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# COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN BUSINESS CONTEXTS

## WORKBOOK

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### FOREWARD

In any career you would like to pursue, the level of success will depend on your ability to communicate.

This workbook is aimed to be an integrated and useful tool for those who want to improve their communication skills and vocabulary in business contexts.

It can be used as a self-contained course meant to cover the most important situations in business and organizational environment, focusing on improving communication effectiveness by a wide range of applied exercises on different organizational contexts.

The main objective is to help you acquire knowledge and skills in order to successfully:

- introduce yourself and describe your educational and professional background;
- demonstrate understanding of organizational communication practices and apply your knowledge in various communication contexts;
- communicate in meetings and small groups, expressing your opinion, agreeing, disagreeing, problem solving, decision making etc;
- apply the principles of effective business presentations.

The workbook comprises authentic readings (adapted and abridged), vocabulary development sections, conversational practice, a concise but well illustrated "Grammar Spot", (which gives an overview of the main

tenses), prepositions, introductors and connectors exercises, all of them important tools in your pursuit for a fluent and accurate discourse at your workplace. Most of the texts and exercises were adapted from different journals, specialized magazines and Cambridge examination organizers, so that the workbook may also be used as a self-study reference and a supplementary practice book for CFE and CAE exams.

## UNIT ONE

# APPLYING FOR A JOB

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*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.*

Nelson Mandela

- **EDUCATION - FUTURE PROSPECTS**

NURSERY SCHOOL- voluntary

PRIMARY SCHOOL- at least six years primary education, from 5 to eleven

SECONDARY SCHOOL- at least five years secondary education, from 11 to 16

GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF SECONDARY EDUCATION  
(GCSE) EXXAMINATIONS (TAKEN AT 15-16)

11 YEARS OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION

ADVANCED LEVEL ("A" LEVEL) EXAMINATIONS (TAKEN AT 18)

university college of education polytechnic

(teacher training)

State Education in England



HIGHER EDUCATION



The chart above explains how state education is organized in England. In each town or district, the system is decided by local authority and so it can vary, but this is the usual system. Draw up a similar of your own state education. Do they resemble?

• **VOCABULARY SPOT**

➤ **EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

John Stewart tells us about his educational background. Complete each sentence with one of the words or phrases from the box below. You will need to put the verb into the right tense:

Apply	graduate	grant	higher degree
Honors degree	job	option	PhD
Place	primary school	scholarship	secondary school
Stay on	study	subject	thesis

1. I started at ..... in London when I was 5.
2. At the age of 11, I went to ....., also in London.
3. At 18, I ..... to university.
4. I got a ..... at Manchester ..... Engineering.
5. In fact I was awarded a .....
6. But at the end of the first year I changed to another .....
7. I ..... from university in 1 988.
8. I have a first class ..... in Economics.
9. I decided to ..... at university.
10. So I did ..... in business administration at the University of California.
11. During the course, I did an ..... on small business development.
12. I found the topic so interesting that I applied for a ..... to do a doctorate on the same subject.
13. Once I got the money, I had to write a 50.000 word .....
14. So now I have a BA, an MBA and a .....
15. All I need now is a .....

➤ **LETTER OF APPLICATION**

**1. Read part of the letter of application below. Are sentences 1-7 'Right' or 'Wrong'? If there is not enough information to answer 'Right' or 'Wrong', choose 'Doesn't say'. For each sentence 1-7, mark one letter (A, B or C).**

I would like to apply for the post of Personnel Officer with Alpha Bank, as advertised in the Daily News on 20 November.

I have a BA in French from the University of London. I am following a part-time course in Personnel Management at the Oxford College of Management, and I hope to pass the Diploma in Personnel Management at the end of December.

When I left university, I worked for a year in a computer company near Cambridge. Then I moved back to London to work as a French teacher in a large school, where I stayed for two years. During this time, I did some part-time work as a language trainer with factory managers, which I very much enjoyed,

Three years ago, I joined Carter's Bank, where for the past year I have worked as Assistant Personnel Officer, dealing mainly with complaints from members of staff.

Having worked in a similar organization to yours, I feel I am fully prepared for the challenges of this job.

