

# WORLD OF BUSINESS



David Cotton

# WORLD OF BUSINESS

AN INTERMEDIATE COURSE  
IN BUSINESS ENGLISH

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LONGMAN

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## *To my daughter Gisèle for choosing the title*

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# INTRODUCTION

This course is designed for those who already have a basic knowledge of English and now wish to acquire the specialized vocabulary and language skills of business.

It consists of 15 units, each one based on an aspect of business. The text may be about a new trend, a dramatic event, a controversial issue or the problems facing a particular company. The topics cover a wide range of subjects and are international in scope.

A typical unit includes discussion work; reading and listening comprehension; vocabulary-building exercises; review and practice of points of grammar; presentation of language functions; a problem involving a role play or simulation exercise; additional discussion topics and a writing assignment.

The teacher's book contains tapescripts for the listening comprehension exercises and keys to the exercises. A cassette with recordings of the dialogues and listening comprehension passages is also available.

## AIMS OF THE COURSE

- to teach and practise the language of business;
- to develop communication skills necessary for business careers;
- to revise basic grammatical structures and patterns of English in a business context;
- to practise the four language skills—reading, speaking, listening and writing;
- to extend students' knowledge of the world of business by presenting texts about new trends, significant developments and the problems and successes of individual organizations;
- to ensure that the contexts within which the language is practised are drawn from a number of different countries or areas of the world.

## EACH UNIT HAS THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

### To Start You Talking

One or two questions related to the subject matter of the text are suggested for discussion. Students are prepared for the reading passage and cover some of the vocabulary in it.

### The Text

Most passages are about 450–500 words in length. Those towards the end of the book are slightly longer and more difficult to read. The average student at this level should be able to read a text in 10–15 minutes. The reading passage provides a context for the grammatical structures dealt with in the unit, and all sections are linked either directly or indirectly to the central topic.



## Comprehension

The questions in this section are intended for group discussion and test whether students have understood the main ideas of the passage. One question generally requires the student to explain the meaning of certain words or phrases in the text. Some questions are more subtle; for example, the reader is asked to interpret meaning, or to give an opinion about a statement.

## Vocabulary

There are two vocabulary exercises in each unit. The first is usually based on terms that have already appeared in the text; the second introduces new items. This section aims at enriching students' vocabulary. Some of the exercises are gap-filling ones; others involve completing a passage with suitable words, or providing correct noun and adjective forms for given words. A few are open-ended; for example, in one exercise students must comment on a graph, using expressions which describe changes in the price of a share.

## Language Practice

This section consists of exercises focusing on points of grammar which cause particular difficulty. They are constructed in such a way that they encourage students to respond actively, usually orally. Many exercises require learners to interpret visual material, for example charts, statistics or graphs.

## Oral Work

### 1. Dialogue

The dialogues are fairly short and may be listened to or read out by the students. The purpose of the dialogue is to prepare the learner for the *problem*. It does this in two ways. First, it introduces the language functions which the student needs to participate effectively in the problem-solving activity. Second, it sets up a problem, providing information which can be used to solve it. Following each dialogue, the language functions are listed. Then students do a short exercise to practise using them.

### 2. Problem

In this section, students are presented with a problem to solve under the heading 'What do you think?' Usually, they are instructed to hold a meeting, the purpose of which is to discuss the problem and work out appropriate courses of action. In many units, the discussions involve role play or simulation activities.

The problems often contain an element of confrontation, involving groups of people, or individuals, who have different ideas about how to deal with a situation—this commonly gives rise to lively discussions. This is an important section because it gives students the opportunity to practise the vocabulary, structures and language functions which they have learned in earlier sections.

## Additional Discussion Topics

Students discuss themes related to the text or issues developed in the problem-solving section.

## Writing Exercise

Most of these exercises are based on common business procedures. Students are required to write memoranda, business letters and telexes, and to draft advertisements and notices.

## Listening Comprehension

Most of the recordings consist of dialogues, but other kinds of listening material are included, such as excerpts from lectures, sales presentations, radio and television programmes, and telephone conversations. The exercises are task-based: while listening to the tape, for example, students must note down facts and figures which are later used to complete a chart, a memorandum or a newspaper article. A few exercises are of the traditional kind where students answer questions based on the listening passage.

'The type of work and the activities of office workers have not changed much in the past 20 years.' Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.



