

# Teaching interpersonal skills in evaluation: A review of the literature on whether and how it can be done

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# The case for teaching IPS

1

Interpersonal skills are critical to good evaluation

2

Evaluators, especially novices, aren't great at it

3

There are few opportunities to explicitly learn interpersonal skills



**A recognised gap in evaluator training**

Gargani (2016, i.e.  
yesterday)

# Technical Skills

Qualitative Methods

Quantitative Methods



Gargani (2016, i.e.  
yesterday)

# Technical Skills

Qualitative Methods

Quantitative Methods

# Social Skills

Trust

Compassion

Connection

Communication

Facilitation

Empowerment



# In case you are dubious...

“ All too often evaluations sink because of poor communication.”

-- Patton & Patrizi, 2005, p.5

Evaluators say IPS more useful than technical skills



Employers & clients think IPS are an essential competency



Good IPS have been empirically connected to evaluation use



The absence of good IPS is the biggest barrier to doing evaluation

# And...

Less than one quarter of evaluation job seekers are taught how to engage with clients or stakeholders during their evaluation training.

-- Davies & McKay (2014)

# And unfortunately...

## Entry level evaluators

Rank  
interpersonal  
skills as their  
second highest  
asset.

Vs.

## Evaluator employers

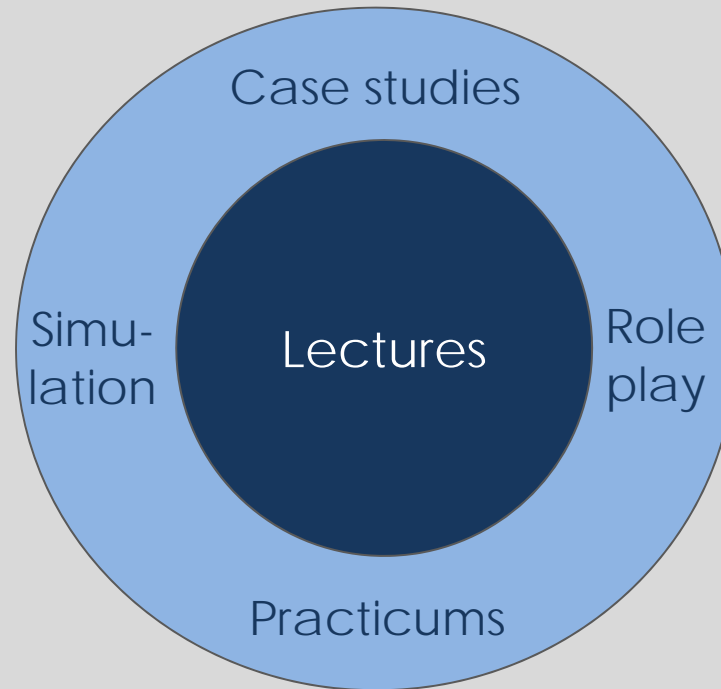
Say it is the  
greatest skills  
deficit among  
new hires.

# Where does this leave us?





# Current teaching methods



Are frequently to be focused on knowledge, rather than skills.

Can you teach interpersonal skills?

Yes.



# Functional IPS skills

Non-verbal  
communication

Reflecting

Listening

Questioning

Explaining

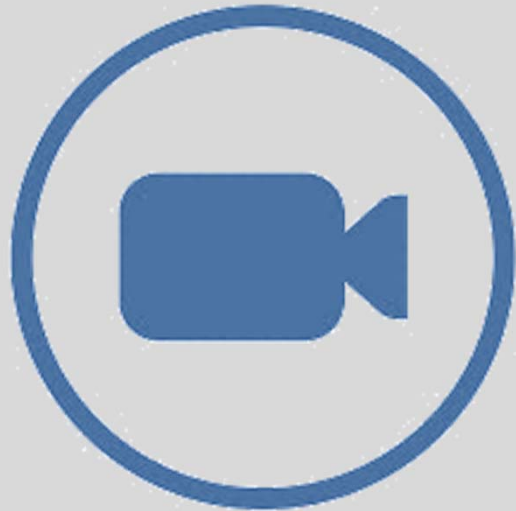
Humour & laughter

Reinforcement

Self-disclosure

Persuasion &  
negotiation

# Strategy 1: Microtraining



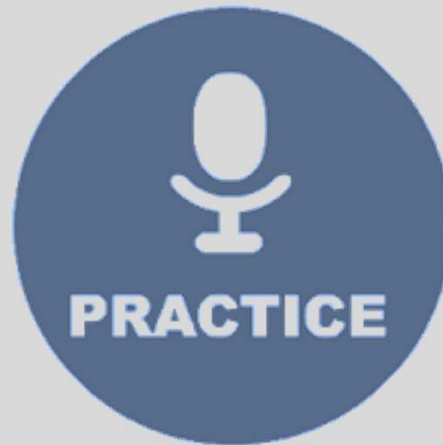
Effect  
sizes:  
M to L

# Strategy 2: Behavioural Modelling Training

Effect sizes:  
M to L



+



+



# Strategy 3: Deliberate Practice



# Situation Awareness



Skilled interpersonal behavior must be relevant to the situation in which it is performed.

“Skill is achieved when learners can systematically adapt their performance to changing personal and contextual conditions” (Zimmerman, 2000, p.3).

# Strategy 4: Expertise-Based Training



XBT applies instructional strategies derived from research on expertise to “hasten the development of learners into experts” (Fadde, 2009)



# The common thread



**Where's the  
practice?**

**Where's the  
feedback?**

# Creating a culture of practice

**Culture of practice:** an environment where individuals deliberately engage in practice of critical skills, and seek opportunities to obtain feedback on that practice.

Within evaluator  
training programs

Across the  
evaluation  
profession

# Thank you & any questions?

**A question for you:** where do you see opportunities for practice and feedback in the evaluation profession?

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