Yours faithfully

Mary Brown

1. Ms Brown is applying for a Job with the Daily News.

A. Right                      B. Wrong                      C. Doesn't say

2. She obtained a Diploma in Personnel Management in December.

A. Right                      B. Wrong                      C. Doesn't say

3. She worked as a computer operator after university.

A. Right                      B. Wrong                      C. Doesn't say

4. While Ms Brown was a school teacher, she also taught company executives.

A. Right                      B. Wrong                      C. Doesn't say

5. In her present job, she has responsibility for internal personnel problems.

A. Right

B. Wrong

C. Doesn't say

6. She enjoys working at Carter's Bank.

A. Right

B. Wrong

C. Doesn't say

7. Ms Brown thinks she would be suitable for the job because of her previous experience.

A. Right

B. Wrong

C. Doesn't say

**2. The letter of application (cover letter) can be as important as the CV in that it often provides the first direct contact between a candidate and an employer. If this letter is not well written and presented, it will make a poor impression. The letter of application normally contains four paragraphs in which you should:**

- confirm that you wish to apply and say where you learned about the job;
- say why you are interested in the position and relate your interests to those of the company;
- show that you can contribute to the job by highlighting your most relevant skills and experience;
- indicate your willingness to attend an interview (and possibly say when you would be free to attend).

*Rearrange the following paragraphs in the correct order to make up a covering letter. Check your version with your partner.*

*Remember that extensive letters for job application are drafted nowadays in case the applicant sends his professional documents to all firms likely to employ his services even if they have not made a public announcement of vacancies. This is called the SHOT-GUN approach.*

A. At the moment I am working part-time as an independent agent for Romanian and German importers of Chinese textiles and chemical products. I find the relevant Chinese factories for the buyers, negotiate for them and translate their contracts into Chinese, Romanian or English.

B. I would appreciate it if you would consider meeting or speaking with me within the next two months about the possibility of my working for your company.

C. I am writing in order to enquire about the possibility of an opening in your company. My goal is to find a position in an international company and I would be interested in either research and development or marketing and sales.

D. Please find enclosed my CV containing further details of my educational background experience.

E. I am particularly interested in finding a position that would offer me management training and that would involve my knowledge of chemical processes and my foreign language skills.

F. My long experience of actively participating in committee meetings as a representative of my student unit has given me good presentation skills, as I am able to present ideas clearly and concisely to an audience.

G. The liaison work I have been doing has been challenging: I have learnt a great deal about the cultural differences in conducting business with Asian and Europe clients.

H. I see my strong points as my ability to lead teams and manage tasks and groups, take the initiative, solve problems, make decisions and open and maintain friendly relationships with people from all walks of life. I have limitless energy and I am willing to work hard to achieve all the goals of any task I am set.

### ➤ RECRUITMENT

**Reading 1** Read the following text which explains how job advertisements differ in three European countries.

#### **Job Ads: Reading between the Lines**

Checking out job advertisements is popular with executives worldwide. But though the activity is universal, is the same true of the advertisements? Are executive positions in different countries advertised in the same way? A comparison of the jobs pages of The Times of London, Le Monde of Paris and Germany's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung suggests not.



First, what UK job seekers consider an essential piece of information - what the post pays - is absent from French and German adverts. It is often left to applicants to raise this themselves. In contrast, most British advertisements mention not only salary, but also other material incentives including a car and fringe benefits. French or German advertisements rarely refer to these.

The attention given to rewards in the UK indicates the importance of the job and its responsibility. In France and Germany, this information is given by the level of experience and qualifications demanded. Salary can be assumed to correspond with this.

If French and German adverts are vague about material rewards, they are precise about qualifications. They usually demand "a degree in ...", not simply 'a degree'. In Germany, for example, a technical director for a machine tool company will be expected to have a Diploma degree in Mechanical Engineering

French advertisements go further. They may specify not just the type of *grande école* degree, but sometimes a particular set of institutions (Formation supérieure X, Centrale, Mines, HEC, ESSEC), these being the most famous *grandes écoles*.

All this contrasts with the vague call for "graduates" (or "graduate preferred") which is found in the UK. British companies often give the impression that they have a particular type of applicant in mind, but are not sure about the supply and will consider others. Their wording suggests hope and uncertainty, as in this advertisement from *The Times*: "Whilst educational standards are obviously important, a large measure of personal oomph\* is likely to secure the success of your application."

In the UK qualifications beyond degree level make employers nervous, but in France or Germany it is difficult to be "overqualified". Many people on German executive boards have doctorates and the French regard five or six years of intensive post-baccalauréat study at a *grand école* as ideal training. British managers are not selected primarily for their intelligence, as managers are in France, or for their expert knowledge, as in Germany. Instead, the British give importance to social, political and leadership skills.

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\* oomph = enthusiasm.