
Strategic Communication Skills for Senior Leaders Training Course

13 – 24 September 2027
Cape town





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Ref: 22_11238 **Date:** 13 – 24 September 2027 **Location:** Cape town **Fees:** 8640 GBP

Programme Summary

Strategic communication and executive presence is a two-week training course for directors and senior officials working at strategic level, culminating in a personal communication plan for their most demanding audiences. Senior leaders are judged on how they frame decisions, listen, handle pressure and carry authority in the room, yet few have refined these advanced communication skills deliberately. The approach builds the full repertoire in sequence, from message structure and listening to presence, high-stakes conversations, boards, media and change. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in strategic communication and executive presence.

The Business Case

Decisions stall when senior messages are unclear, when leaders talk past their audiences or when difficult conversations are avoided. Boards lose confidence in proposals that are poorly framed, and teams lose direction when change is explained inconsistently. Leaders who structure messages, read their audience and stay composed under pressure shorten decision cycles and protect trust inside and outside the organisation.

- **Decision Speed:** Reduces rework and repeated meetings by presenting recommendations in a structure senior audiences can act on.
- **Stakeholder Confidence:** Strengthens trust with boards, partners and the public through consistent, credible messages.
- **Change Adoption:** Improves the uptake of new priorities by explaining change clearly and responding to concerns early.

Principles and Evidence Base

- **Minto Pyramid Principle and SCQA:** Structure board papers, briefings and spoken recommendations in Sessions 2 and 7.
- **Aristotle's Rhetorical Appeals Ethos, Pathos, Logos:** Provide the lens for balancing credibility, emotion and evidence in Sessions 1 and 4.
- **Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion:** Inform ethical influence with peers and external stakeholders in Session 4.
- **Johari Window and Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes:** Support self-awareness, feedback and choices in difficult conversations in Sessions 5 and 6.



Intended Participants

- Executives who present recommendations to boards, ministers or executive committees.
- Senior leaders who represent the organisation to partners, regulators of their sector and the media.
- Heads of function who lead large teams through change and uncertainty.
- Leaders who conduct high-stakes conversations on performance, conflict and difficult decisions.
- Senior officials whose authority depends on influence across organisational boundaries.

The programme serves executive offices, corporate affairs, operations and public administration functions across government, energy, banking and healthcare organisations.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose their own communication strengths and blind spots using structured feedback.
2. Participants will be able to construct concise messages and recommendations for senior audiences.
3. Participants will be able to apply active listening and questioning to uncover stakeholder concerns.
4. Participants will be able to adapt voice, body language and presence to formal and informal settings.
5. Participants will be able to conduct high-stakes conversations and media interviews with composure.
6. Participants will be able to justify a personal communication plan for their key audiences and change agenda.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Foundations of Strategic Communication

What separates communication at executive level from everyday management communication?

- Communication as a Leadership Function
- Ethos, Pathos and Logos in Senior Settings
- Audience Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping
- Communication Style Self-Assessment
- 360-Degree Feedback Interpretation

Day 2: Message Design for Senior Audiences

How is a message built so that a busy audience grasps it and can act on it?

- Minto Pyramid Principle
- SCQA Framing for Recommendations
- Key Message Houses and Proof Points
- Simplifying Complex and Technical Content
- Executive Summaries and Briefing Notes



Day 3: Listening and Powerful Questioning

How do senior leaders hear what is not being said?

- Levels of Active Listening
- Open, Probing and Reflective Questions
- Reading Non-Verbal Signals
- Summarising and Checking Understanding
- Listening Tours and Skip-Level Conversations

Day 4: Persuasion and Ethical Influence

How is agreement won without authority or pressure?

- Cialdini's Principles of Persuasion
- Influence Mapping Across Organisational Boundaries
- Framing Proposals Around Stakeholder Interests
- Handling Objections and Scepticism
- Ethical Limits of Influence

Day 5: Executive Presence

What creates authority and credibility in the room and on screen?

- Gravitas, Composure and Confidence Signals
- Voice, Pace and Pausing
- Body Language and Use of Space
- Presence in Virtual and Hybrid Meetings
- Johari Window for Presence Feedback

Day 6: High-Stakes Conversations

How are difficult conversations held without damaging relationships?

- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes
- Preparing for Performance and Accountability Conversations
- Managing Emotion Under Pressure
- Delivering Unwelcome Decisions
- Repairing Trust After Conflict

Day 7: Communicating With Boards and Committees

How are proposals presented so that boards can decide?



- Board Paper Structure and Decision Requests
- Presenting Risk and Uncertainty
- Handling Challenging Questions From Directors
- Chairing and Contributing to Senior Meetings
- Data Visualisation for Executive Audiences

Day 8: Media and Public Communication

How do leaders speak for the organisation in public and in a crisis?

- Media Interview Techniques and Bridging
- Crisis Holding Statements
- Spokesperson Preparation and Message Discipline
- Social Media and Reputation Exposure
- Cross-Cultural Considerations for International Audiences

Day 9: Communicating Change

How is change explained so that people understand it and act on it?

- Change Narrative and Case for Change
- Cascade Planning Through Leadership Layers
- Responding to Resistance and Rumour
- Two-Way Feedback Channels
- Measuring Communication Effectiveness

Day 10: Applying Strategic Communication and Executive Presence

How are the skills combined into a plan for the leader's most demanding audiences?

- Applying Audience Analysis to a Participant Agenda
- Rehearsing a Board Recommendation With Peer Feedback
- Simulated Media Interview on a Live Issue
- Personal Development Priorities From Feedback
- Personal Communication Plan Presentation

Methodology

The programme relies on simulation and rehearsal. Participants prepare and deliver real messages from their own roles, take part in recorded board, media and conversation simulations, and receive structured feedback from peers and facilitators. Each session ends with a practice cycle that builds towards the personal communication plan in Session 10.

- Suggested activity: Rewriting a ministry briefing note using the Minto Pyramid Principle.
- Suggested activity: Recorded media interview on a bank service outage.



- Suggested activity: Role-playing a performance conversation with a senior energy project manager.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a personal communication plan. It contains an audience map, core messages for current priorities, a presence and voice development plan, preparation notes for one high-stakes conversation and a change communication cascade, ready to use with their executive team and to review with a coach or line manager.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the strategic communication and executive presence programme suitable for directors and senior officials?

Yes. It is designed for leaders at strategic level who already communicate with boards, teams and external audiences. It assumes management experience and builds advanced communication skills on that base.

Which models does the strategic communication and executive presence programme rest on?

It draws on the Minto Pyramid Principle and SCQA for message structure, Aristotle's rhetorical appeals, Cialdini's principles of persuasion, the Johari Window and the Thomas-Kilmann conflict modes.

How is the personal communication plan from the strategic communication programme used at work?

You leave with a plan covering your audiences, messages, presence goals and change cascade. It guides your next board papers, team briefings and difficult conversations, and can be reviewed with your coach.

How does strategic communication and executive presence training differ from a presentation skills course?

It covers the whole communication repertoire of a senior leader, including listening, influence, difficult conversations, boards, media and change, rather than slide design and delivery alone.