

FULL CIRCLE ROLEPLAY SUBMISSION FOR TECHNICAL EVALUATION

Contract Number: 701176380- Provision of Actors for Role Play to Support the Training of Visiting Officers

(1). Demonstrate your understanding and context of the requirement, highlighting what you consider to be the more important aspects in making the role play effective.

Understanding of the Importance and Requirement of the VO Course

In understanding the importance and requirements of the VO Course, the collective acting experience of Full Circle Roleplay in varied roleplay scenarios is invaluable. The VO course is a vital component in ensuring that this sensitive pastoral work commands the confidence of service families and in enabling the armed services to meet the needs of all those for whom they bear responsibility. Full Circle Roleplay aims to provide prospective VOs with the opportunity to experience a simulated scenario by creating an authentic, challenging and unique learning experience with the aim of increasing confidence when supporting bereaved families. The true art of acting without it feeling like a performance is a skill that Full Circle are confident its actors are able to provide.

The third day of the VO course is a valuable opportunity for participants to put the previous day's learning into action. Full Circle see its role as working with participants to provide them with an experience they can draw upon should they be required to undertake the VO role in the future.

It is vital the actors that Full Circle employ are able to give credible and realistic scenario led performances and that they are able to adapt to the specific needs and requirements of the course. A majority of the team have experience of working within military institutions and are thereby in tune with the needs and challenges presented. Full Circle stress the importance of the part actors play, and the complexities of the VO course and ensure that they are fully aware of the demands and difficulties the work presents. As such, Full Circle underline the importance of being constructive whilst remaining sensitive to individual delegate needs.

The Value of using actors in training

Using actors in training is enormously beneficial and provides powerful results. Actors employed by Full Circle have the emotional depth and intensity required to make these complex and difficult scenarios credible. They have the ability and experience to illustrate the difficult and challenging family dynamics and further emphasise the sensitive and fragile environments a VO may encounter. Real life and its accompanying emotions cannot be entirely replicated but using the right actors means Full Circle Roleplay get as close as possible.

Range of emotions required

The raw emotions of the newly bereaved can manifest themselves in many different ways. Shock, hopelessness, declining mental health, frustration, guilt and anger are all emotions that service personnel may have to deal with. When playing a role, the actors need to get to a place in order to feel these emotions. Thus, whilst the scenario is fictitious, the emotions are very real. This is the key value that actors bring to the course. If the actor is genuinely feeling the emotion, the delegate will also experience how it feels in that moment. The skill and technique of the actor comes into play here. Great care is taken in employing a company of actors who are experienced, flexible and astute and who are able to draw upon their life

experience. Actors are encouraged to pitch their performances appropriately whilst covering a wide range of emotions within the scenario.

The Difference between Military and Civilian Worlds

The Military, like many other professions, tends to have a language of its own, and this is sometimes an area that service personnel may struggle with. The raw emotions of a newly bereaved family, especially one unfamiliar with a military environment, may not be what a VO expects. The art of stripping things back and resisting the urge to hide behind military jargon can sometimes prove difficult. A predetermined approach to doing things associated with military life can prove restrictive in a roleplay setting. Using a prescriptive approach may alienate a grieving family which in turn causes friction and miscommunication. Full Circle Roleplay is aware that delegates may need to adapt the language they use and employ a more flexible and empathic approach.

Giving service personnel the opportunity to experience “being present” when there is often no right thing to say, is invaluable. Full Circle Roleplay understands that a VO will have information to gather from relatives eg confirming names/addresses and memorialising social media accounts, and that this is a key part of their role. However, helping delegates understand the importance of not coming across as too *task focused* is equally important. Encouraging active listening and appropriate questioning at the right time is vital in maintaining a successful and often long-lasting relationship with the bereaved.

