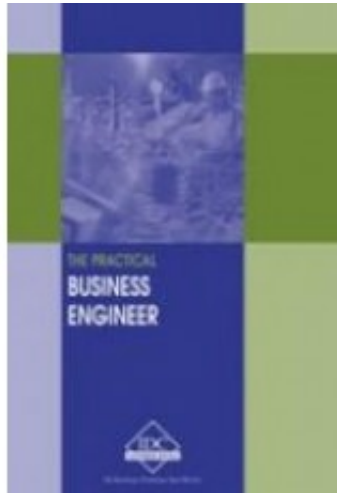


BE-E - The Practical Business Engineer



Price: \$65.95

Ex Tax: \$59.95

Short Description

It is a truism that engineers tend to focus on technical issues to the detriment of the commercial realities that impact on their businesses on a daily basis. Engineers and other technical professionals put enormous effort into achieving their degrees and diplomas and believe that their technical skills are the most important factor in determining who will get the best jobs and who will manage the most prestigious and interesting and well paid jobs.

Description

It is a truism that engineers tend to focus on technical issues to the detriment of the commercial realities that impact on their businesses on a daily basis. Engineers and other technical professionals put enormous effort into achieving their degrees and diplomas and believe that their technical skills are the most important factor in determining who will get the best jobs and who will manage the most prestigious and interesting and well paid jobs.

But unfortunately the reality is considerably different. What gives you enormous momentum in achieving success in industry is possessing sharp and broad commercial and management skills. Engineers and technical managers are generally bright, capable, hard working and highly trained individuals who can readily deal with the commercial issues in their organisation once they have received the necessary training in the critical issues as outlined in this manual. This manual is designed to help you build strong competencies in business

communications and promotion and marketing of your business and indeed of yourself, it will save you years of learning from experience.

Table of Contents

Download Chapter List

[Table of Contents](#)

First Chapter

Basic Commercial and Business Concepts

1. Basic Commercial and Business Concepts

Engineers are turning to manage businesses as a part of their roles – maximizing the business process efficiency with technical excellence is becoming a necessity. Among the many qualities or basic requirements for an effective Business engineer, communication plays a major role. Communication is part of the process in any job and it is a frequent and critically important for any operation. It makes the difference between success and failure for an organization or individual.

Learning objectives

- Key skills and concepts that would help in commercial and business communication.
- Some of the: basic communication skills, feedback, presenting winning presentations, effective habits of success among others

1.1 Why is communication important?

Communication is vital in any job and it is a frequent and critically important process. Particularly for a business engineer, it makes the difference between success and failure.

1.2 Business communication skills

Effective communication plays an important role in enhancing organizational success.

Managers with communication competence are able to get things done efficiently and effectively. Modern technology has greatly contributed to management's access to information; it is knowledge management, after all, who must ultimately determine the information to be retrieved and to whom it should be sent. No matter how sophisticated information technology becomes, managers at all levels of an organization need to be skilled in business communication and aware of its effectiveness for the successful operations.

Which business communication skills should receive the most emphasis in the workplace?

A criterion for determining the importance of any communication skill is its frequency of use. Among communication skills, listening is the most used and certainly occupies a large portion of daily communication. This skill plays a central role in assessments of communication competence in the workplace.

Even if listening skills are very important for business people, oral and written communication skills are claimed to be important as well. There have been several prominent recent studies, which have yielded interesting findings concerning these two areas of communication.

Good writing and speaking skills are required not only in management positions, but also in jobs that rely heavily on computers.

There have been a number of studies exploring the communication types needed in a workplace or for business contacts. One study found that the greatest daily portion of time certified management accountants spent in their spoken communication covered face-to-face communicating, telephoning, meeting informally, and advising. The results of their study also indicated written communication most frequently used in preparing memos and letters.

With the emergence of information technology, e-mail and the fax have taken on a vital role, especially in international business communication. E-mail was claimed to be one of the most lively and intelligent conversations people had in some time, and it is now rapidly embracing communication worldwide.

1.3 Questioning skills

We frequently ask questions when we are not really looking for answers.

“How are you?” for example, often elicits a “How are you?” response, as an answer.

Ill-prepared, ill-timed and inappropriate questions create barriers in our relationships.

For example, think of the manager who asks “Any problems?” when clearly already

packed up to leave for the weekend. Some more questions are placed in Figure 1.1.

Questions are too useful to confine only to interviews or information-seeking occasions.

We can use questions to:

- complain or criticize
- deceive or disrupt
- encourage
- interrupt or intimidate
- persuade
- show concern or interest
- show our own knowledge
- upset

Figure 1.1 Essential Questions - Communication

1.4 Feedback

Without response or feedback, there is no communication.

