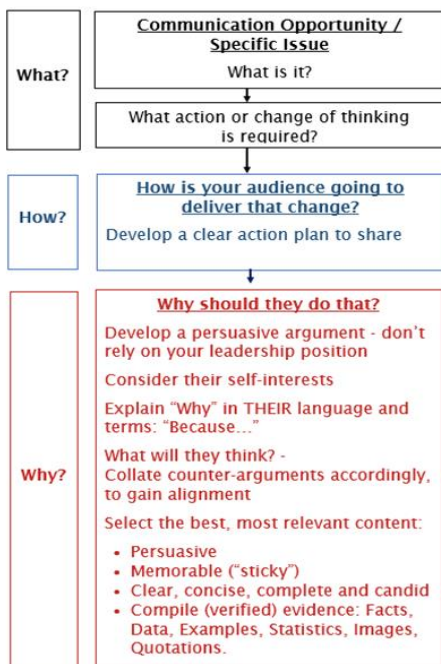
At GPB, when we talk about different Behavioural Styles, we advise that, to be persuasive, you should treat people the way they need to be treated. That advice has a corollary here: understand your audience, and talk to them the way they need or like to be talked to. Explain “Why” in THEIR language and terms. Doing so should make gaining acceptance for your key messages easier and longer-lasting.

Your arguments (usually forward looking) should be well grounded in logic and make sense, even if they’re initially surprising to your audience.

**Develop Your Super-Power: Explain “Why”, Persuasively**

*“With great power comes great responsibility”*

– Uncle Ben Parker, in Spiderman



Source: GPB, June 2020

Providing strong counter-arguments to perspectives they may hold and which you’ve also considered can help demonstrate how much you’re on the audience’s wave-length, building even more common ground.

Big issues you’ll need to communicate persuasively in the short-term, either internally or externally, could indeed include the impacts of Coronavirus and the economic downturn.

Why? Because, following lockdown, your organisation is unlikely to return immediately or entirely to its old, pre-

Covid ‘normal’ ways of working—and maybe it never will. You’ll need to decide on and clearly communicate WHAT any ‘new normal’ should look like and HOW that will be achieved by your team.

But you’ll also need to explain WHY any proposed changes are the right and best things to do. And, to maximise both your impact and credibility, we recommend you communicate consistently to all potential stakeholders. It’s a pattern most communication should follow, anyway, most of the time.

To maximise alignment, consider other people’s self-interest. By all means explain WHAT you need from them and HOW they’re going to deliver that (the Features).

At least equally important, however, is explaining WHY that will be of benefit - to them, not to you. Fundamentally, you should show how your proposal affects them for the better: the positive impacts - or least negative.

In 1972, Johnny Nash sang that “There are More Questions than Answers”<sup>5</sup> But nearly 50 years on, in reality, an effective communicator tries to provide all the necessary answers, in order to explain “Why”, to get their audience ‘on board’, and to minimise the risk of disruptive challenges.

By Desmond Harney

Other sources:

1. HBR: Good Leadership Is About Communicating “Why”, Nancy Duarte - May 6th, 2020 edition.
2. ‘Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action’, Simon Sinek, 2011
3. ‘Getting to Yes: Negotiating an agreement without giving in’, Roger Fisher and William Ury (Preface to the Third Edition)
4. ‘Thinking, Fast and Slow’, Daniel Kahneman, 2011 (Penguin edition, p.387)
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny\\_Nash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_Nash)
6. <https://www.ambyrne.com/2018/01/17/hollywood-keep-making-super-hero-movies/>.
7. <https://houston.culturemap.com/news/city-life/07-12-10-a-rebranding-crime-village-people-respond-to-the-ymcas-name-change/>.
8. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why%3F\\_\(Bronski\\_Beat\\_song\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Why%3F_(Bronski_Beat_song))
9. [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Y.M.C.A.\\_\(song\)](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Y.M.C.A._(song))