Effectiveness of group settings v 1-2-1

There is a common misconception that the main value of any simulated training course is in undertaking the roleplay exercise. Full Circle Roleplay believes that it is equally beneficial for the observers in the room. The value and importance of peer-to-peer learning cannot be underestimated. It not only helps to nurture confidence but can also reinforce a deeper learning experience. Evaluating each other’s learning and giving and receiving feedback is an effective and instrumental part of any successful training programme. Learning together is more powerful and makes a greater long-term impact. Conversely, a one-to-one setting tends to focus on the individual without the benefit of participants/peers articulating and clarifying their own learning and recognising different perspectives.

The Importance of constructive feedback

Full Circle Roleplay is confident that its actors are able to offer honest, constructive and supportive feedback in equal measure. All actors employed by the organisation have experience in delivering such feedback, specifically in relation to grieving families. Understanding the pressure and anxiety participants encounter when taking on the role is also important. Constructive feedback can help to identify problems in communication providing it is within a safe and confidential setting. As such, feedback should be delivered in a way that encourages the development of skills and provide a deeper understanding of the VO role.

(2). What do you consider to be the main considerations and challenges for the actors when conducting roleplay with those who have been trained in the military environment; demonstrate how your organisation proposes to prepare them for taking part in the training of Visiting Officers to support bereaved families.

Military setting and terminology

Full Circle Roleplay ensures that its actors are aware of a military environment and understand the aim of training VOs to support bereaved families. This key information will be provided to the actors through the training process prior to the commencement of the VO course. The

values and standards of the Armed Services including integrity, mutual respect and selfless commitment are characteristics required of a VO. Actors are made aware of this aspect of a soldier's training, focusing not only on the values and standards, but also appreciating the need to treat families fairly as for example outlined in the Military Covenant.

Full Circle Roleplay provides training on military structures and on terminology that may be useful when in character. Ultimately, interactions played out within the roleplay setting need to feel credible, and as such Full Circle is conscious that its actors should react in a realistic manner. Some families will have a working knowledge of how the military works, whilst others will be less informed.

Preparing actors for skill-based scenarios

Full Circle actors are encouraged to engage, support and challenge delegates. Knowing when and how far to challenge a participant is essential and a vital part of successful training.

As a bespoke training organisation, Full Circle Roleplay work hard to ensure its actors and facilitators are of the highest calibre. Each actor brings his/her own unique interpretation to the roles and their own focus on the world of the character. Actors are encouraged to be creative around the story and to fill in any gaps, providing they maintain credibility. Full Circle is confident that its company of actors provide authentic and credible performances, together with astute and honest feedback in an encouraging and empathetic manner.

Credibility and Delivery of the scenario

The level of emotion and energy required for the VO course is not to be underestimated. Actors employed by Full Circle Roleplay are committed and experienced and furthermore able to bring the VO scenarios to life and add value to the course as a whole. For example, Full Circle regularly train medical doctors in communicating breaking bad news to patients. These medical professionals often comment on the value of these sessions in particular the opportunity to practice the use of empathy in extremely sensitive situations.

The key to a realistic interaction is to ensure actors employed by our organisation embrace simplicity and truthfulness. Knowing how far to push service personnel whilst in character, when to put on the brakes and remain sensitive to their needs is vital. Full Circle actors have the emotional depth and intensity required to make the scenarios credible and to enhance the experience of delegates.

Sensitivity and awareness of the Participants

Full Circle Roleplay understands the enormous pressure and emotional impact of the VO role, and is committed to ensuring that the characters are played with empathy and sensitivity while at the same time remaining open to challenge within a supportive and safe environment.

Full Circle aims to give delegates an opportunity to build rapport, display empathy, to be conscious of body language, to be open and honest whilst remaining supportive. The organisation is conscious that a VO will often need to fulfil this role for an extended period of time. The interaction begins at the start of this journey which is often the most challenging stage.

The purpose of the VO course is for participants to engage fully and understand the procedural processes put in place when someone dies; whether that is on active duty, suicide or as a result of an accident. Understanding that information is of course a vital component of the VO role but being able to impart that information with sensitivity and patience is equally important. Full Circle never underestimates how powerful just being present and listening can be.

