

SkillBott

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS MODULE

Communication is the capstone of human society. This is especially true in the workplace because billions of dollars are earned and lost every day 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. Phone, text, email 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, text messages, tweets and other forms of "non-personal" communication that is straining the interpersonal communication skills of many employees. Researchers are finding that society's younger generations are far less "skilled" in the art of face-to-face communication. 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 Communications Skills Module in the SkillBott Program was designed to meet the expectations of employers from ANY industry—as well as to arm our learners with the tools they need to get employed, stay employed and enjoy a prosperous career.

Our lessons and activities were 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.

The module begins with a section where learners are provided 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 Communications 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 skills can only be obtained by those who know how to listen. In the two part series about "listening", learners are taught to 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 skills, but we don't stop there! Our students learn to understand that there are two certainties in the workplace: First, your job and career will be met with uncertainty. And second, effective Communication skills 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 altogether, yet can easily be handled.

In most cases, 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 often times, they assume the receivers of these “pearls of wisdom” are actually listening. Listening to advice is not enough, however. The exercises and lessons in this module 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!!

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! Students experience exercises which cover respectful, professional workplace communication, and avoid the venom of communication: GOSSIP!

The topic of networking is investigated 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! Learning to network with co-workers, partners, business colleagues, and others in your field is yet another critical area our students discover. Through a number of real life situational lessons, they are given the opportunity to gain experience and confidence in their abilities to be part of the network.

The concepts of learning to take advice and deal with criticism are crucial to developing good communication skills. Students get the chance to deal with multiple situations where they learn to accept advice and feedback and then make something of it. Learning to give and receive healthy constructive criticism goes hand-in-hand with this topic. Arming students with the skills to handle these situations and walk away with their head held high is the goal of these lessons.

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 co-worker 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.

References:

1. Title: Spanning the Chasm: A Blueprint for Action. Preparing Tomorrow’s High Performance Workforce

Author: Business-Higher Education Forum

Journal Citation: *Business Higher Education Forum*; bhef@ace.nche.edu

Publication Year: September, 1999

2. Title: The Key Pieces of the Career Survival and Success Puzzle.

Author: Simonetti, Jack L.

Journal Citation: *Career Development International*, v4 n6 p312-17 1999

Publication Year: 1999