**Advice squeezed straight from the experts**



# Resolving Conflict - at home and at work



Lynda Russell-Whitaker

## Models for dealing with conflict in one-to-one communication settings

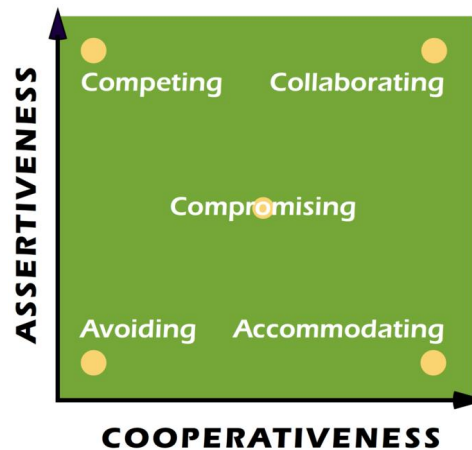
Over the past few months, we may have been managing conflict in many guises, given the current extraordinary circumstances of Covid-19 lockdown in the UK and around the world, and the challenges that proximity...or the opposite... has brought. We all have our individual coping mechanisms; I've noticed a tendency for some close friends to distance themselves, not wishing to communicate much at all: others have been more communicative than usual.

For many of us living in households of several people, perhaps of different generations, with limited space and opportunity to get out (though that is easing), this can put even further strain on us and our relationships. We have the additional unusual conditions of intertwined personal and business lives. You or a partner might have been furloughed, or working from home when you're not set up to do so. You might be providing home schooling when you're ill-equipped, and untrained, for this work. All these factors can be a huge challenge, adding to the stress many are experiencing from so much uncertainty. Conflict is inevitable during these situations, so conflict resolution seemed like a useful topic to address, focussing specifically on the dynamic between two people.

There are two methods, or tools, for resolving conflict that I've had some training in and experience with in the last few years. These are *Transactional Analysis (TA)*, which I first came across in the early 80s, and the *Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument*, which I only discovered as recently as 2017.

Those of you working in HR and Organisational Development (OD) will probably be familiar with both models, so please forgive the over-simplification. I'm not an expert in either system; links to further resources are provided at the end of the article. In these past few months, I have found elements of both models useful and hope they might provide the same for you.

In the 1970s, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann developed five conflict resolution strategies that they observed people use in handling conflict. That is, in a situation where the concerns of two people appeared incompatible. These strategies are underpinned by two dimensions of an individual's behaviour: *assertiveness* and *cooperativeness* (see diagram on left).



The strategies are:

- competing - assertive and uncooperative
- accommodating - unassertive and cooperative
- avoiding - unassertive and uncooperative
- compromising - moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness
- collaborating - assertive and cooperative

Although each of us is capable of using all five conflict-resolving strategies, some of us tend to favour one or two over the others, perhaps because we are more adept at using them, whether through practise or temperament. The problem with doing this is that different strategies are often required for different situations. In an emergency situation, for example, a competing strategy is probably more effective than an avoiding strategy.

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts





# Resolving Conflict - at home and at work. Cont...

Are you aware of using one of these strategies more than another? If so, have you found it more or less effective in specific situations, or with certain people? What might be the outcome of practising a different strategy? Has being at home more had an effect on your conflict-resolving strategies?

Like many systems, they are constantly evolving. Five decades on, Ralph Kilmann has developed the Kilmann Organizational Conflict Instrument (link provided below).

Even earlier (in the late 50s), Eric Berne developed the now well-established *Transactional Analysis* (TA), publishing the best-selling book 'Games People Play' in the early 60s.

If you're unfamiliar with TA, the simplest way to describe the system is that it assumes we are always interacting with each other in a combination of various ego states, i.e. parent, adult, child. These are broken down further. The adjectives have changed and developed over the years. Modern TA has a number of variations. The basic states are:-

Parent: Nurturing or Controlling  
 Adult: Neutral position  
 Child: Natural/Free or Adapted

These ego states are all based on our experiences, but the parent and child states have usually been internalised by behaviour we experienced or observed as children. People often have a preferred mode, but we can all take any position in an interaction.