Knowing the right thing to say when someone's world has just been shattered is complex and giving trainees the opportunity to feel at ease in uncomfortable situations is part of this valuable learning experience.

Full Circle understands that working in this way is not easy, and as such actors are encouraged to never lose sight of participants' needs. The roleplay day is something that many delegates find challenging. Therefore, it is important that actors are aware of the feelings of anxiety and nervousness that may be present for some. The actor's job is not to "break" the VO but rather to provide an opportunity to practice the role of VO in a safe and nurturing environment.

(3). Describe how your organisation will cope with short notice changes to numbers or dates, and how no-shows or delays by the actors are handled.

Actors on Standby

Full Circle Roleplay has introduced standbys on every assignment to account for any potential last-minute auditions or unforeseen circumstances that may arise.

Actors v's Roleplayers

The success of Full Circle Roleplay is largely as a result of employing actors within the profession as opposed to *roleplayers*. This is an important and relevant distinction and one not always adhered to by competitors. Actors who deliver roleplay are more readily able to display appropriate range of emotions and adopt a more realistic and natural approach to often complex and intense scenarios. The actors Full Circle employ are all professionally trained and are suitably qualified to provide authentic and credible performances every time.

Procedures in place for short notice changes

It is the nature of the acting business that castings can sometimes arise at the last minute. To combat this, Full Circle has introduced procedures to ensure clients are not impacted by any potential changes, and when required a suitable actor replacement is ensured. The exception to this rule is for foreign assignments when names are required in advance. Full Circle ensure its actors are aware of this obligation.

(4). Demonstrate how your organisation would prepare the actors for the scenarios, describing the quality and standard of devising you would expect. Provide assurance that they are sufficiently experienced to respond with appropriate levels of emotion, including crying. (Two scenarios are attached to the SOR for information if required)

Preparing actors emotionally for VO training

Full Circle Roleplay works with a range of actors who have relevant experience in the area of bereavement, as outlined above in its work with medical professionals. This means that when Full Circle employ new actors, it is able to provide thorough and detailed training on VO character scenario requirements.

Full Circle looks at the different stages of grief, thinking specifically how each might be applied to the scenarios at hand. Denial, anger, depression and acceptance may all manifest in different ways. The importance of bringing something different to each role is underlined. Being able to convey trauma authentically is of course important. Grief affects people in different ways and as such Full Circle actors are tasked with expressing the complexities and often nuanced stages of grief that people experience when a loved one dies. Shock, anger, mental instability, guilt, frustration, and not being able to accept what has happened are some

examples of emotions that Full Circle Roleplay particularly focus upon within actor engagement.

Being able to be flexible and inventive around the scenario is also important and is an area of focus when training actors. It is important to Full Circle that its actors create the world of the individual and by doing so, allow the VO the space to fulfil their role.

Full Circle actors will have an understanding of the aim and meaning of the VO role and be aware of the military approach. They will prepare scenarios in advance of the training to ensure confidence in delivering their roles with the appropriate level of emotion required.

Quality assurance and Competency

Professionalism and quality are maintained within the pool of actors Full Circle employ. Its actors work across many different sectors within the world of Learning and Development. From breaking bad news with trainee doctors, presentation skills and advocacy training for Barristers, and coaching for difficult conversations in the workplace, Full Circle prides itself on being adaptable and fair.

To maintain this high level of quality, quarterly workshops are offered to our actors to ensure they uphold the values and working techniques that the organisation champions. Full Circle differentiates itself from its competitors by not just being another *roleplay training company* employing *roleplayers* across a wide range of sectors. It is a company of actors that work in the profession, maintaining busy acting careers and utilising their skillset in the Learning and Development sector.

Work and life experience/attitude of actors

Full Circle employ a mix of actors, all of whom bring a wide range of experience to the table and have a varied playing age. As such, it is able to cast appropriately when it comes to age and gender. Its actors are aware of the importance of maintaining professionalism at all times and being respectful of the rules and regulations when working on a military base.