Modern office equipment: How much information is used in the

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## EACH UNIT HAS THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS:

### To Start You Talking

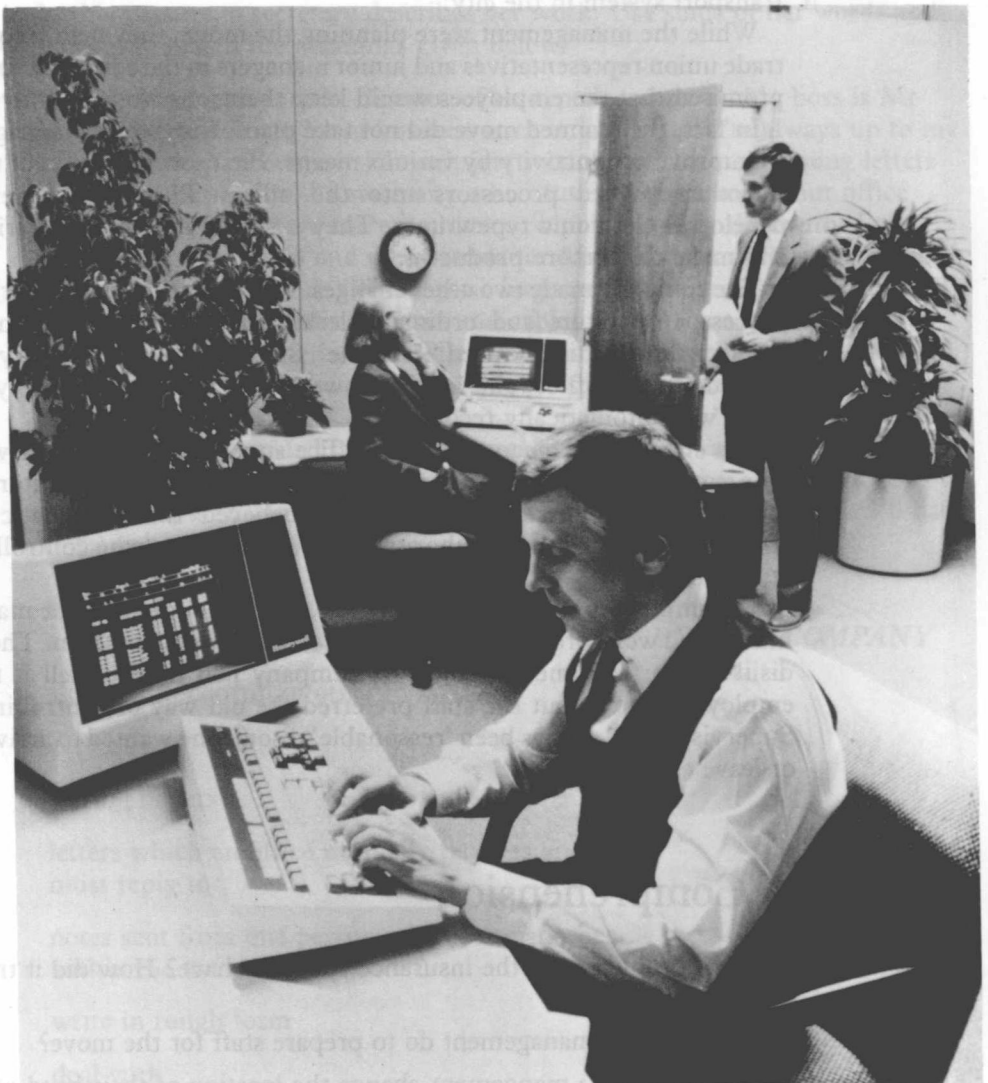
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# 1 CHANGES IN THE OFFICE

'The type of work and the activities of office workers have not changed much in the past 20 years.' Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.



*Modern office equipment: Honeywell information systems in use.*



As most managers know, it is not always easy to persuade staff to use new machines, or to accept changes in their working conditions. The management may truly believe that the machines or changes are for the good of their employees. The employees, however, often think differently.

5 Here is an example to illustrate the point. This story is about a large insurance company in Europe. Its head office is situated in a major city. About five years ago, the company had a problem. The amount of paperwork in the office was increasing and the clerical workers were having trouble dealing with it. Unfortunately, the company could not employ more workers because office space was  
10 limited.

To solve the problem, the management decided to change the location of their head office by moving to a town about 50 kilometres away. They also had another reason for wanting to move: the company was losing 16% of working hours because staff were arriving late to work. They were often delayed by the unreliable  
15 transport system in the city.

