A GUIDE TO SUCCESS—PROFESSIONALISM IN BUSINESS

成功指南
——职业性(商务)

商务英语朱星组　主编

广播电视大学出版社

A Guide to Success

Professionalism in Business

成功指南

职业性(商务)

A Guide to Success—Professionalism in Business
成功指南——职业性(商务)
商务英语课程组 编

(如有缺页或倒装,本社负责退换)

出 版 说 明

本课程是从英国开放大学(Open University)引进、改编的多种媒体的商务英语课程,配套教材包括《成功指南——职业性(商务)》(A Guide to Success—Professionalism in Business);《环球商务英语》(World Class English for Business)(1,2 册);录像带(光盘)及 9 盘录音带。

《成功指南——职业性(商务)》讨论商务从业人员所应具备的基本职业素质。《环球商务英语》深入浅出地介绍了一些当代商务理念和国际商务惯例,以及英语国家的商务文化。全书分 1,2 册,有 8 个教学模块(Module),第一模块公司结构与经营(Module 1   Change and the company);第二模块客户服务(Module 2   The customer);第三模块财务管理(Module 3   Finance);第四模块新产品开发(Module 4   A new product);第 2 册包括:第五模块技术培训与发展(Module 5   Responding to technology);第六模块招聘与求职(Module 6   Recruiting new staff);第七模块广告与市场竞争(Module 7   Advertising and competition);第八模块销售与服务(Module 8   Selling the product)。

本教材由中央广播电视大学外语部刘黛琳、崔松策划并定稿,对外经济贸易大学国际交流学院李平、张筱霖、王帆、宿玉荣参加了教材的改编和注释工作。

Table of Contents

Part One: Professionalism in Business

Part Two: World Class English for Business—Course Guide

Part One

PROFESSIONALISM IN BUSINESS

Specially prepared by

Dr. Tony Stapleton

British Open University Business School

Introduction

As a result of your studies, you now have a good understanding of the English language. You are able to read and speak English at a level that enables you to work in an international business environment. You are also familiar with most of the words and expressions that are commonly used in business discussions. In this Guide we are going to introduce some business concepts and ideas that you are likely to encounter in your professional life. When you have completed it, you will have the knowledge and confidence of a business professional.

We expect you to spend around two weeks studying this Guide. In such a short time we can only offer an introduction to business concepts. We have chosen to focus on five aspects of business operations and management. First, we look at the way that you work within a team. We recognise that every team and every organisation is different, but we also believe that there are common issues that all business professionals encounter. The first of these is managing your own time. It is unlikely that you have the time to do all the things that we want to do or need to do. You therefore have to learn how to organise your time and how to set priorities. You probably also work in a team, and you need to know how to contribute to the performance of the team. Motivation is an important contributor to successful team working, and we discuss how teams and individuals can be motivated.

The next subject that we introduce is that of planning. This includes planning your work, planning your business and planning your resources. Many business people operate on the basis of instinct and experience. We believe, however, that you are likely to be more successful if you understand the process of planning and decision-making. We therefore introduce you to a rational model for planning. We follow this with a discussion of the principles that underlie decision-making. Successful business operations also include regular performance evaluation, and we discuss how you can achieve this.

In your studies you will carry out many exercises concerning relations with customers. You will be familiar with the importance of markets and marketing to all organisations. In the third section of this Guide we introduce some of the principal marketing models. In particular, we look in detail at aspects of pricing, distribution and advertising.

We do not need to explain why finance is an essential element of business. We are not going to try to make you into accountants, but we believe that all business people need to understand the basic elements of finance. In Section Four we introduce to three of these elements: costs, cash flow and investment analysis.

Finally we look at the particular characteristics of businesses that operate internationally. It is likely that you are exporting products or that you are working with foreign partners. It is therefore important that you appreciate why operating internationally can make business more complicated. We look at two particular aspects of international business: cultural differences, and the need for local adaptation.

Throughout this Guide we include a number of Activities. We encourage you to carry out these activities, so that you can understand how the concepts apply to your own organisation. At the end of each Activity we include some comments and feedback, but we suggest that you do not read these comments until you have completed the Activity. We also include a number of Examples and we hope that these will also help you to understand the business concepts and models that we have introduced.

