

BTEC in a Box

BTEC First

Business

Sample pages

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TOPIC The purpose of communications in business contexts: 1

LEARNING OBJECTIVE Describe the importance of effective communication and identify problems in doing it well

Topic information	Delivery methods	Guidance	Box content
<p>Communication is the most basic essential element for any organisation.</p> <p>Various media are used in business to inform, to promote, to persuade and to instruct. These include written, oral, telephonic and email communications.</p> <p>Learners need to consider what it means to communicate. In theory, messages are sent or transmitted (T) <i>and</i> received (R):</p> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>T —————> R</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">↑ ↑</p> </div> <p>But there are many barriers to effective communication.</p>	<p>Ask learners to speak to the person next to them in class, informing the other person about themselves, perhaps describing an interest, hobbies, likes, dislikes, work, and so on. This should just be a conversation, with no notes allowed. Then ask each learner who has received information to report to the group about the person who has described themselves in this way. Discuss the accuracy of these reports.</p>	<p>At this early stage in the unit it is important to stress the crucial importance of communication in any business organisation.</p> <p>Dismiss the notion that communication is easy by identifying the many barriers preventing messages being received. Get the group to consider the sort of barriers that exist. To illustrate this point, perhaps try talking to the group while constantly scratching your head; or talk one-to-one with a learner in front of the whole group while eyeing them up and down.</p> <p>Effective communication is a tough skill to master. Case studies 1 and 2 show two situations in which people are struggling to communicate well.</p>	<p>Case study 1: The Prince's Trust</p> <p>Case study 2: The Primary Care Trust – a disastrous meeting</p>



TOPIC The purpose of communications in business contexts: 2

LEARNING OBJECTIVE Describe, using examples, the purpose of formal business communication in different contexts

<i>Topic information</i>	<i>Delivery methods</i>	<i>Guidance</i>	<i>Box content</i>
<p>In this topic, set out the purposes of formal business communication. This requires defining what is meant by formal. Formal communication is characterised as being on behalf of an organisation; it is communication undertaken as part of business or job function, or in an official capacity. Contexts for these formal communications include instructions, meetings, complaints and presentations.</p> <p>Contrast with a definition of informal communication and its role in an organisation. Informal communications are made by people on behalf of themselves as individuals. This includes chat, banter and rumour.</p>	<p>Draw a simple organisation chart on a board or chart, with one boss at the head, branching out to three deputies, each having six staff and possibly subordinates.</p> <p>Discuss formal lines of communication, then ask the class to consider formal purposes and informal lines of communication within this organisational structure.</p>	<p>Refer to the importance of informal communication occurring irrespective of the formal structure or precise job roles</p> <p>Outline that the purpose of communication depends on the context, such as subordinate to line manager, staff to customer, manager to manager. This also affects the style and tone of the communication. It might be useful to establish what line management is at this point.</p> <p>Use the case studies on The Prince’s Trust, Primary Care Trust and Walkers Crisps to illustrate different contexts requiring communication skills.</p> <p>Assessment 1 could be issued at this point. This can be a focus for development work and delivery of the unit content.</p>	<p>Case study 3: Walkers Crisps</p> <p>Assessment 1</p>



TOPIC The purpose of communications in business contexts: 3

LEARNING OBJECTIVE Describe, using examples, the purpose of formal business communication in different contexts

Topic information	Delivery methods	Guidance	Box content
<p>In this topic, focus on how the contexts of communication affect the style and tone.</p> <p>For example, a meeting between a salesperson and a manager to discuss low sales figures is likely to adopt a formal tone.</p> <p>The purposes of any communication will differ according to role. For example, in an exchange between a manager and a subordinate, the manager may want to encourage or warn while the subordinate may want to justify his or her actions. In a customer complaint context, the customer may want to demand some kind of action, while the employee may wish to placate, inform, explain or apologise.</p>	<p>Get learners to set up and act out role-plays using the case studies as contexts.</p> <p>Note that the assessment requirement is to set up a <i>context</i> and agree and demonstrate the purposes of a verbal or written communication.</p>	<p>The emphasis in the previous topic was looking at the various purposes calling for communication skill in business. Here the emphasis is on how the context affects both the communication method and the style and tone of that communication.</p> <p>Demonstrations are the only way to drive this home to learners. They will gain from experience, particularly if they are encouraged to think about the background to communicating.</p> <p>The next session(s) should be given over to Assessment 1. Use Case studies 1, 2 and 3 as illustrations of different contexts governing communication media, style and tone. Materials prepared in groups or pairs can form the basis of learner responses to tasks. Teacher/tutor discretion is required as to deadline date.</p>	<p>Assessment 1</p>