While the management were planning the move, they held frequent talks with trade union representatives and junior managers in the company. In addition, they promised that the employees would keep their jobs after the move.

In fact, the planned move did not take place. Instead, the management decided  
20 to improve productivity by various means. First, over a period of two years, they introduced word processors into the office. These are, essentially, highly developed electronic typewriters. They save the time of secretaries and typists, and make them more productive.

The company made two other changes. It divided the clerical workers into word-  
25 processor operators and ordinary clerks. And, to reduce the number of lost working hours, it introduced 'flexitime'. Staff were allowed to vary the times they arrived at their office, and left it. However, the time they actually spent at their desks was automatically recorded.

The effect of the changes on the office supervisors and clerks was surprising.  
30 The supervisors who were not in charge of word-processor operators felt that their jobs were less important. They also believed that automatic recording of attendance reduced their authority. Before, it was *they* who controlled employees' attendance.

The employees were not happy either. They thought that the management had  
35 introduced word processors to 'squeeze' more work out of them. They particularly disliked the flexitime system. The company had tried to sell it to them as an employee benefit, but the staff preferred the old way of controlling attendance. Supervisors had always been 'reasonable' if someone wanted to arrive at work late, or leave early.

## A Comprehension

1. What problems did the insurance company have? How did it try to solve them?
2. What did the management do to prepare staff for the move?
3. Why didn't the management change the location of their head office?
4. How does a word processor help a secretary to be more efficient?

5. Why did the supervisors and clerical workers dislike flexitime?
6. Explain clearly the meaning of these words and phrases:

*paperwork* (l. 7)  
*junior managers* (l. 17)  
*improve productivity* (l. 20)  
*authority* (l. 32)  
*sell it as an employee benefit* (l. 36)

## B Vocabulary

1. In this passage, a secretary describes her work. Use some of her words and phrases to match the meanings given below.

'I work as secretary to the director of an export company. My boss is Mr Wood. We're doing a lot of business at the moment, so I'm always up to my eyes in work. You see, my job isn't just sorting out the mail, typing letters and filing documents. I have many other duties. For example, our office receives a lot of routine correspondence, which I usually deal with. I also draft important letters and memoranda for Mr Wood, as well as organize his diary and work schedule. We've got a large number of overseas customers, so I'm continually sending telexes and cables abroad. In addition to that, I have to take telephone calls, handle travel and hotel bookings, and entertain visitors. Oh yes, I forgot to mention, I'm responsible for buying office supplies too.

My boss is interested in business machines. He's got a dictating machine and intercom on his desk. In the corner of the office, there's his new toy—a micro-computer. Now he's keen to buy a word processor. I suppose I'll have to learn how to use that soon.'

### Meaning

a firm which sells its goods overseas

### Word/phrase

EXPORT COMPANY

a person in control of others

.....

very busy

.....

storing papers

.....

letters which an office normally receives and must reply to

.....

notes sent from one person or office to another

.....

within the same company

.....

write in rough form

.....

deal with

.....

amuse and interest

.....

a means of speaking to several offices linked to each other by means of microphones and loudspeakers . . . . .

a machine for storing and printing text that has been typed into it . . . . .

2. Here are some things you can find in an office:

cupboard	file	in-tray	stapler
chart	filing cabinet	out-tray	telex
desk	folder	keyboard	wastepaper
diary	flimsy	paper clip	basket/bin
drawing pin	floppy disc	safe	

Which do you use to . . . ?

store records

stick notices on a board

hold papers together (two possible answers)

show figures or graphs

note down appointments

hold letters and memos that will soon be sent

type in information

keep money and valuable documents

throw things into which you no longer need

pass printed messages from one place to another

What do you use the other things for?

## C Language Practice

Word processors *save* the time of secretaries and typists, and *make* them more productive.

The *present simple tense* is used here to express facts which are permanently true.

Read the following:

Mr Corbett, the manager of a small company, answered this advertisement.

### WORD WONDER

#### YOUR OFFICE OF THE FUTURE FOR ONLY £500

You know that the cost of producing typed paperwork is becoming an expensive item in your office expenditure.

What you need is the Word Wonder word processor.

Ring 11-222 3333 to arrange a visit by one of our representatives.

Before the Word Wonder representative's visit, Mr Corbett made a list of things he wanted to find out.

