

## Book Reviews

# Trainingsbuch Business English: Kommunikation und Zusammenarbeit in internationalen Teams (a review)

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Don't worry about the 'buch', German for book, in the title or the fact that the information on the front and back cover of the book is in German. The interior of the book is entirely in English and is full of excellent ideas and activities for teachers of business English and intercultural understanding.

*Trainingsbuch Business English* is written by two of the leading business English teachers and intercultural trainers. Bob Dignen is CEO of York Associates and ILP (International Leadership Performance) and the author of several books on intercultural training. Ian McMaster is a business English teacher and intercultural trainer and was Editor of Business Spotlight, a magazine on Business English, published in Germany. The book is aimed at non-native speakers using business English in an international environment but is also very useful as a guide for teachers of English in business and also trainers in a corporate environment. The book assumes a reasonable knowledge of English including grammar and professional vocabulary but goes on to offer tips and phrases which gives confidence to users and improves communication. The result is better relations with business partners, building trust and getting better results in business dealings. Included in the book are ways of getting your message across in meetings, how to manage meetings, influence discussions and the decisions that are taken, managing conflict and giving and receiving feedback both face-to-face and online.

The book offers activities that teachers and trainers can use in class and in the seminar room and discusses business management issues as well as practising the language commonly used in particular situations.

The book is organised into three main sections. Part 1 deals with the fundamentals of communication, including how to get your message across, how to listen effectively and how to work with different communication styles. Part 2 looks at 20 areas of teamwork, grouped into five sections – forming relationships, teambuilding, leadership, building cooperation and dealing with disagreements, and resolving challenges. Part 3 focuses on useful basic phrases in managing communication, professional socialising and networking, meetings, presentations, negotiations and writing.

In the introduction to the book the authors make the point that international communication isn't just about language. Business environments can be very varied with people from different organisations having different ways of doing things. We must also consider differences in cultures. Cultural diversity is a key factor in global business and differences can lead to language and behaviour misunderstandings both within and between companies. At the same time, it is important for the business English user working in international environments to assess their own communication style and see how they need to adapt to the situation they are in.

Two tips in Part 1 which addresses communication fundamentals are the D.I.E. model that helps users select the most appropriate phrase for what they want to convey. D stands for Describe, I stands for Interpret and E stands for Evaluate. This is about developing the right mindset for dealing with communication issues that might arise and your response to them. The second tip is P.R.O.D.U.C.E., a way of deciding how to set priorities.

P stands for Purpose (decide what you want). R stands for Relations (be aware that the need for quick decisions may lead to ignoring relationships). O stands for Organisations (what are the priorities and aims of the organisation?) D stands for Decision (how to ensure good decision making). U stands for Upshot (the results of our decisions). C stands for continuous learning (self-development), and E stands for Energy (pay attention to health and well-being). Examples like this draw attention to the authors' immense experience, not just in teaching Business English but also in their familiarity with working with leading international organisations and how to improve students' communication style.

Focusing on the English language phrases taught in each chapter, Parts 1 and 2 contain a simple and quick test to check understanding of the key phrases taught. Answers are listed at the end of the book. One exciting feature of Parts 1 and 2 is the use of critical incidents, real-life situations that have occurred in international business which the teacher and students can analyse and suggest ways of resolving the problems that arise. One real-life example concerns a team manager who wants to nominate two members of her project team to make a presentation of their excellent results to the board of senior managers. The problem is can they speak English fluently enough to make a good presentation? She knows that some of the managers can be very critical of presenters who make mistakes when using English in a meeting. So, the question is should she make the presentation herself or should she nominate her project team members to make the presentation and risk possible negative feedback from the audience? The difficulty in reaching a decision is making relations between the team leader and her team colleagues quite difficult as they are enthusiastic about having the opportunity to present their results to the senior managers' board.

Dignen and McMaster suggest relevant and thought-provoking questions the students can discuss under the title of 'What do you think?'

1. Why should the team leader let her project team members make the presentation to the board?
2. Would be better if the team leader makes the presentation herself?
3. What do think the team leader should do?

Setting up the work in this direction, the class is invited to exchange their views on the questions and offer answers which may be based on their own experiences.