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this Guide is to provide an introduction to general business skills and knowledge. The specific objectives are to understand how to:

* Manage your time
* Work in teams
* Plan your work and make decisions
* Monitor and evaluate your operations
* Recognise customer needs
* Choose and implement marketing policies
* Analyse costs and cash flow
* Make investment decisions
* Respond to cultural differences
* Recognise the need to adapt products internationally

1. Managing yourself and your team

The first step to being successful in business is to be good at managing yourself and the people that you work with. In the first Session we look at how well you organise and use your own time.

1.1 Managing your time

Whether you are new or experienced in your organisation, you know that your job requires specific skills and abilities. However, you may find that your work gives you little opportunity to consider what you are doing, or why you are doing it this way. As a result, you may feel that you are not in control. This can be very frustrating. If you feel this way, you are not alone—it is common sometimes to feel ill—prepared for your job and to wonder whether you are doing things right. This is what Carla is experiencing in Example 1.

Example 1: Is this how it is meant to be?

It was Carla's first review meeting with her manager since she had been appointed as Section Manager. She was pleased to be promoted, of course, but the job was very different than her expectations. Her manager had asked her to prepare a list of her views of her job based on her experience so far.

She looked at the list—it was rather depressing:

—She could never spend any time at one task—she was constantly being interrupted.

—She seemed always to be reacting to, rather than initiating, events and requests.

—Much of her time was spent on one-off day-to-day matters.

—She was always arguing about work responsibilities and resources.

—She never had any time to think—she was always having to make decisions immediately.

—She seemed to spend all her time talking to people, and never actually *doing* anything.

She was apologetic as she handed over her list, but was relieved when her manager laughed and said "Welcome to the world of management!"

So you should not feel guilty if you are having difficulty managing your time.
Nevertheless, if you allow this to continue you may find it increases pressure on you. It

can reduce your efficiency; and may make you feel that you are not doing your job properly. Therefore, unless you tackle the problem it is likely to get worse.

Your problems with time management are likely to include poor time organisation, wasted time, interruptions and changing priorities. It therefore makes sense to look at these aspects of your work routine. You can do this by analysing your *actual* use of time and comparing this with how you would *like* to use your time:

—*Plan* how you should use your time to be more effective at work.

—*Analyse* how you currently use your time at work.

—*Reflect* on how these differ and what you want to change.

—*Change* your use of time.

—*Review* progress regularly to ensure your approach is still appropriate.

This process of collecting information, planning, taking action and reviewing the results is one that managers use for many of their activities. You will come across it later on this course under the name of the control loop (Figure 1). We now look at these stages in more detail.

Plan

The essence of good time management is to distinguish between the *urgent* and the *important*. Important activities are often more long-term than urgent ones. They have the potential to develop and move your work forward in key areas. Urgent tasks, on the other hand, require immediate attention in order to keep the routine work operating smoothly. They may not have the same long-term impact as important issues, but unless they are performed properly there may be no long term! You therefore have to handle both. To be able to do this you must handle routine activities efficiently. This requires you to plan your time and set priorities carefully. Activity 1.1 helps you to start this planning process.

Activity 1.1 (allow 5 minutes)

Think about what is urgent in your work—things you must do very soon because other people are waiting for them. Then think of some important things that you want to do, but which always seem to end up at the bottom of your list because you do not have enough time. Try to think of three examples of each in your work at the moment.

1. Urgent immediate tasks:

_____

_____

_____

2. Important tasks that you *ought* to be doing:

_____

_____

_____

Comments

If you have not identified any important tasks that you ought to be working on, then you are a good time manager. But if you have identified tasks in Part 2 of the Activity, then you need to find ways of managing your time more effectively.

Analyse

The best way to analyse your use of time is to keep a detailed work record for a typical day at work. You may wish to repeat this exercise to see if a pattern emerges.

Reflect

Reflection means making comparisons and identifying alternatives before deciding on a course of action. It helps you to learn from experience. You should ask yourself the following questions:

- Are all your activities really necessary? Are there some that would be done better by other people?
- What things should you be doing more of? Look back at the areas of work that you identified in Activity 1.1: is your actual use of time consistent with these priorities?
- Are you spending too much time on anything?
- Do you spend a lot of time responding to demands from others? If so, can you delegate some of these tasks?
- How much of your time is spent dealing with unexpected urgent issues? If these dominate, you probably need to improve your time planning.