Full Circle Roleplay is committed to encouraging equality and diversity amongst its workforce and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

Why Full Circle Roleplay?

Before setting up Full Circle Roleplay, Shane Armstrong and Jane Garioni have both worked consistently as actors across theatre, TV and Film. Shane studied English and Drama at University before training as an actor at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. Jane worked as a solicitor before training as an actor at The London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art. Having worked extensively across the public and private sector in Learning and Development, they are both passionate about practical based training in the workplace and have over 15 years' experience in this field. This led to them setting up Full Circle Roleplay to reach out to prospective clients.

Work includes;

- Working with NHS medical professionals on communication skills
- Breaking bad news and difficult conversations workshops
- Writing and developing management training programmes

- Engagement training for global real estate and financial sectors
- Advocacy assessments and interviewing skills within legal and policing sectors

The Full Circle website (www.fullcircleroleplay.co.uk) includes what it does, how they do it and the services offered. It also includes testimonials within the legal, medical, armed forces and business arenas reflecting its experience to date.

Here is what our clients say about us:

“They bring huge value to the programme and are a core component of its successful delivery.”

Emily Link
Producer // Driving Performance
Interactive Workshops Limited

“The experience they bring is key to the effective delivery of the Course, I warmly recommend them.”

Rev David Simpson
Instructor, Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre

“They are fair, unflappable and sensitive to the feelings of sometimes nervous candidates.”

Peter Lyons
Barrister and Director
CPD Training

“Feedback has always been honest, transparent and supportive in equal measure.”

Dr Nigel Giam
Mentor MRCGP Course Organiser

(5). Describe the level of qualifications, references and experience which your organisation requires before taking on new actors, and how you ensure these are accurate.

Experience/qualification of actors

Full Circle Roleplay take pride in the quality and experience of the actors that work for them. Each actor is required to have a professional acting qualification from an accredited University or Drama School. In addition to their training, our actors are actively working in film, theatre and television. Before taking on an assignment, actors employed by Full Circle are extensively briefed and trained where necessary.

On the VO course, Full Circle will advise actors on appropriate levels of emotion and delivery of clear, honest, constructive and supportive feedback. The actors will have the ability to modify language and tone when required; for example, when participants speak English as a second language. Full Circle take great care to select the right actors for the task at hand. Engagement and commitment to the work are assured.

This level of experience is extremely important. If a character is played authentically and is fully engaged, it should not feel like a performance. It is impossible for a training course to replicate real-life experience, but we can provide a realistic, detailed and emotionally intelligent imagining that enhances the learning experience. This type of work can only succeed if actors work openly and collaboratively with the course facilitators and are themselves sensitive to the challenges the trainees may face in their role as a VO.

Selection process

Full Circle Roleplay employs individuals who are actively working within the profession as actors. This experience is vital to ensure the actors we employ bring an emotional depth to the characters they play. Full Circle are aware of how important this is for the VO course, specifically given the circumstances and subject matter involved.

The majority of the actors on our books have worked with the directors of Full Circle Roleplay in the past and are well known to them. If unknown to the directors, new actors come highly recommended from a reliable source within the industry.

Full Circle Roleplay interview actors, assess their CVs and take up references before taking on any new actor. When possible, at least one of the directors or a member of the senior actor team will see their work either at the theatre or a filmed showreel. Experience of working in the world of Learning and Development is also a requirement for actors new to the organisation.

(6). Describe how your organisation ensures that the service provided, including the quality of the role-play, is of the standard required by the Authority.

Professional Service

Full Circle is only as good as the product it delivers. Its *product* is the actors it employs. As such, actors are vetted and cast appropriately and have the ability and experience to enhance and add value to the training courses.

In addition to the requirement of an accredited qualification, actors at Full Circle Roleplay work actively within the profession and have experience of working in Learning and Development. Acting by its very nature is a creative art form and every actor will interpret a role differently. Full Circle see this as a strength and actively encourage it with the creatives who work for them.

