

Transitions: Life Skills for Personal Success

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COMMUNICATIONS MODULE

Communication is the capstone of human society. This is especially true in the workplace because billions of dollars are earned and lost everyday due to effective and ineffective communications. In the world of work, effective communication can mean the difference between a crushing failure or an exhilarating accomplishment. In today's high tech society, communication training is more important than ever. Voice over Internet Protocol and HTML code are not the communication training we are talking about; today's successful employee needs communication training of the most complex form: interpersonal communication (*Business-Higher Education Forum, 1999*). In fact, it is the increase in our society's dependence on e-mail, voice mail and other forms of "non-personal" communication that is straining the interpersonal communication skills of many employees. Researchers are finding that our society's younger generations are less "skilled" in the art of face to face communications. As dictated by workforce demands (*Simonetti, Jack L. 1999*), many employers are expecting job candidates to possess outstanding communication skills, not only to become employees of their organizations, but to excel on the job and become promoted from within.

The Effective Communications Module in the Transitions Program was designed to meet the expectations of employers from ANY industry—as well as arm our learners with the tools they need to get employed, stay employed and enjoy a prosperous career.

Our lessons and activities were painstakingly developed to ensure our learners would experience true to life situations that elicit the communication styles, methods and techniques that employers expect and demand. In addition, we formulated a sequence of high-powered topics that begin with the fundamentals for success and culminate with the acquisition of skills that exceed expectations.

We begin with a section that provides learners with valuable anger-control tools that will help them successfully negotiate the most emotionally-charged situation at work. For even in uncertain and stressful situations, the cool-headed, well-spoken, tactful professional will always win the day!

Our learners continue the Effective Communication journey by arming themselves with three of the most powerful words in the business lexicon: "I don't know." To our learners' amazement, they discover how to use those three powerful words to help them listen, learn and communicate their way to on the job success!

Effective Communications can only be obtained by those who know how to listen. Our two-part series about "listening" helps learners better capture complicated information and utilize reflective feedback to convey a sense of understanding towards a demanding boss. Listening establishes a solid foundation for Effective Communication, but we don't stop there! We also help our learners understand that

there are two certainties in the workplace: First, your job and career will be met with uncertainty. And second, Effective Communication will be able to lessen the severity of, and the number of, uncertain experiences at work. In this section of the Module, activities and lessons focus on disarming ambiguity, chaos and uncertainty at work. These are areas of turbulence that cannot be avoided yet can easily be handled.

On occasion, listening has to be followed-up with immediate action. Many supervisors and managers have a lot of information and advice that they impart to their employees, but oftentimes, they assume the receivers of these “pearls of wisdom” are actually listening. Listening to advice is not enough, however. Our exercises and lessons demonstrate how listening is turned into learning when followed by action and results. In other words, the world of work is results oriented and results come from actions, which begin with listening—those who listen get results!!

The employee who is well-spoken, cool-headed and listens patiently is typically the employee who is in command of the most powerful Effective Communication element: persuasive speaking. In this two-part series, our learners equip themselves with persuasive speaking skills that will build their confidence with making a sale, defusing a disagreement, changing someone’s mind, asking the boss for a raise or finding a coworker to cover during the weekend shift. Persuasive speaking skills are not simply an expectation from employers, nor are they a luxury for the business savvy. These skills are a necessity for job and career success.

Our learners also have an opportunity to examine their verbal communication styles. They can reflect upon the types of words they use regularly, and whether or not those words can command respect in the workplace. They learn that the words they use truly are a reflection of who they are. Vocabularies can actually convey one’s IQ, level of education, personality traits, temperament and even work ethic! Our exercises cover respectful, professional workplace communication, and avoiding the venom of communication: GOSSIP!

Then, we introduce the topic of networking as a crucial communication skill for acquiring a job. Our learners come to understand that they have a network already, even if they didn’t know it!

Finally, the Module culminates with our third two-part series: Customer Oriented Communication. In the world of work, everyone serves a customer, whether face to face or via electronic communications—the customer is the life blood of every business. This critical skill is presented in a series of situational activities based on the real world customer service traits that employers demand. Regardless of the setting—be it retail, fast food or a Fortune 500 Corporation, customer service communication is the **ULTIMATE** factor in deciding whether an employee is on his or her way to failure or success. When interacting with customers, we convey the importance of being positive, having passion, and being caring, friendly and reliable. Our learners discover that all of these positive traits can be conveyed in one’s tone of voice, body language and vocabulary! To top it all off, we provide lessons that impart the successful philosophy that a “customer” is more than a person who purchases services or goods from a company. A customer is actually anyone we

come in contact with during the workday— a colleague, a delivery driver, even a supervisor!

And we come full circle with our training. Because treating your boss as one of your top customers can bring a whole new meaning to providing “service with a smile”— which in turn helps you communicate more effectively on the job—which in turn helps you achieve results—which in turn makes the company more money—which brings you job security and a successful career!

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