No doubt you can imagine the sorts of things a controlling parent might say, or a nurturing one. The same is probably true of a free or a rebellious child. All of these can be useful, but in terms of resolving conflict, adult-to-adult communication is usually the most effective. The behaviour and language tends to be neutral, emotionally mature and constructive.

Over the years, one TA tool that I've found useful for resolving conflict is

to be aware (it sounds simple, but not always easy) of the position I'm taking, as follows:-

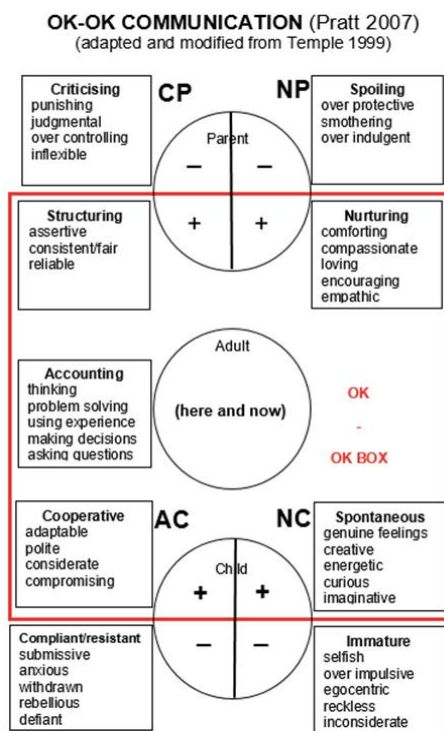
- I'm OK, you're OK (+OK, +OK)
- I'm OK, you're not OK (+OK, -OK)
- I'm not OK, you're not OK (-OK, -OK)
- I'm not OK, you're OK (-OK, +OK)

Sometimes, this awareness happens on reflection. Can you recall a recent conflict where it's obvious to you what position you were taking? If you had shifted your perspective, how do you think the outcome might have differed? How could

this system be useful to you in a future conflict-resolving situation?

If you're interested in exploring these systems further, some resources are provided below. Here's to us all dealing with and resolving conflict more constructively as lockdown lifts...and beyond.

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker



**Sources:**

1. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265565339\\_Thomas-Kilmann\\_conflict\\_MODE\\_instrument](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265565339_Thomas-Kilmann_conflict_MODE_instrument)
2. <https://kilmannagnostics.com/>
3. <http://www.ericberne.com/transactional-analysis/>
4. <http://www.ericberne.com/im-ok-youre-ok-by-thomas-a-harris/>
5. <https://juliehay.org/>

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# Half-time oranges in a slow start to the year



Ewan Pearson

The year is half completed and a deadline for an extension to the Transition Period looms.

It may have been a madly hectic and massively changing six months for most of us - and the world economy - due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, but it's been a slow half year for one set of the UK's negotiation discussions...

What!? Yes this is nothing to do with Covid-19 and all to do with the much-forgotten 'Transition Period' after Brexit, 11 months in which the UK is no longer a member of the EU but continues to be subject to EU rules and remains a member of the single market and customs union, along with the security arrangements. Freedom of movement remains (in theory, but not at all now we have Covid-19) and citizens' rights are unaffected. There is no more Nigel Farage and the other UK MEPs in the European Parliament, no UK commissioner and UK ministers no longer attend meetings of the European Council.

Let's recap:  
Brexit = divorce bill,  
Transition Period = time to get a new deal done,  
and Trade Deal = the new bipartite relationship between the UK and the EU.

A quick quiz: I suspect you know who the EU's chief negotiator is, but who is the UK's current chief negotiator? Yup, like me, most of you won't know who it is, and we can be partially forgiven as there have been quite a few... See bottom of article for the answer.