assessment activity front sheet



ASSIGNMENT TITLE **Interpersonal skills**

Learner's name		Assessor's name	
Date issued	Completion date	Submitted on	

<i>Reference for grading criteria</i>	<i>Grading criteria</i>	<i>Date achieved</i>	<i>Evidence</i>	<i>Comments/feedback from assessor</i>
P5	demonstrate interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills when demonstrating business communications			
M3	explain the interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills used to support effective communication			
D2	evaluate the importance of effective interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills in a given business context			

Learner declaration

I declare that all the work submitted for this assignment is my own work or, in the case of group work, my own contribution to the work of the group in which I worked, and that no part of it has been copied from any source.

I understand that if any part of the work submitted for this assignment is found to be plagiarised, none of the work submitted will be allowed to count towards the assessment of the assignment.

Signed:

Date:



ASSIGNMENT TITLE **Interpersonal skills**

- ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES
- In this assignment, you should:
- demonstrate interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills when demonstrating business communications (P5)
 - explain the interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills used to support effective communication (M3)
 - evaluate the importance of effective interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills in a given business context (D2).

TASK INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is regarded as vital in the company you work for. There is great emphasis on treating everyone with respect and handling any sensitive cases with confidentiality and discretion.

An induction package is being prepared, and a section on interpersonal skills is being produced. You are required to write out at least three situations that will require good use of interpersonal skills. Then you must demonstrate *at least* one of these for new staff.

If you wish, you can use the examples given in the Any-Firm Ltd case study as a basis for your situations.

TASK 1

Using a business context or situation, such as those described in the Any-Firm case study, create a demonstration of the importance of interpersonal skills in communication. After your demonstration, say briefly what you have tried to show.

TASK 2

To support understanding of the issue of interpersonal skills, explain in a written presentation why – in the situations you used – these skills were required. What might have happened if these skills were absent? What might have resulted in terms of communication?

TASK 3

Using at least two of the situations or contexts you have looked at, write an evaluation of the non-verbal and interpersonal skills that were required. Give your views as to whether they were important or not in that context.



ASSIGNMENT TITLE	Interpersonal skills
ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES	<p>In this assignment, learners should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demonstrate interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills when demonstrating business communications (P5) ▪ explain the interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills used to support effective communication (M3) ▪ evaluate the importance of effective interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills in a given business context (D2).
WHAT YOUR LEARNERS WILL DO IN THIS ASSIGNMENT	<p>Learners will perform brief demonstrations showing interpersonal skills in dealing with a difficult or a sensitive situation. The Any-Firm case study offers some ideas as to the kind of situations in which these skills are needed.</p> <p>Learners should explain how interpersonal skills can be used to support communication and evaluate the interpersonal and non-verbal skills used in a specific situation.</p>
WHAT THEY WILL LEARN IN THIS ASSIGNMENT	<p>Learners will learn how oral communications, in some instances, need to be underpinned by good interpersonal and non-verbal skills and that this is very often the difference between success and failure in dealing with a sensitive situation.</p>
GRADING SCHEME (what is required for each grading level)	<p>For learners to achieve P5</p> <p>Assessors will witness a learner interacting with another in dealing with a difficult situation. The learner will show appropriate non-verbal signals and offer reassurance and sensitivity.</p> <p>For learners to achieve M3</p> <p>The learner should be able to explain why a particular approach was adopted and what it was hoped would be achieved by that approach.</p> <p>This requires a written presentation, possibly a report, in which learners could use the scenarios in the Any-Firm case study to explain the reasons why interpersonal skills can be so important. They should cover issues such as respect, care and concern for an individual's welfare. In one-to-one situations dealing with a difficult or awkward issue, learners should explain why a gentle, calm, supportive but occasionally firm approach is needed.</p> <p>For learners to achieve D2</p> <p>This level of work will show a very sound appreciation of a given business situation and an ability to evaluate the kinds of interpersonal skills that would assist, or exacerbate, the situation.</p>
GUIDANCE NOTES	<p>Interpersonal skills are not easily taught. Some would say they are innate skills. However, everyone is capable of understanding the basic requirements for confidentiality and sensitivity in particular situations. The most crucial non-verbal signals such as giving eye-contact can be taught.</p>