*List of questions to ask Word Wonder representative*

Find out:

- If the machine shows one completed page of a long document.
- How many standard letters and documents the machine memorizes.
- If the machine puts words or paragraphs in new positions.
- If we can put a whole block of text on another page.
- How much the machine gets on one page.
- If the machine wipes off words or characters.<sup>1</sup>
- How fast the machine prints.
- If the machine matches names and addresses to standard letters.

This is the list of information the Word Wonder representative looked at in order to answer Mr Corbett's questions.

*Word Wonder Specifications*

- 118 characters per line, 100 lines per page.
- Screen display of any completed page of document or letter.
- Storage of up to 200 pre-set documents or letters.
- Repositioning of whole paragraphs or single words.
- Removal of single characters, words or paragraphs.
- Movement of blocks of text from one page to another.
- Automatic filing of names and addresses with standard letters.
- Printing rate: 160 characters per second.

Mr Corbett's meeting with the representative started like this:

Mr Corbett: There are several things I'd like to know about your word processor.

Representative: Yes, Mr Corbett.

Mr Corbett: Does the machine show one completed page of a long document?

Representative: A screen displays any completed page.

**Work in pairs**

Ask and answer Mr Corbett's other questions.

<sup>1</sup>Characters = single letters, i.e. a, b, c.

## D Oral Work

### Preparation Making suggestions

*Susan and Jane work as clerk-typists in an insurance company. The manager of the office is Mr Harris. Read or listen to the dialogue.*

Susan: Jane, do you know what I've just heard?

Jane: Not bad news, I hope.

Susan: It is, actually. I was talking to Pat a few minutes ago. You know she's friendly with Mr Harris . . .

Jane: Yes, I believe they do get on rather well.

Susan: Well, Mr Harris told Pat in confidence. Um . . .

Jane: Yes, go on.

Susan: All right. Pat told me the management's going to make big changes in our office. They're going to put everything on a computer—filing, accounts, wages, the lot.

Jane: Good heavens! You mean, they're planning to computerize the whole department?

Susan: Exactly. And when that happens, we'll be out of a job.

Jane: Mmm . . . you may be right, Susan. Look, let's go and see Pat, and find out more about this.

Susan: I don't think she knows anything more.

Jane: Why don't we see Mr Harris then?

Susan: We can't do that. After all, I did promise Pat that I wouldn't tell anyone.

Jane: Yes, that's true. You know, Susan, it might be a good idea if we started looking for another job. How about calling in at the employment agency on our way home?

### Practise these expressions

To make suggestions:

Examples:

Let's talk to the manager about this problem.

Why don't we introduce flexitime in our company?

It might be a good idea if we used computers to handle our accounts.

To accept/reject suggestions:

Examples:

Yes, that's a good idea.

No, that's not a good idea. (The speaker is definite.)

No, I don't think we should do that. (The speaker is less definite.)



Work in pairs. One of you is an office worker, the other is the manager of the office. Using the expressions listed below, the office worker makes suggestions for improving his/her working conditions.

Example:

A: Why don't we have a two-hour lunch break?

B: No, I don't think that's a good idea.

*Let's . . . . .*

*Shouldn't you . . . . . ?*

*Why not . . . . . ?*

*It might be a good idea if we . . . . .*

*It might be worth/worth while . . . . .*

*Why don't you/we . . . . . ?*

### Problem

Gerald Parker, managing director of Reliant Insurance plc, is unhappy. This morning, three managers have come into his office, each telling him the same story. Somehow or other, the office employees have heard about the computer systems which will soon be introduced. The employees are all very upset. The older ones are afraid of modern technology, and the younger ones do not want to learn new methods of work. Most of the staff are certain that they will lose their jobs when the office is computerized. Some are already looking for jobs with other firms.

The staff are right in one way. The company will need fewer office workers when the computer is installed. This will be in three months' time, but the machine and systems will be working efficiently only six to nine months later. At that time, about half the staff—there are 15 altogether—will have to leave because there will be no work for them.

But what about now? This is the busiest time of the year for the company. Every employee is working overtime and will continue to do so for the next two months or more. The office has recently taken on two temporary workers, but neither is doing her job well.

Mr Parker is worried. He did not tell the office staff about the plans to install a computer because, for a long time, the management were not sure if they wanted to introduce it. He still has not signed the contract with the supplier of the equipment. Now he is beginning to think 'Maybe we should forget about the computer and leave the office as it was'.