After three extensions, the UK formally left the EU on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2020. Theresa May's Withdrawal Agreement (WA) agreed 21 months for this

transition, but after the Brexit delays, we now have the last 11 months of this year for negotiations between the UK govt and the EU to settle the terms of a new trade deal, inter alia all the other trade deals we now have to do, and in particular the USA. Or no deal at all, possibly with anyone new...

As of 16<sup>th</sup> June the UK had agreed 20<sup>1</sup> deals, with a further 16<sup>1</sup> under discussion, of which only Canada is a fellow non-EU G8 country, the others being Japan, Russia and USA. The UK says its 'priority is to launch negotiations with the EU, the US, Australia, New Zealand and Japan'.

The UK and Japan have agreed to negotiate a new bilateral deal using the existing EU agreement as a base (but these talks have been paused since 13 May for a public consultation), and we have signed Mutual Recognition Agreements with Australia, New

Zealand and USA<sup>2</sup>.

In my view, the Brexit negotiations were 'won' by the EU. One aspect of that win is that the EU said it will not negotiate details of new arrangements with the UK until it ceased

to be an EU member. I am sure it would have been possible to do so, after all - to use the most common metaphor used in those talks - a post-divorce deal is sorted out before the final divorce, not afterwards. *'You want half the assets and to see the kids every two weeks? I'm not discussing that until you've signed!'* But no, instead the EU chose to inflict the delay in the start of trade talks on the UK.



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# Half-time oranges in a slow start to the year. Cont...

New arrangements with the EU are due to start on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2021, and 'officially' if the UK wants to extend the Transition Period (of up to two years under the WA), it needs to have asked for that by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020, only a few days after we publish this article. 'Officially' the UK does not want to extend, and has even encoded this in law, and reinforced this in a press release from the Withdrawal Agreement Joint Committee (WAJC) as recently as 12 June. Yet, both sides are taking the discussions 'real slow'.

Negotiation Tactics – aka the development of Relative Power – are being used extensively here. For those in the know, the Power Tactics being used are pretty standard ones. Here is a quick review of the main ones:

1. *Use the big guns occasionally:* Boris Johnson met (in clockwise order) Ursula von der Leyen, David Sassoli, Michel Barnier and Charles



Boris Johnson speaks with Ursula von der Leyen, David Sassoli, Michel Barnier and Charles Michel.<sup>5</sup>

- Michel online for 'high level' talks on 15 June, and even before they met they said they'd accelerate things, with 5 new rounds of talks starting on 29 June. They agreed to get on with it.
2. *Best alternative to a negotiated agreement (BATNA):* The threat to walk away. In this case it means a 'No Trade Deal' end to 2020 and the UK moving to WTO (World Trade Organisation) rules, although N.Ireland has a separate outcome under the Northern Ireland Protocol. After that the UK can continue negotiating. Also comparisons with other deals and bad treatment/breach of spirit used by UK.
3. *Competition to the deal:* used by both sides here e.g. by the UK use of USA as if it were some kind of alternative, and the EU using its

other trade deals.

4. *Timing:* Combined with BATNA, the UK have told the EU there will be 'no extension'. This is getting minds to focus on working faster towards a deal, and is considered a genuine position.
5. *Authority:* the latest Conservative manifesto aimed for a relatively loose free trade agreement, giving Boris and his team strength to say they can't soften their position.
6. *Posturing Language:* using words like 'officially' (which surely means we will do something else unofficial), 'partial deal', 'very difficult', 'repeatedly ruled out', no/some 'scope for compromise' (aka concede), 'level playing field' and 'fairness' (using ethics as a tactic), which leads me to.....
7. *Morality:* keeping or breaching promises already made, a tactic used by each side. The UK called the EU on this in May with the accusation that it was keeping to the spirit of the agreement and treating the UK worse than any other trade deal counterparty.
8. *Meeting Locations:* we're not just meeting in Brussels this time, but online then in each city.
9. *Proximity and uniqueness* used by EU e.g. fish, Financial Services/banking.
10. *Precedent:* the UK says 'you've already agreed this and that with us and in other trade deals with the EU
11. *Internal conflict* – the separate factions of the Conservative Party now seem to be arguing again over whether the UK should be an EU-partner (aka protectionism) or a free agent.
12. *Time:* by each on the other, and by the UK on itself, with some asking for an extension because they say they can't cope with the post-EU future and deal with the damage

