

## **Communication Training Offers GMCR Employees Insights, Builds Skills**

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GMCR employees in Sumner, Knoxville, Waterbury and Essex are learning new ways of approaching and understanding communication through a series of innovative workshops with Leslie Schreiber of Schreiber Training.

The trainings involve hands-on, interactive activities that explore topics of communication style, climate and perception -- and include tools for developing non-defensive responses to criticism. Basic Communication 101 focuses on communication styles and behaviors; Basic Communication 201 expands on these ideas, covering topics such as listening skills, managing interpersonal conflicts, using language responsibly and emotional intelligence.

The training includes personal assessments, which help participants determine their preferred communication styles and climates. The “true color assessment,” which Schreiber said people really enjoy, is a personality test that groups people according to a primary color representing their communication style.

“We all have a primary color, and it’s easy to remember, ‘Oh, I’m a gold, and there’s only three other colors I need to think about when I’m interacting with other people,’” Schreiber said.

The true color assessment helps people learn not only more about who they are, but also that those they work with may not have the same primary colors as they do, Schreiber explained. “It can help explain why sometimes communication can be stressful.”

George Aube, a shift supervisor responsible for order fulfillment and material handling in the Specialty Coffee Business Unit, attended both the Communication 101 and Communication 201 trainings in Waterbury. Aube said through the trainings, he learned new things about himself, and about human nature in general, that will prove useful in his position.

“The techniques I learned have helped me understand how others communicate and interact,” said Aube. “I feel that developing relationships with co-workers is key to a successful work environment.”

Schreiber, who holds a master’s degree in experiential education, has designed the program to involve participants from the start. “In class, people are interacting with each other right away, and practicing the skills,” said Schreiber. “They love the hands-on component of it. Most people learn best by doing.”

Vicky Lilley, a customer care representative in the Essex call center, said she found the classes particularly revealing. “The little things we learn in communicating in our lives

are not always the best way . . . and the way things are perceived is not always the way we think others should perceive them . . . and this class really opened that up.”

Pam Douglas, distribution center team associate with the Specialty Coffee Business Unit, attended the Communication 101 training in Knoxville, Tennessee and called it “one of the best communication classes I have taken.” Douglas said the class was a mix of communication techniques and psychology: “telling you who you are in order to understand who the other people you are working with are.”

“By the end of the first session I was captivated,” said inventory manager Dori Austin, who attended the training in Vermont. “There was so much to learn and she provided a wonderful interactive environment to learn in.”

Schreiber hopes the class provides increased confidence in communication, and a sense of community with others in the group.

“Communication is a backbone to everything else we do in our lives,” she said. “If you’re not a good communicator it’s going to keep showing up for you in your life in negative ways. It’s a core component for success.”

Schreiber also offers a Power Up training component for employee groups, and Six Thinking Hats, a tool for efficient meeting management.