

# Ariel

CASE STUDY

## Shifting a Global Consulting Firm's SMEs from Analysts to Advisors

How a global consulting company used  
communication skills to optimize their SMEs



## The changing role of the subject matter expert

As a world-renowned management consulting firm, this international organization has the best and brightest employees. But with the sweeping digital revolution proving that data and analytics were only getting more complex, and with the need to compete with leaner, more matrixed companies that eliminate all excess jobs, the roles of those talented employees needed to change.

***“The issue was twofold.***

***We had to train our SMEs to be more effective leaders and presenters, and we had to free up our consultants so that they could get back to their core roles.”***

**“Poor communication skills account for an average loss of \$62.4 million per year at companies with 100,000 employees and \$420,000 per year at companies with fewer than 100 employees.”**

*- SHRM, The Cost of Poor Communications*

Subject matter experts (SMEs), specifically, were shifting from behind-the-scenes to client-facing roles—meaning one of this firm’s most pressing issues became that its SMEs were being asked to partner with clients and engage in strategic dialogue in addition to providing complicated, data-heavy analysis.

While these SMEs are the best in their fields, with compelling stories to tell, the company’s head of Learning and Development knew that this shift would mean the team needed additional soft skills to communicate, lead teams, guide presentations, and engage with clients.

This issue was tied to day-to-day operations and resource management, too: sending a consultant or manager, rather than a SME, into the field was far more costly and impacted the firm’s internal resources.

For this professional service firm to deliver the high level of service and insight they were known for, they needed to

1. enhance the engagement and communication skills of their SMEs to lessen the burden on their consultants
2. bridge the gap between their SME's knowledge and their ability to communicate that expertise to a wide variety of audiences in a clear, effective way.

***“We know Ariel.***

***We've seen results with Ariel. So, we asked Ariel to help us.”***

## **Ariel's solution was an innovative leadership presence journey**

The prior work that Ariel had done with the firm's leadership team was now expanded in scope to include knowledge workers. To accomplish the specific needs of those knowledge workers, Ariel designed and executed the Leadership Presence Development Program, a seven-step journey to help participants develop greater self-awareness, confidence, and credibility.

Designed to enhance their current skills, this journey provided the SMEs with the tools and mindset to

- develop, deliver, and act as a resource about highly technical material using clear, compelling messages
- build authentic relationships and trust with any audience
- use storytelling as a business tool
- drive action, influence stakeholders, and encourage buy-in.

With a combination of virtual classrooms, one-on-one coaching, and three days of in-person experiential learning, this intense, immersive program was challenging. Participants began with a self-assessment and then used role-play to learn as they practiced. They received instant feedback from a coach and became more comfortable with “real-world” scenarios. Each participant also received a follow-up session and attended a completion webinar to reinforce learning and ensure behavior change.

***“It was transformative.***

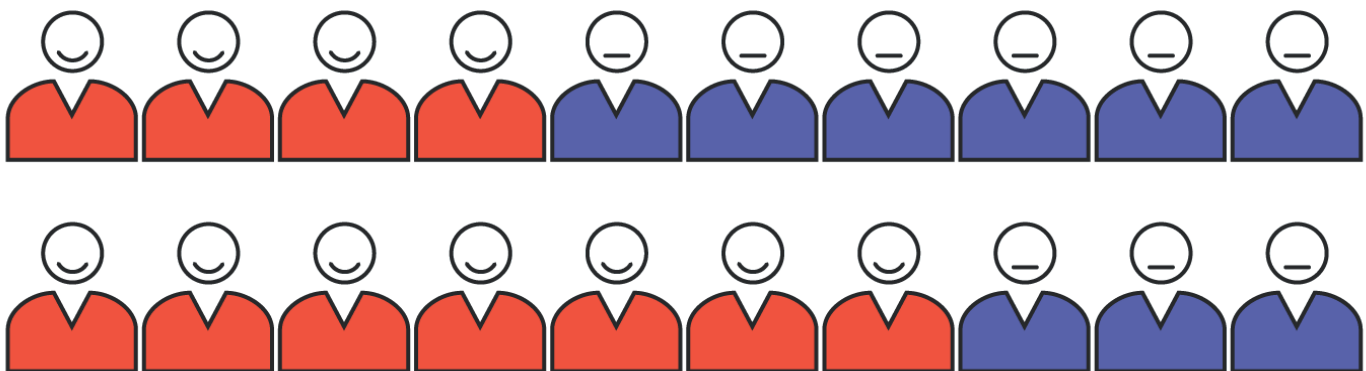
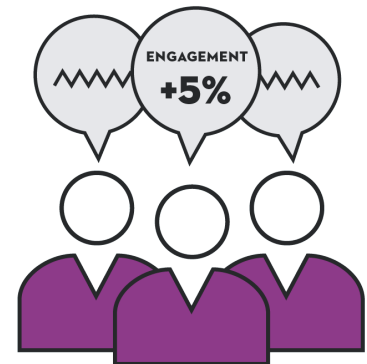
**We saw an immediate shift in behavior: SMEs that were more confident and better at overall communication, insight, and collaboration.”**

## The results: increased client satisfaction because of valuable client-facing experts

After completing Ariel's program, SMEs experienced 5% increased engagement and 30% greater client satisfaction. SMEs also reported feeling more comfortable in their roles, meaning they had successfully shifted their mindset from experts to trusted advisors—and they were seeing clear, immediate improvement. This was just weeks after leadership presence training and management support (a critical element in program success).



To date, our client has implemented Ariel's leadership presence program for thousands of employees at every level. They continue to reap the benefits of staff who can lead, connect, and engage with multiple audiences.



**CLIENT SATISFACTION +30%**

Since the program launch, consultants and leadership are using their time more effectively—and are much more comfortable handing over the technical reins to their more knowledgeable colleagues. This provides measurable savings in terms of money, time, and effort in servicing existing clients, and it allows the firm to expand their activities related to new technical opportunities.

To learn more about Ariel's leadership presence development program, [visit here](#).

***“They nailed it.***

**Ariel has proven—again—that their use of listening, authenticity, storytelling, and presence techniques undoubtedly improves communication in every business setting.”**



## About Ariel

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Ariel develops powerful and authentic communication skills to drive better performance for leaders and teams. Our integrated suite of programs is delivered via classroom, virtual classroom, and a digital offering to provide flexibility in learning. Whether you need to develop your next generation of leaders, connect global teams, or keep your workforce engaged and motivated, we can tackle your most pressing business challenges to ensure that your teams write, speak, lead, and sell with impact and emotional intelligence.

Visit us at <https://www.arielgroup.com/>