We show how Amnon tries to balance urgent and important tasks in Example 2.

Example 2: Urgency and importance
_____

Amnon knew that he needed to update the product publicity brochure. It had not been changed for two years and, although it was still accurate, it looked out-of-date and old-fashioned. It compared poorly with those of his competitors. He really needed to establish a website with the current information—the existing brochure did not even have an e-mail address on it. He was embarrassed every time he gave one to a potential customer.

He began work on the brochure the following Monday, and he reckoned it would take him most of the week to get it ready for the printer. At 11 : 30 that morning he received a call from David, his Sales Manager. David was due to give a presentation to a large potential client the next morning, but he had just had a call from his wife saying that their daughter had been taken into hospital with a high fever. Then at 1 : 00 his secretary Maria came in to say that she had heard from a friend in Production

that there had been an equipment failure and one line was likely to be down for at least a week.

Amnon made a cup of coffee and considered how he was going to cope. He decided that it was not fair to ask David to go ahead with the presentation—he would be worried about his daughter. Amnon would have to make the presentation himself, and he would need the afternoon to prepare for it. The production hold-up was worrying—he had some major orders that were already on tight deadlines. He would not be able to do anything about that today, but would need to give it priority later in the week. The first thing that he needed was to get information on the likely delays—Maria could collect that for him for when he came back on Wednesday. As for the product brochure, well—that would just have to wait. Perhaps they could just print a sticker with their e-mail address to put on the existing brochures.

He asked Maria to come into his office . . .

Change

Now that you have analysed how you spend your time, you can start to improve your time management. Activity 1.2 helps you to do this.

Activity 1.2 (allow 10 minutes)

1. Consider which of the following approaches might help you improve your use of time:

	I already do	I would like to do
Check my understanding of role with my manager		
Adjust the balance of my working day		
Attend training to improve my skills		
Plan and schedule my use of time more carefully		
Use my diary as a planning tool		
Delegate some routine tasks		
Identify tasks for the day and tasks for the week		
Make a daily list and review it at the end of each day		

2. Now note down three things that you will do within the next week to improve your time management:

_____

_____

_____

Comments

It is important that you review your time management after two weeks to see whether you have achieved the changes that you identified in part 2 of this question. This

7

analysis will help you to plan your time more efficiently. If you are going to continue to improve, however, you will need to repeat this exercise every two or three months.

Review

Once you have made a plan for the use of your time you should review the results. Make a note in your diary three weeks ahead. In three weeks time, review how the steps you have taken are working. You should ask the following questions:

—What went well?

—What could have been improved?

—What went wrong and why?

In this Session we have looked at how you can improve the management of your own time. Next, we are going to discuss how to work more effectively in groups.

1.2 Working in a team

You probably spend much of your time working in groups. Sometimes this goes really well — the group is successful and you enjoy the social contact. But at other times there is conflict in the group, and performance and motivation suffer. In this Session we consider what can be done to make groups work well.

Factors affecting groups

The way groups are set up will affect their performance:

— **Group size**   There is a trade-off between the range of expertise in the group and the opportunity for members to participate. Research has shown that groups of five to seven perform best.

— **Nature of the task**   The group's task needs to be clearly defined. It should be challenging but achievable.

— **Resources**   If a group is not given sufficient resources or support, it is unlikely to be successful.

— **Recognition**   The morale of a group will be improved if its work is recognised as being important.

— **Composition**   Groups work well when the members of a group share similar values and beliefs. On the other hand, mixed groups will face more conflict but are likely to be more creative.

Groups are also influenced by behavioural factors. The contribution of members can be directed towards the task or towards people. Successful groups will demonstrate both types of behaviour, as illustrated in Example 3.

Example 3: Behaviour within groups

The way that members behave and speak to each other will affect the performance of a group. We can see this from the following examples:

1. Task-orientated:

No, I disagree. I think that to follow Mehta's proposal would be taking us away from the main task.

Perhaps we should ask advice from Irena — she is likely to know if this problem has occurred before.

Yes, I agree with Karl — we had a similar situation last year.

