



# Enhancing the Written Communication Skills of European Employees

## HBOS

HBOS plc was formed following the 2001 merger of Halifax plc. and the Bank of Scotland creating the fifth largest bank in the UK as well as the UK's largest mortgage lender. HBOS is the holding company for Bank of Scotland plc, which operates the Bank of Scotland and Halifax brands in the UK, as well as HBOS Australia and HBOS Insurance & Investment Group Limited, the group's insurance division. The group became part of Lloyds Banking Group through a takeover by Lloyds TSB in early 2009.

## Communicaid

Communicaid is a global culture and communication skills consultancy that assists the world's leading organisations to mitigate the risks and maximise the opportunities of working in a complex and ever-changing international environment. We work with international organisations such as HBOS to provide a complete suite of consultancy services as well as targeted intercultural, language and communication skills training.

# Developing the Writing Skills of European Employees to Improve Internal Communication

As the bank has made acquisitions and grown organically across Europe, HBOS has placed great importance on maintaining and developing the skills of all staff in these locations. HBOS's Chester-based Learning & Development team, in consultation with Corporate Europe, identified a requirement in the Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Madrid and Paris offices for improving report writing skills and written communication between European teams and the Bank's headquarters.

Communicaid, HBOS's existing partner for world language training, was selected to work in partnership with the L&D team to design and deliver tailor-made writing programmes concurrently in all four locations across Europe.

## Training Objectives

The key requirements of the training were to:

- Develop written skills towards a harmonised pan-European benchmark

- Review and adopt key principles of Plain English and current best practice in drafting business documents

## Challenges

The main challenges were seen as:

- Ensuring a consistent approach and trainer methodology in each location
- Adapting the core content of the course to each individual delegate's needs and nationality

## Training Approach

Based on an in-depth diagnostic consultancy carried out with HBOS' Learning & Development department, Communicaid's communication skills team designed a standard programme to be rolled out across Europe. In order to ensure that the programme met the needs of delegates in all four countries, each participant carried out a self-assessment and pre-training assignment. The results of these were then analysed and fed into the design of the individual programmes to take into account the strengths and weaknesses of each delegate.

All training was delivered by Communicaid's dual-qualified communication skills trainers, both expert communication trainers and commercially experienced.

## Our Solution

- The training began with a half-day launch seminar providing delegates with a comprehensive overview of the principles of good, clear commercial writing

- Five follow-up individual sessions allowed each delegate to develop their own specific skills and work closely with their trainer on authentic business documents
- A final "wrap-up" group workshop allowed the group to re-visit key principles, share learning experiences and measure their progress

## Results

Participants are now more confident writing business documents and incorporating best practice into their reports and correspondence.

My trainer made my course an extremely rewarding experience. Time flies when you're having fun! Her training approach was excellent and I feel more confident in my written communication as a result

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