



# The Talk Place Meeting: Exercise Description

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# The Talk Place

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## Background

This exercise has been designed to investigate how a candidate behaves during a discussion with a customer who has complaints. It is suitable for graduate to middle managers. The candidate takes the role of a manager of a hotel who meets with a customer (role player) who manages a nearby conference centre 'The Talk Place'. The Talk Place delegates staying at the hotel have made some complaints about the disruption to their stay and staff attitudes. In addition the manager of The Talk Place has been approached by a nearby competitor hotel. The exercise tests the capacity of candidates to maintain their relationship with a customer, dealing positively and sensitively with their complaints and potential reasons for switching to the nearby competitor. Whilst the exercise is set in the context of the hospitality industry, the issues are important to any organisation.

The competencies that are relevant to this exercise and can be used as rating dimensions are as follows:

### **Communication Skills**

#### **Customer Focus**

#### **Drive**

Users may substitute versions of the competencies above from their own existing competency framework as desired.

A five minute briefing is required in which the candidate is provided with their materials. This is followed by a 10 minute 'silent reading' period to review the background information and plan their meeting strategy based on the set objectives. Following this the one to one meeting is held with a 15 minutes time limit.

## Exercise Content

The 2-page participant brief provides all of the background information to the hotel's size, the refurbishment programme and services. It also provides details of the relationship with The Talk Place. The instructions to participants outline the scenario as follows:

"You are about to have a meeting with Sam Harper, the manager of Talk Place. Sam is a major customer and has been for a number of years. He has asked for this meeting because of 'difficulties' experienced by his clients when staying over at Ambledown; he has indicated that he is considering sending his referrals to 'Kessington', a new member

of a chain of 'Coach House' hotels. The chain specialises in providing premium rate accommodation and fare, but set in an attractive rustic environment in rural towns.

Your task in this exercise is to have a 15 minute meeting with Sam with two objectives. These are:

- To find out why Sam wants to refer his clients to Kessington.
- To try to retain the Talk Place business and goodwill, if at all possible.”

## Assessor Brief

The Assessor Brief provides background information (i.e. an Overview, Relevant Competencies, Timing, Exercise Materials and Key Issues). A separate full set of Administration Instructions is provided. General advice is provided on observing and rating the exercises, along with rating guidelines, and details of how to conduct a Post Exercise Review.

## Role Player Brief

The role player brief for the manager of The Talk Place also provides background information together with some direction as to their wants, needs, thoughts and feelings surrounding their on-going relationship with the hotel:

“You met with Les [the Hotel representative] 6 months ago to discuss renovations taking place at Ambledown and their impact upon your clients. At the time you were reasonably happy about the steps being taken to minimise any negative impact the work might have. You were pleased that Les had made a special effort to arrange the meeting which took place.”

The role player brief includes information about the private views of The Talk Place’s manager regarding the business connection with Ambledown, together with its advantages and disadvantages for The Talk Place and its custom.

## Quantities

The Administration Pack contains the following items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 2 sets of Admin Instructions
- 12 Observation Sheets
- 12 Rating Forms
- 4 Assessor Briefs
- 2 Role Player Briefs

After initial purchase of the Admin Pack, a Refill Pack may be purchased which contains the following consumable items:

- 12 Participant Briefs
- 12 Observation Sheets
- 12 Rating Forms

Current pricing can be determined by reference to <http://www.sr-associates.com/pricing.html>

If desired, further queries as to the exercise demands and content can be made to:

Stuart Robertson & Associates Ltd  
Empress Buildings  
380 Chester Road  
Manchester  
M16 9EA  
Tel: 0161 877 3277  
[www.sr-associates.com](http://www.sr-associates.com)  
[mail@sr-associates.com](mailto:mail@sr-associates.com)