

BUSINESS EXECUTIVES DRAMA CLASS

Read the article about a woman who helps business executives to improve their images. Then answer the multiple choice questions on the next page.

Maura Fay is a casting agent. She chooses actors for films, advertisements and soap operas, and her life is filled with people who refer to each other as "darling" and kiss the air when they meet. It is an environment which is immediately attractive to serious business people. Yet Maura Fay is now finding that her new courses, which are intended to improve nervous executives' presentation techniques, are being taken very seriously indeed.

"It began," says Ms. Fay, "about four years ago during one of the workshops I set up for actors. Not stars, but those who could take on small character parts. Teenagers especially, or people in their fifties and sixties who might have talent, but have no idea of how to present themselves in front of an audience. That's when it struck me, in the middle of one of these sessions. I suddenly thought, this is what the business community needs."

For Ms. Fay it was obvious. Business people are trained to do business, not to perform. Yet if they are to put across their ideas, their knowledge and their information in a memorable way, they need to understand actors' techniques. So Maura Fay set about teaching business people how to win and influence their audiences, how to handle nerves, how to control their breathing and how to make a good impression. It took a long time but the outcome was worth it.

"Most of our trainers are drama teachers. Many have been actors, some still are. In every workshop we do, we involve professional actors. So you can be taught by someone you've seen on television the night before. It's all very exciting and part of new management thinking as we approach the next century. Technology has changed the face of offices throughout the world, but companies are people, not things, after all.

Some business communities are rather cautious about accepting Maura Fay's techniques. Meanwhile other organizations are working along similar lines and using theater-based workshops not only for putting across business ideas, but also for dealing with people's behavior. Theatrical workshops, like music, can cross language and cultural frontiers. Different nationalities will interpret things in different ways, but that is one reason why a theatrical workshop is so interesting and useful.

Maura Fay is also concerned with how to do business in different cultures and she employs actors from various countries to help with multi-cultural workshops. These actors then demonstrate exactly how clients in their own countries would behave in certain business situations, and there is very valuable experience for companies looking to do business in a particular country.

1. How have business people's attitudes changed towards Maura Fay?

- A They no longer take her seriously.
- B They are more attracted to the theater.
- C They think she is a very good agent.
- D They value what she can offer them.

2. What does "it" in paragraph 2, highlighted in bold, refer to?

- A Choose young stars for new films.
- B Advertising her existing courses.
- C Developing ideas for businesses.
- D Setting up business courses for actors.

3 Maura Fay's original workshops were intended to

- A improve star performers' abilities.
- B give ordinary actors more skills.
- C help actors get better jobs.
- D turn young people into stars.

4 What did Maura Fay think business people most needed?

- A more knowledge of the theater.
- B learning to remember information.
- C understanding how to relax.
- D an awareness of acting skills.

5 How does Maura Fay feel about her business courses?

- A They're very hard work.
- B They're very up to date.
- C They're very impersonal.
- D They're very dramatic.

6 What does the writer say about theater-based workshops?

- A Some people are not very keen on them.
- B They influence people's treatment of others.
- C They mean people interpret things wrongly.
- D Some people find them rather uninteresting.

7 Maura Fay employs actors from other countries who

- A discuss people's business plans.
- B explain their own business ideas.
- C act out "foreign" business reactions.
- D teach business people how to behave.

8 What is the writers' purpose in the text?

- A To complain about new business training methods.
- B To help drama teachers change their profession.
- C To provide information about training people.
- D To argue that actors are good at business.