Feedback is no more or no less than:

- Body language (and contact)
- Verbal or other exchanges that indicate that people are happy or unhappy with the message sent to them
- Silence

The response cycle can start as soon as one starts addressing his or her target audience:

- It can be slower or faster than expected
- It can tell a lot less or a lot more than expected.

1.5 Effective business presentations

An effective presentation should convey the intended message to the audience.

It is important to define the purpose of the presentation before starting to prepare

the content. Some of them are illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Most business presentations fall into two categories:

- (a) Those that convey information to the audience.
- (b) Those that try to persuade the audience towards a certain course of action.

The content and the manner of presentation would depend on the purpose.

One should always start preparation for any presentation by answering questions

such as those below:

- What does the audience need? Why are they attending this presentation?
- Who will be there?

- How much time have I been allotted for the presentation?
- Does this include the question and answer session?
- What content do I need to cover? Why?
- Will this content interest the members of the audience (all/ some of them)?
- What will be the organization of the presentation?
- Do I want to give reading material at the end of the presentation?

Figure 1.2 *Presentation Skills*

Answers to these questions are vital to creating presentations that are meaningful to the audience.

Some people have standard presentations and make the same presentations in different context and to different audiences. This “one-size-fits-all” approach is a certain way to disaster. People making presentations need to view the situation from the audience’s viewpoint and not their own. A detailed audience analysis helps to understand the needs to the people attending the presentation. This is not difficult in a business context. The purpose of every business presentation can be defined with a fair degree of clarity. The details pertaining to the audience can be obtained from the person who has invited the presenter. Obtaining answers to these questions hardly take time. This can be done face-to-face, over the phone or through mail. Yet, many presenters do not do this homework.

Not sticking to the allotted time is a common problem. Presenters come with dozens of slides and run out of time.

It is possible that some of the audience, including key decision-makers, leave before the presentation is completed because the budgeted time is over. Proper

homework can prevent this.

Another frequent problem in business presentations made to customer organizations is that the presentations focus on the seller's company rather than the buyer's needs. A large number of slides are utilized to talk about one's organization at the start of the presentation. It takes time to reach those aspects that interest the buyer. There is a high degree of risk over here as the audience may switch off after some time.

The key is to get to the buyer's need as quickly as possible. If the purpose of the presentation is to get the audience to make a decision to buy a product or service, it is important to tell them why and how it will benefit them. The important point to note is that it is important to answer the "what-is-in-it-for-me" question from the audience's viewpoint. State the buyer's need along with assumptions made, explain how the solution will meet the need and why the presenter's organization is best suited to deliver the solution.

The presenter needs to walk a tightrope when there is a mixed audience.

It is possible that the CEO, CFO and CIO are present during a key presentation made to the customer organization. Each of the CxO profiles may have a different perspective and it is necessary for the presenter to cater to these needs. Some presentations have an overdose of features of PowerPoint. The purpose of the visual aid is to prompt the presenter and to get the audience to focus. Short bullet points will suffice rather than having verbose sentences. The latter leads to many people reading the slides instead of facing the audience and making a presentation.

Too much of content in a slide leads to transitions being utilized to prevent the entire content of the slide being displayed. The best method is to have one idea per slide and not more than five to six bullet points in a slide. This will go a long way in preventing the audience from thinking about subsequent points before the presenter has completed the current one. Such simple methods can remove the need to use fancy transitions.

Figure 1.3 Captivating your audience

To summarize, "*Proper preparation prevents poor presentation*". One needs to

state the purpose of the presentation and the needs of the audience at the preparation stage. This will help the rest fall into place.

1.6 Effective habits of success in business

Figure 1.4 Effective habits of success in business

1.6.1 Be proactive

Effective people in business use their resources and initiative to work towards their personal goals. In particular, each person has both a circle of influence and a circle of concern. Thinking and worrying endlessly about things outside of your circle of influence isn't particularly productive. Working within your circle of influence is productive. Further, the more effective you become, the more your circle of influence will expand.

1.6.2 Start with the goal in mind

To be truly effective, you must begin with your goal in mind. Many people climb the ladder of success only to find the ladder was leaning against the wrong wall.

Many winners are good visualizers. To succeed, one should learn to visualize. Visualization can be done in any area of your life. Before a sales presentation, a difficult confrontation, a performance, or the daily challenge of meeting a goal, see it clearly, vividly, relentlessly, over and over. Create an internal zone, which makes you feel comfortable. Then, when you get into the situation, it doesn't scare you.

1.6.3 Prioritize

Categorizing your tasks by priorities eliminates a lot of wasted time. If you always start with the number one priority on the list and work your way down to the least,

you will be accomplishing the most important tasks for yourself and your business

The key to putting first things first is to understand that you have many things you can do which will have a significant, positive impact on your life. But, you probably don't do them, because they aren't urgent. They can be delayed. Of course, so will your success.

1.6.4 Interdependence

Independence is the key to interdependence. By being independent, you can learn how to be more effective by effectively working with others.