### What do you think?

Mr Parker talks about the problem with some of his managers. He asks them to make suggestions and advise him what to do now.

Instructions:

Work in *small groups*. One of you is managing director, the others are managers

of the company. The managing director should discuss with the other members of the meeting the following questions:

1. What actions should the management take to solve the problem?
2. Should Mr Parker try to find out *who* told the workers about his plans? If so, what action should he take?
3. Have the management made any mistakes? If so, what are they?

### Additional Discussion Topics

1. 'The secretary will soon disappear from office life.' True or false?
2. This chart is based on a recent study of the work of secretaries. It shows how the average secretary spends his/her working day. Some activities are missing from it. Using the list below as a guide, put each activity in an appropriate position on the chart. (Answers in the Teacher's Book.)

Talking face to face	<i>List of activities</i>
6% of the day	★ clerical work
.....	★ filing
8%	★ dictation
.....	★ photocopying, taking messages to people
13%	★ dealing with the post
.....	★ talking on the telephone
20%	★ waiting for work
Coffee and personal	
2%	
.....	
2%	
.....	
18%	
.....	
4%	
.....	
2%	
Miscellaneous	
5%	
Typing	
20%	

### E Writing Exercise

Susan Barnes is a clerk-typist at Reliant Insurance. She is an excellent worker. This morning she went to see Mr Harris, the office manager, and handed him a letter saying that she was giving up her job. Mr Harris did not want Susan to leave, so he tried to persuade her to change her mind.

Write the dialogue that took place between Susan and Mr Harris. If you wish, use the start of their conversation which is given below.

Mr Harris: I must say, Susan, I'm surprised by this letter of resignation. Why do you want to leave, exactly?

Susan: It's quite simple really, Mr Harris. You're going to computerize all the office systems soon, so there won't be any work for the clerk-typists, will there?

Mr Harris: . . . . .

Susan: . . . . .

## F Listening Comprehension

First, listen to the dialogue. Then listen again and complete these notes.

1. Mrs Keller arranged to meet Mr Perkins because . . . . .
2. Her firm is fairly large. It supplies . . . . .
3. It is also a complex business. They have more than . . . . .
4. One of their main problems is . . . . .
5. If a book sells well, they . . . . .
6. In order to get new supplies of a book, someone . . . . .
7. If the company installs a computer, they will know . . . . .
8. Using a computer, you can find out the number of each book in stock. You just . . . . .
9. A computer will also warn you that . . . . .
10. Mrs Keller would have to pay . . . . . She thinks that the cost is . . . . .

## 2 GLORIA VANDERBILT JEANS

Why are jeans so popular in many countries? Do you think there will always be a market for them?

Murjani is a manufacturer of high-fashion or 'designer' jeans. These are sold under the Gloria Vanderbilt label. The company's biggest market is the United States. There, Gloria Vanderbilt jeans are a household name. However, as recently as 1977, Murjani was having little success selling jeans or any other merchandise in the US. Its turnover was only \$25 million.

At that time, the American head of the company, Mr Warren Hirsch, had a clever idea. He decided to change the image of the jeans, priced at \$10 a pair. He set out to make them status symbols, so that people wearing them would appear fashionable, well-to-do and with good taste. For these qualities, they would pay \$40 a pair.

To change the jeans' image, Mr Hirsch was able to persuade Gloria Vanderbilt—a member of a rich and famous American family—to endorse the product. She let the company put her name on the back pocket of the jeans. After that, he arranged for her to appear on television.

In television commercials, Miss Vanderbilt seemed to be promoting the jeans. Actually, she was selling an image of wealth and elegance. Obviously, young people in New York did not have her money or style but, by buying her jeans, they could look or feel as if they did.

This new approach to marketing the product was successful. After one year of television advertising, Murjani's sales increased to \$150 million. In the following year, they almost doubled. Naturally, the managers in Hong Kong were delighted with the results. They forecast that sales would reach \$1,000 million by 1985.

Some fashion experts believe that this figure is too high. The market for expensive jeans has become very competitive now. There are over 200 firms in the business, though many of these are late-comers looking for quick profits.

There is another reason why Murjani's rate of growth may slow down. Rival companies have started using television to promote their own jeans. A few years ago, jeans rarely appeared in television commercials; these days, they are frequently advertised on television in the New York area.

One day, the boom in jeans sales will come to an end. Manufacturers like Murjani are already preparing for that time by diversifying into other fields, such as sports goods and footwear.