ASSIGNMENT TITLE	Interpersonal skills
ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES	<p>In this assignment, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ demonstrate interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills when demonstrating business communications (P5) ▪ explain the interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills used to support effective communication (M3) ▪ evaluate the importance of effective interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills in a given business context (D2).
WHAT YOU WILL DO IN THIS ASSIGNMENT	<p>In this assignment you will offer a short demonstration of interpersonal skills in a business context. You will explain why interpersonal and non-verbal signals are important. You also need to say whether you think effective interpersonal skills were used in a specific business context and fully justify your views.</p>
WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS ASSIGNMENT	<p>In this assignment you will learn how to interact with other people. You will understand what people look for when dealing with others in a business context.</p>
HOW THIS ASSIGNMENT WILL BE GRADED (the grading criteria)	<p>To achieve the P5 grading criterion, you will give a demonstration of interpersonal skills by listening to someone in a sensitive business context and responding to them in an appropriate way.</p> <p>To achieve the M3 grading criterion, you will be able to explain how your actions in the demonstration – both in terms of interpersonal skills and non-verbal signals – would have helped the situation.</p> <p>To achieve the D2 grading criterion, you will be able to take various aspects of interpersonal skills and non-verbal signals and say how, if at all, they helped in the context.</p>
GUIDANCE NOTES	<p>Interpersonal skills are those things that people look for in each other. We all have these skills, to a greater or lesser extent. When we are at work we need to use these skills all the time, no matter how we feel. At home, you may feel in a bad mood (your mum, dad, brothers and sisters will often be the first to know) but when at work you have to use your interpersonal skills to hide your moods. This means listening, helping, supporting, nodding, smiling, and so on.</p> <p>These skills are the key to effective communication. A manager wishing to admonish a member of staff cannot be seen to be grinning while issuing a serious warning. If you are listening to a colleague who is seriously worried, you should listen and take an interest – otherwise the message is received that “you do not care”.</p> <p>Managers have a particular responsibility to show care and concern. The best and the most promising staff in organisations are usually those with good interpersonal skills. These skills can make the difference between “competence” and “excellence”.</p>



ASSIGNMENT TITLE	Interpersonal skills
TASK NUMBER AND TASK DETAIL	<p>Task 1 (P5) Using a business context or situation, such as those described in the Any-Firm case study, creates a demonstration of the importance of interpersonal skills in communication. After your demonstration, say briefly what you have tried to show.</p> <p>Task 3 (D2) Using at least two of the situations or contexts you have looked at, write out an evaluation of the non-verbal and interpersonal skills that were required. Give your views as to whether they were important or not in that context.</p>
GRADING CRITERIA	<p>P5 demonstrate interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills when demonstrating business communications</p> <p>D2 evaluate the importance of effective interpersonal and non-verbal communication skills in a given business context</p>
GRADE / LEVEL	The answer below suggests some of the approaches learners could adopt in their work for Task 1. The written evaluation of one situation for Task 3 would meet the D2 grading criterion. Note that for a full answer, a learner should provide a similar evaluation for at least one other situation.
EXEMPLAR ANSWER	<p>Task 1</p> <p>Each of the situations facing Any-Firm Ltd requires a sensitive approach. Learners can use these situations, or others, to show the kinds of interpersonal skills that would be essential.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The woman with the criminal record needs to be approached confidentially. The situation requires a careful and gentle verbal discussion – there should be no heavy or overly formal approach. She should be given the chance to talk, and the interviewer should take care in listening to what she has to say. Supportive questioning, advice and reassurance could be required. ▪ The worker accused of stealing tools should again have a private interview. If there is proof (such as CCTV images), then this is a straightforward case of dismissal. If there is no strong evidence, then the situation requires a great deal of sensitive and careful handling; people cannot be accused on the basis of rumour. ▪ The sales manager who is behaving erratically and is known to be stressed needs support and guidance. An employer has a duty of care for employees. This person is entitled to a confidential meeting, to be heard and to receive help. There needs to be a friendly exchange, with reassurance.



