Course Title: Advanced Communication & Interpersonal Skills

- **Duration:** 5 Days (approximately 35-40 instructional hours)
- **Course Goal:** To elevate the communication and interpersonal effectiveness of professionals by providing them with advanced techniques, practical frameworks, and intensive practice in active listening, assertive communication, building rapport, and influential questioning, enabling them to build stronger relationships, navigate complex interactions, and achieve better outcomes in any professional setting.
- **Core Focus:** Mastering active listening, assertive communication, building rapport, and effective questioning.

Learning Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this workshop, participants will be able to:

- **Apply** the principles of deep, active listening to fully understand others' perspectives, needs, and unspoken concerns.
- **Master** the art of asking powerful, open-ended questions to guide conversations, uncover critical information, and stimulate thinking.
- **Communicate** assertively and confidently, expressing their own needs and perspectives clearly and respectfully without being passive or aggressive.
- **Build** rapport and trust quickly and effectively with diverse personalities, including colleagues, clients, and senior leaders.
- **Understand** and interpret non-verbal cues and body language to enhance communication effectiveness.
- **Adapt** their communication style to different situations and audiences for maximum impact.
- **Navigate** difficult conversations with greater confidence and a focus on constructive outcomes.
- **Provide** and receive feedback in a way that strengthens relationships and drives performance.
- **Create** a personal action plan to continuously improve their communication and interpersonal skills.

Target Audience:

- Professionals at all levels who wish to enhance their influence and effectiveness.
- Managers, team leaders, and project managers.
- Sales professionals, customer service representatives, and client-facing roles.
- Technical professionals who need to improve their communication with non-technical stakeholders.
- Anyone looking to build stronger, more productive professional relationships.

Prerequisites:

- None. This course is designed to build upon basic communication skills to an advanced level.

Teaching Methodology:

This is a highly experiential and skills-based workshop. Theory is kept to a minimum, with the vast majority of time dedicated to practice and feedback. The methodology includes:

- **Interactive Mini-Lectures:** Introducing core concepts and frameworks.
- **Self-Assessments:** Tools for understanding personal communication styles and habits.
- **Live Demonstrations:** Instructor demonstrates advanced techniques.
- **Intensive Role-Playing & Simulations:** The core of the workshop. Participants practice skills in triads (speaker, listener, observer) with structured, peer-led feedback.
- **Video Recording & Playback (optional, for onsite):** Allows for powerful self-reflection on communication style.
- **Group Discussions & Problem-Solving Clinics:** Applying skills to real-world communication challenges brought by the participants.
- **Action Planning:** Developing personal plans to apply learning directly to their work.

*(For **Online Delivery**, this will be adapted using breakout rooms for intensive role-playing, polls for quick feedback, virtual whiteboards (e.g., Miro/Mural) for brainstorming, and using the chat function for real-time observation.)*

Materials Provided:

- Comprehensive digital or printed workbook with key concepts, frameworks, question banks, and skill-building exercises.
- Results from personal communication style self-assessments.
- Templates and checklists for preparing for difficult conversations and giving feedback.
- A personal action plan template for communication mastery.
- Certificate of Completion.

Detailed Day-by-Day Curriculum

Day 1: The Foundation – Deep Listening & Building Rapport

- **Module 1: The Anatomy of Advanced Communication (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - Welcome, introductions, and establishing a safe, interactive learning environment.
    - Moving beyond "sending a message": Communication as a two-way process of creating shared meaning.
    - The three components of communication: Words, Tone of Voice, and Body Language (Mehrabian model).
    - Common communication barriers and how to overcome them.
    - **Activity:** "Communication Self-Audit" – Participants reflect on their current communication strengths and challenges.
- **Module 2: The Art of Active & Empathetic Listening (Approx. 3 hours)**
    - The four levels of listening: Downloading, Factual, Empathetic, Generative.
    - Techniques for Level 3 (Empathetic) Listening:
        - Paraphrasing for content.

        - Reflecting feelings.
        - Summarizing to ensure alignment.
    - Listening for what is *not* said: Uncovering underlying needs and emotions.
    - **Intensive Practice Session:** Paired exercises and triads to practice and receive feedback on active listening skills.
- **Module 3: Building Rapport & Trust Quickly (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - The science of first impressions and the "likeability" factor.
    - Techniques for building rapport:
        - Finding common ground.
        - Matching and mirroring (subtly).
        - Using names effectively.
        - Demonstrating genuine curiosity.
    - Building trust through consistency, reliability, and authenticity.
    - **Activity:** "Rapport-Building Drill" – Timed exercises to practice building connection with different partners.
    - **End of Day 1 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 2: The Art of Questioning & Assertive Communication