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# Half-time oranges in a slow start to the year. Cont...

## Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd is a respected adviser based in London. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken and written word, improving the performance of individuals and teams. Over the long term our work improves the way a firm does business.

We coach and advise individuals to perform at their best in the toughest situations including: Presentations, Online Communication, New Business Pitches, Business Development, Negotiating, Media Interviews, Telephone Calls and Document Writing.

We also produce scientific voice, visual and content analysis reports, which are unique to GPB. We then provide voice and visual coaching, and content advice.

Our clients' needs are the only focus of our work; we listen to them and closely tailor our response to deliver first class coaching and advice. In support of this we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as:

- Voice, Visual and Content Analyses,
- Prospect Relationship Management (PRM),
- the Information Iceberg,
- Clients' Rights Act,
- Feature, Benefit Impact (FBI),
- Buyers' Criteria Analysis, (BCA), and
- our Q&A Methodology.

from Covid-19. The 'slow clock' is our concept for how the pace starts slowly. There is always a load of faffing about until the 11<sup>th</sup> hour minute, and we're in the middle of that now - several rounds of talks have made next to no progress in recent weeks. One concept that we share in our negotiation coaching is that of *accelerating time value*, typically from a slow start. A day now does not seem to be worth or cost much, but in mid-December 2020 it will seem to have passed very quickly and much will be expected of each day.

13. *Trading concessions to do the deal:* the haggling has started: fish for finance; strong or weak border checks; the location of those borders and checks in England or N.Ireland; and protecting the Good Friday Agreement (which both sides say they are keen to do).

We can all learn a lot from watching others negotiate, whether they do it well or badly. This will be one to

watch closely from here on, and we can all apply the learnings to our own work with suitable translations.

If I have one thing to suggest we watch it will be the degree to which either side deviates from what it says is non-negotiable, and in particular the *emotional* effect this has on both sides.

By Ewan Pearson

*PS: Answer: The UK's current chief negotiator is David Frost (and for the EU it's still good ol' Michel Barnier).*

### Sources:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-trade-agreements-with-non-eu-countries>
2. A mutual recognition agreement (MRA) is one in which countries recognise the results of one another's conformity assessments.
3. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/brexit-transition-period>
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-51244126>
5. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/eu-prepares-to-knuckle-down-for-summer-of-brexit-talks-1.4279826>

## GPB is trading normally and successfully online

We would not normally spend column inches here telling you about us, but the unique situation merits a word or two here. We started coaching online - with our client Hewlett Packard providing the 'tech' - in 2000, running VCs or "Virtual Classrooms". That's also the year we published our first of these "Speak Up" Journals. The VC idea was ahead of its time, but Zoom, Teams and Google Meetings are all remarkably similar to this and so very familiar to us.

Since the lockdown, our staff have been working well and safely from home, and the transition to that was very smooth. A few early client events were cancelled, but we've now replaced those with plenty of 1-1 two-hour coaching sessions and we have also been working with client teams on key presentations such as AGMs, and fund-raising for our Private Equity and Infrastructure clients. Clients are enquiring more and more about blended and post lockdown coaching, and our online group workshops.

We have also published an Infosheet on effective Online Communication, and this can be viewed as a short guide at our website, and a more detailed handout can be downloaded as a pdf. Please visit [www.gpb.eu](http://www.gpb.eu) and see the Press and Articles column on the right for these.



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