- The bonus scheme is a change that will possibly have an adverse effect on some staff. Therefore, its introduction should be handled very carefully and managers should set out very clearly the reasons for the change, the benefits for the business and the impact that this will have on staff. People with problems should ask for personal interviews.

Task 3

Situation 1: The criminal record

A woman who has become a valuable member of staff is found to have a conviction from ten years ago for assault.

Interpersonal skills required:

- Tact
- Diplomacy
- Confidentiality
- Listen
- Reassurance
- Support.

How important are these skills?

In my opinion, these skills are vital in this situation. The woman concerned does not need to be embarrassed or humiliated. She needs to be spoken to in private. She needs an opportunity to speak about her past. The employer or HR manager needs an opportunity to listen to her concerns. The matter is in the open as far as the employer/employee relationship is concerned.

During the interview, it is important to hear what she has to say and to offer reassurance that she will not be put on trial again. She should be told that she is valued, and has done a good job so far. This will give her confidence. She will fear being dismissed. Be aware of her feelings.

By handling the situation skilfully, the air can be cleared and the business can keep a good worker. Clumsy handling can offend, embarrass and cause friction. The firm could lose a member of staff if it handles the situation badly and without tact.

ANY ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL REQUIRED

None.

GRADING COMMENTS

Note that Task 3 calls for an *evaluation* of the importance of interpersonal skills in each situation. The learner needs to assess whether the approach demonstrated had the desired effect. For example, was the interviewer able to change an approach to avoid making the situation worse? Learners should also consider what might have happened if someone had handled a situation badly? For example, in the situation of the woman with a criminal record, what might have happened if a colleague had shouted across the office: "Hey you, I hear you bashed somebody up."



1: The Prince's Trust

The Prince's Trust was founded in 1976 by The Prince of Wales. The Trust has become the UK's leading youth charity. It offers a range of opportunities including training, personal development, business start-up support, mentoring and advice. The purpose of The Prince's Trust is to reach young people in the UK who face more barriers than most and to help them get past those barriers.

The Trust employs more than 700 people and enjoys the support of over 7,000 volunteers. The Prince's Trust needs to raise at least £1 million every week to continue its work, and it regularly sends letters to businesses appealing for support.

Melissa's story: making the wrong impression?

Melissa Tindale is a young woman with a burning ambition to own her own shop. From a very early age she has been interested in accessories. She has a large collection of costume jewellery, brooches, bangles and scrunchies.

No member of Melissa's family owns a business. In fact, most of Melissa's family are out of work. Her dad is an alcoholic and her mum works as a part-time cleaner in a further education college.

When Melissa is advised to contact the Prince's Trust for help and support in starting her own business, she is surprised. In fact she does not believe that anyone would be willing to help her. "What's in it for them?", she thinks.

Melissa is asked to go to an interview by The Prince's Trust. At the interview she is going to have to tell two of the trust's advisers about her business idea. She must convince them that she is serious, that she has a plan and that she believes it will work.

Melissa attends the interview. The first thing she is asked is quite easy. "Please tell us a little bit about yourself," asks Pauline Atkinson, who seems to be leading the interview.

Melissa laughs and just says: "Not much to say really. I go out with my friends and we hang around the park. I sometimes go into town as well and have a look around." Melissa is very nervous and chews the ends of her fingers.