- **Module 4: Mastering Powerful Questioning (Approx. 3 hours)**
    - Moving from telling to asking: The power of inquiry in influence and leadership.
    - Open vs. Closed questions: When to use each.
    - A deep dive into different types of powerful questions:
        - Clarifying questions (to ensure understanding).
        - Probing questions (to get more detail).
        - Hypothetical questions (to explore possibilities).
        - Reflective questions (to encourage insight).
    - Using questions to guide a conversation without dominating it.
    - **Workshop:** Participants develop a bank of powerful questions for different work scenarios (e.g., one-on-ones, problem-solving).
- **Module 5: Understanding Communication Styles: Assertiveness (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - The four communication styles: Passive, Aggressive, Passive-Aggressive, and Assertive.
    - Defining Assertive Communication: Expressing your needs, thoughts, and feelings clearly and respectfully.
    - The "Assertiveness Bill of Rights."
    - **Self-Assessment:** Participants identify their default communication style in different situations.
- **Module 6: Techniques for Assertive Communication (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - Using "I" statements to express your perspective without blame.
    - A simple framework for making an assertive request.
    - Learning to say "no" gracefully and professionally.
    - How to disagree respectfully.
    - **Intensive Role-Play Workshop:** Participants practice making assertive statements and saying "no" in various workplace scenarios.
    - **End of Day 2 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 3: Non-Verbal Communication & Giving Feedback

- **Module 7: Reading the Room: Non-Verbal Cues & Body Language (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - The power of non-verbal communication in conveying meaning and emotion.
  - Interpreting common body language signals (gestures, posture, facial expressions).
  - Ensuring your own body language is congruent with your message.
  - Reading group dynamics in meetings.
  - Cultural differences in non-verbal communication.
  - **Activity:** Analyzing video clips (muted) to interpret non-verbal cues.
- **Module 8: The Skill of Giving Constructive Feedback (Approx. 3.5 hours)**
  - Why feedback is a gift for growth.
  - Preparing to give feedback: Intent, timing, and location.
  - Using a structured feedback model (e.g., **SBI: Situation-Behavior-Impact**) to keep feedback objective and actionable.
  - Giving effective positive reinforcement and recognition.
  - **Intensive Role-Play Workshop:** Participants practice delivering both positive and constructive feedback in coached triads.
- **Module 9: The Art of Receiving Feedback Gracefully (Approx. 1.5 hours)**
  - Managing your emotional reaction to feedback.
  - Techniques for listening to understand, not to rebut.
  - Asking clarifying questions to ensure you understand the feedback.
  - Thanking the giver and committing to reflection.
  - **End of Day 3 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 4: Navigating Difficult Conversations & Conflict

- **Module 10: Preparing for & Structuring Difficult Conversations (Approx. 3 hours)**
  - A step-by-step framework for planning a difficult conversation.
  - Defining your purpose and desired outcome.
  - Anticipating the other person's perspective.
  - Structuring the conversation: The opening, the exploration, the problem-solving, and the closing.
- **Module 11: Managing Emotions During High-Stakes Interactions (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
  - The impact of stress on communication (fight-flight-freeze).
  - Techniques for staying centered and managing your own emotional triggers.
  - How to handle strong emotional reactions from others (e.g., anger, tears, defensiveness).
  - The power of a strategic pause.
- **Module 12: Difficult Conversation Simulation (Approx. 2 hours)**
  - **Capstone Role-Play:** Participants engage in a longer, more complex role-play of a difficult conversation based on a detailed case study (e.g., addressing a performance issue, resolving a conflict with a colleague).
  - Facilitated debrief and group discussion on strategies and outcomes.
  - **End of Day 4 Recap & Q&A.**

Day 5: Adapting Your Style & Creating Your Action Plan

- **Module 13: Adapting Your Communication Style (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - Introduction to a simple behavioral model (e.g., DISC - overview).
    - Identifying different communication preferences (e.g., fast-paced vs. deliberate, task-focused vs. people-focused).
    - Strategies for flexing your style to communicate more effectively with different personalities.
    - **Activity:** "Communicating with Different Styles" – Participants re-craft a message for four different personality types.
- **Module 14: Communication in the Virtual & Hybrid World (Approx. 2 hours)**
    - The unique challenges of digital communication (lack of tone, ambiguity).
    - Best practices for clear and professional email and instant messaging.
    - Tips for effective communication in video meetings.
    - Building rapport and connection with remote colleagues.
- **Module 15: Your Personal Communication Action Plan (Approx. 2.5 hours)**
    - **Action Planning Workshop:** Participants reflect on their key learnings and feedback from the week.
    - They identify 2-3 specific communication skills they want to improve.
    - They create a personal action plan with concrete steps, practice opportunities, and ways to measure their progress.
- **Module 16: Course Review & Commitment to Practice (Approx. 1 hour)**
    - Review of the key communication models and skills.
    - Open forum for final questions and sharing key insights.
    - Participants share one key commitment from their action plan.
    - Course evaluation and closing.