The chapter goes on to discuss different management aspects of the situation including thinking about decisions, leadership and decision making and exploring strategies to make better decisions. Then the authors provide a number of possible answers to solve the problem, the team make the presentation, the team leader makes the presentation herself and leaves her colleagues out and finally, the whole team appears in front of the board. The team leader leads the presentation but gets her team members to make parts of the presentation which they will feel competent to do. The chapter continues by teaching key phrases that can be used in a presentation and concludes with a short sec-

tion of exercises to test what has been learned about the language used in making decisions. A perfect lesson plan for upper intermediate and advanced users of English as an international business language which can be spread over one or two sessions as required.

All the critical incidents featured in the book are very much true to life and focus on difficult decisions or poor relations within the company or between different businesses, positively engaging the participants in the class by asking what they think of the problem and what they would do to resolve it. They will certainly have experienced similar issues in their own careers at some point.

Part 3 of the book presents phrases which are typically used in business communication exchanges, including social phrases and ways of explaining what you want. Chapter 30 on writing, for example, contains phrases to explain the reason why you are writing as well as listing common greetings and phrases to establish good relations and how to sign off and choose from a range of closing remarks. It also offers 'crucial phrases' used in giving good news and bad news, making a request, offering help, confirming, offering and giving opinions, complaining, apologising and thanking. Although students will certainly know some the expressions listed, others will be new to them and each 'crucial phrase' category contains three to five examples. An excellent strategy for teachers and trainers is to take a category and introduce it into the class alongside the critical incident discussion. For example, if you have chosen the critical incident story about the team leader making the right choice of team members for the presentation to senior managers, you might want to look at Chapter 28, Presentations, which lists phrases the students can use to improve their presentation style.

In addition to its emphasis on language proficiency, *Trainingsbuch Business English* uniquely addresses the importance of cultural diversity in global business. The authors highlight how varying cultural backgrounds within organisations can lead to misunderstandings in both language and behaviour. Recognising and navigating these differences becomes crucial for effective communication. The book guides business English users in assessing their own communication styles, encouraging adaptability to diverse situations. This cultural awareness aspect adds a layer of depth to the language learning process, preparing users to navigate the complexities of international business environments successfully.

*Trainingsbuch Business English* not only equips users with language skills but also efficiently explores decision-making processes within a professional context. The authors introduce practical models such as the D.I.E. model and P.R.O.D.U.C.E., offering users frameworks to approach communication challenges and set priorities. These tools go beyond language instruction, building a holistic approach to effective communication that considers both mindset and decision-making strategies. This integrated approach undoubtedly reflects the authors' comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of successful business communication.

The inclusion of critical incidents in Parts 1 and 2 adds an interactive dimension to the learning experience. By presenting real-life scenarios, the book encourages students to think critically, apply language skills in context, and propose viable solutions. This pedagogical approach does a great job levelling up language proficiency and developing problem-solving and analytical skills, valuable assets in the professional world. The book's practicality extends beyond language learning, making it a valuable resource for educators seeking to cultivate critical thinking skills in their students.

*Trainingsbuch Business English* recognises the evolving nature of international business communication, particularly in the era of online interactions. The inclusion of guidance on giving and receiving feedback both face-to-face and online reflects the authors' awareness of the contemporary business landscape. As virtual communication becomes increasingly prevalent, the book prepares users for effective digital interactions, ensuring they can face the challenges of remote collaboration with confidence.

The book's structure, divided into three main sections, caters to diverse learning needs. Whether focusing on communication fundamentals, teamwork dynamics, or specific language phrases, users can tailor their learning experience. This modular design accommodates various teaching styles and thus allows educators to adapt the material to the specific needs and proficiency levels of their students. Such flexibility is what ensures the book's usability in a range of educational settings, from traditional classrooms to online learning environments.

Summing up, *Trainingsbuch Business English* is an excellent book for training students and business executives in international business communication as it offers practical situations to engage students and involve them in expressing their views through the critical incidents and presents phrases commonly used by native speakers of English grouped by function that students can learn and practise to improve their communication skills. An excellent resource for your personal or institutional library.