Independence exposes you to a bigger realm and will eventually result in deep, fruitful associations, increased productivity, service, contribution and growth

Independent thinking alone is not suited to interdependent reality. Independent people who do not have the maturity to think and act interdependently may be good individual producers, but they won't be good leaders or team players. They're not coming from the paradigm of interdependence necessary to succeed in marriage, family, or organizational reality.

1.6.5 Think win-win

One must seek mutual benefit in human interactions. Some people think 'If I win, you lose'. Such people, who focus upon power and credentials, have trouble building meaningful relationships. Such people drive other people away and cannot be extremely effective.

To be successful you should learn to encourage and leverage the strengths of others. To do this effectively involves being able to find win-win deals.

1.6.6 Synergize

Different people see the world in different ways. You must value the differences between people and how they view the world. Recognize and respect different

points of view and use them as driving forces to produce the best solutions and enhance mutual awareness and respect

1.7 Dealing with team problems

Many problems between team members arise from simple misunderstandings. Effective communication is an important part of effective team work. This is especially so within diverse teams.

Effective communication requires success at each of the following stages:

- Delivering a message
- Receiving a message
- Understanding the message
- Responding to the message

Figure 1.5 The Communication cycle

One of the key skills for effective communications is to practice active listening techniques.

Here are a few tips that could help:

- Non-verbal listening responses - e.g. look into the speaker's eyes; nod to show your acknowledgement or approval; lean towards the speaker
- Paraphrase what you are hearing – e.g. say “I think what you are trying to say is ...” (and then repeat what the speaker told you in your own words to check for understanding)
- Comment on the implications – e.g. ask “are you saying that...?”, or “do you mean that ...?” This indicates a genuine interest in the message, and shows the speaker that you have really understood what is being communicated.
- Invite continuation – e.g. say “what happened then ...?” or “can you give me an example?” or “tell me more about ...” This communicates a desire

to hear more about the topic, and promotes an openness between the two parties.

- Reflect the underlying feelings (empathy) – e.g. say “that must have been satisfying” or “you must have been so upset?” This shows the speaker that you are really keen to understand and are trying to put yourself in his or her shoes.

Effective teams not only communicate effectively but they are able to avoid and to resolve conflicts constructively.

Conflict is probably inevitable: differences of opinion will always occur, and in themselves on not a bad thing. Well-managed disagreements can be constructive and can ratchet-up the quality of thinking and analysis surrounding a certain issue.

But negative and sustained conflict will be destructive and counter-productive within teams.

It is important to note that most conflict arises from how we respond to potential conflict.

Here are some typical precursors to conflict situations.

Team members:

- Make comments and suggestions in an emotional way
- Attack others’ ideas before these have been fully expressed and evaluated
- Accuse one another of not understanding the real point
- Take sides and are inflexible
- Attack one another on a personal level, sometimes in subtle ways

Conflict, if left unresolved, will escalate and will certainly interfere with the effectiveness of the team and the morale of team members.

There are usually three components to every conflict situation:

- Adversarial positions – i.e. playing a “win-lose” game, and wanting to

- “win” rather than solve problems
- Holding to tightly-held positions – i.e. seeing no need for achieving mutual goals; hardening positions, narrowing communication and limiting involvement with fellow team members
 - Emotional involvement – i.e. becoming emotionally attached to one's position

Figure 1.6 shows the typical development of a conflict situation.

Figure 1.6 Development scenario of conflict situation

As you can see, it is much easier to tackle conflict at an early stage before it becomes entrenched. However to confront conflict requires both courage and skill. There is always the potential for things to go wrong and to become quite emotional. It takes a skilled facilitator to mediate between two parties in conflict. Alternatively, it takes great maturity on the part of the team members involved to try and resolve the conflict themselves.

How to manage a conflict situation

Here are six steps which may help you next time you have to try and resolve a conflict situation:

Step 1 - acknowledge that conflict exists

Step 2 - identify the “real” conflict

Step 3 - listen to all points of view

Step 4 - together, explore ways to resolve the conflict

Step 5 - gain agreement on, and responsibility for, a solution

Step 6 - schedule of follow-up session to review the resolution

1.8 Summary

Communication is part of the process in any job and it is a frequent and critically important for any operation. It makes the difference between success and failure for an organization or individual. Listening, proper questioning and interpreting the feedback in a right way are the key elements in communication.

Effective presentation requires careful preparation. The intended message should reach the participants. Audience analysis, content to be covered, timing and mode of presentation are the basic points to be considered before preparing a effective presentation.

Effective habits in business environment are the step stones for success. Proactiveness, fixing goals, prioritizing, teaming spirit, winning attitude and synergizing the efforts are the habits of successful business engineer.

Proper communication and teaming spirit are important in managing workplace conflicts. Interpretation also plays a major role in understanding people and their problems in the workplace.