Age, gender and diversity

Care is taken to cast the roles appropriately taking into account age, suitability and where possible, diversity.

Working collaboratively with the Authority

Full Circle encourage an approachable and collaborative working relationship with the Authority based on mutual trust and respect. This includes being open on different ways to improve and enhance training workshops and maintaining a close relationship with clients on how best to do this. Communication is key. Post event evaluation is reviewed to ensure client satisfaction. Suggestions for improvement are taken on board and a collaborative work ethic is encouraged with the organisation's clients to produce a robust offering of the highest quality.

Working collaboratively with Actors

Complacency should be avoided at all costs in the acting profession. Full Circle Roleplay ensure that its actors provide credible and authentic performances every time. To this end, quarterly team workshops are held and feedback after each assignment actively encouraged. The feedback is two-fold: comments from the actors on how to enhance actor engagement, and when necessary, feedback is provided to individual actors on their performance.

Full Circle Roleplay is always looking at ways to improve and develop the training workshops offered to actors on its books. A close relationship is maintained with actors on how best to do this. Open discussion is encouraged and Full Circle work collaboratively with its actors to ensure everyone has a voice.

Specific and structured feedback

Full Circle encourage openness and transparency. Actors work collaboratively with facilitators to ensure specific feedback is delivered. Actors are trained on how to structure their observations in a supportive and empathetic manner. Particular attention is made to ensure actors are sensitive to the needs of participants and are mindful of the language they use when delivering constructive feedback. It is imperative they do not “break” the VO.

Quality Control

The aim of Full Circle Roleplay is to be cost effective and where possible, local actors are used to reduce travel and accommodation costs. That said, in reality, professional actors tend to be London based due to the demands of the business. Full Circle passionately believe that employing active and professionally trained actors as opposed to *roleplayers* (who often lack the training and experience required to maintain a credible performance) is key to ensuring quality and enhancing the training provided. Full Circle recognises the value and experience actors bring to the table for which they are fairly remunerated.

(7). What assumptions has your organisation made in compiling your tender document?

Assumptions based on the SOR

The Supplier assumes that the Authority will:

- Inform the Supplier should the number of courses increase beyond 20 per year as outlined in Para 1 of the SOR
- Cover any excess costs for the remaining dates based at other MOD Garrisons (as detailed in Para 1 of SOR), should the travel costs exceed that of the central location
- Issue actors with pre-written scenarios in advance as per Para 1 of the SOR
- Inform the Supplier of any variations to the scenarios. This should be provided to the Supplier in advance of actor engagement
- Provide a clear and detailed understanding of MOD models of loss and bereavement as per Para 2a of the SOR
- Provide a summary of the Services Duty of Care (including the Military Covenant, The Moral Component and Family Expectations) to the Supplier as per Paras 3 and 7 of the SOR
- Provide the Supplier with advance notice with regard to any changes to nominations, age and gender requirements for actor engagement as per Para 5a of the SOR
- Provide details of actor engagement 2 clear weeks before the course begins (with the exception of Cyprus) as per Para 5b of the SOR
- Provide details of the Cyprus engagement 8 weeks in advance of the deadline as per Para 5b of the SOR
- Provide 3 weeks' notice should course numbers reduce/increase as per Para 5b of the SOR
- Provide the Supplier with the key information required by the VO in the roleplay setting as per Para 6a of the SOR
- Provide the guidance and setting of the scenarios as per Para 6a of the SOR
- Ensure each roleplay will last 40 minutes inclusive of critique as per Para 6b of the SOR

Other Assumptions

The Supplier assumes that the Authority will:

- Negotiate a fee with the Supplier on any further requirements not directly associated with a live training event. This includes any training films, still photography and any other forms of publicity where an actor's image is used
- Ensure no more than an 8-hour working day with a minimum of two fifteen-minute breaks and a one-hour lunch break