2. People-orientated:

Anna, you haven't said anything for a while. What do you think?

I know how much this project means to you, Lee. I appreciate your honesty in speaking as you did. It must have taken some courage.

Colleagues, colleagues. If we go on like this, we'll never get anywhere. Why don't you two talk about the details later?

The last comment is both people- and task-orientated: it represents good group behaviour.

Overcoming problems

We all know that some groups do not work well. There can be lots of reasons for this. Three of the most common causes are:

— **Hidden agendas** A hidden agenda is when an individual has private objectives that are not the same as those of the group. These may include trying to impress or embarrass a colleague or seeking to defend their personal status. The best way to treat this problem is to bring these objectives into the open.

— **Anxiety** Some group members may lack confidence and feel threatened by the group. This may cause them to talk too much or too little, or to behave badly in other ways. This can be overcome by making them welcome and integrating them into the group.

— **Groupthink** This occurs when a group makes a bad decision because the members are unwilling to challenge each other. It can occur if there is a very co-operative culture, or if certain members exert great authority. Groupthink is discussed in Example 4.

Example 4: Groupthink

Famous examples of groupthink include:

1. The disastrous US invasion of the Bay of Pigs in Cuba. The Pentagon planning group had ignored warnings about the dangers and had underestimated the problems.

2. Coca Cola was forced to withdraw its New Coke formula after severe loss of market share. Senior managers had convinced themselves that New Coke was a good idea even though market research did not support it.

3. British Airways decided to replace the UK flag on the tail fins of its aircraft with examples of world art. However, its older customers—who were its most important market segment—opposed this change. BA was forced to restore the flag.

All these examples resulted from selective interpretation of evidence and a refusal to take notice of warnings. In each case the decision was strongly promoted by one or two individuals, who were not challenged by other members of the group for cultural or political reasons.

Groupthink can occur in teams that normally work well together. It can be prevented by introducing outsiders into the team and by encouraging a questioning attitude amongst its members.

Improving team performance

The chances of a team being successful can be improved by understanding its structure and its processes.

- **Team structure** A good team will be one that works in an organised way, is reliable and includes the right professional knowledge. Its members will be co-operative, will be good listeners and will have enough time to undertake the necessary tasks. Meredith Belbin argued that "*No-one is perfect, but a team can be.*" He said that successful teams include members capable of making specific contributions to the team. If they have the right strengths, their weaknesses could be covered by other members of the team. His suggestion of team roles is described in Example 5.

Example 5: Team roles

Belbin identified the following team roles:

Plant	Source of original ideas— an innovator	**Shaper**	Task-orientated, dynamic—makes things happen
Implementer	Turns ideas into practical actions	**Teamworker**	Promotes harmony, good listener
Completer-finisher	Conscientious—ensures completion of task	**Co-ordinator**	Acts as Chairperson, good communicator

Monitor-evaluator	Analytical—provides objective judgment	**Specialist**	Single-minded, focused—provides rare skills
Resource investigator	Explores opportunities— has many contacts		

- **Processes**   Teams are not always harmonious or effective from the start. It is important to recognise that teams go through several stages. At each stage, the team faces different challenges and behaves in a different way. Work by Tuckman and Jensen identified five stages: forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. These are described in Example 6.

Example 6: Stages of team building

Tuckman and Jensen's five stages are:

1. **Forming**   Members are confused and nervous as they get to know each other. The manager needs to establish goals, roles, responsibilities and procedures.
2. **Storming**   The team argues about different ideas and approaches. Everyone expresses their view and the role of the manager is to listen.
3. **Norming**   The team begins to come together and work towards an agreed aim. The manager is involved in building the team.
4. **Performing**   By this stage the team is working efficiently to achieve its goals. The manager's role is to maximise team effectiveness.
5. **Adjourning**   Once the task is completed, the team disbands. The manager needs to provide feedback and assist in the transition to new tasks.

Now that you have read about aspects of working in groups, carry out Activity 1.3 to see how they apply to your work.

Activity 1.3 (allow 20 minutes)

Consider a formal group of which you are a member, and answer the following questions:

1. Does its structure affect its ability to function?

Factor   How satisfactory is this factor?
Size
Task(s)
Resources
Recognition