"We hear you want to start a business of your own? What is it you want to do, Melissa?" says Arjun Patel very quietly. Melissa feels a bit embarrassed now. "Just open a shop that's all – simple enough, innit?"



The panel has not made much progress with Melissa so far, but the advisers are not deterred by Melissa's nervousness. They know that people like Melissa have much more to say when they feel less uncomfortable.

activities

- Write down what things might be preventing Melissa Tindale from communicating how she really feels.
- What would you advise someone in Melissa's place to do in order to convince the panel that she is serious about her business idea?
- If you were a member of the panel, what would you do to help Melissa make her case?
- Write a letter on behalf of The Prince's Trust to the business community. This letter should clearly explain the work of the charity and it should make an appeal for support. The Trust requires both practical as well as financial support from businesses to continue its work.



2: The Primary Care Trust – a disastrous meeting

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) are now at the centre of the NHS. They control 80% of the total NHS budget. Because they are local organisations, they are in the best position to understand the needs of their communities.

A pressure group called Patients Against Charges has written to Anytown PCT complaining that the car parking charges at the hospital are very high. They say that patients who have to attend for treatment cannot afford to park. They are threatening a noisy protest at the Anytown PCT offices.

Robert Stokoe, a manager at Anytown PCT, has been invited to talk to the group. During the meeting, some members of the pressure group are becoming very annoyed at the *apparent* uncaring attitude of Mr Stokoe. He is sitting back in his chair looking very relaxed indeed. When a member of the group wishes to make a point, Mr Stokoe immediately looks down at his papers: he makes very little eye contact with the person speaking; instead he sits making notes.

Some members of the group have decided that Mr Stokoe is against their case. This makes them even more determined to make things awkward for him. When the speaker sits down, Mr Stokoe looks up to say something. "You are rubbish," yells a voice from the back. "You just don't care," shouts another. "Hang on, hang on...please," says Mr Stokoe, a little bewildered by the sudden hostility in the room.

In fact, Mr Stokoe is totally sympathetic to the case made by Patients Against Charges. That is why he agreed to meet the group. He wants to make sure that he gets all the evidence about the group's case so that he can take their grievance up with the PCT senior management.

activities

- What has Mr Stokoe done wrong? What does the situation tell us about communication?
- Do you feel it was a good idea for the PCT manager to go to the meeting? Why? Justify your response. What might be the benefits and problems of such an approach?
- What advice would you give to Robert Stokoe so that he could do better next time?



3: Walkers Crisps

The Walkers production factory in Leicester employs 2,000 people. An important consideration for Walkers is safety. The factory at Leicester contains many hazards, so Walkers regards safety as a high priority.

Ian Moir is a 19-year-old factory maintenance fitter who works in the Leicester factory. One day he hastily bends down to pick up a box containing some equipment parts and immediately feels a sharp pain in his back. Ian collapses to the floor in agony.

“What happened?” says the fitter working alongside Ian.

“My back’s gone!” says Ian.

“Could’ve told you that,” says his workmate. “I saw how you lifted that box. Have you ever been trained how to lift something *properly*?”

Ian just groans as he waits for the first aiders to get to him. The health and safety manager has heard there has been an incident and she is also on her way down to the scene.

Later in the day, the health and safety manager wants to know exactly what happened to Ian Moir. She sends a note to the worker who witnessed Ian hurt his back. The note simply says: “See me; my office, 5pm.”

“Stuff that – I’m going home,” says the employee.

Meanwhile, Ian’s father has called the factory office to say that he would have expected his son’s employer to give proper training in lifting. The factory health and safety manager knows that *full* training was provided, and this injury must have been caused by a moment of carelessness.

activities

- Identify the best medium of communication (for example, a report, letter, note, phone call, face-to-face conversation) to use in each of these contexts.
 - Details are needed about how the incident occurred in which Ian Moir has seriously hurt his back.
 - There need to be further warnings issued to workers about lifting heavy loads.
 - Ian Moir’s father must be informed that proper training was given in the factory.