

In Practice

Learning the Language of Business

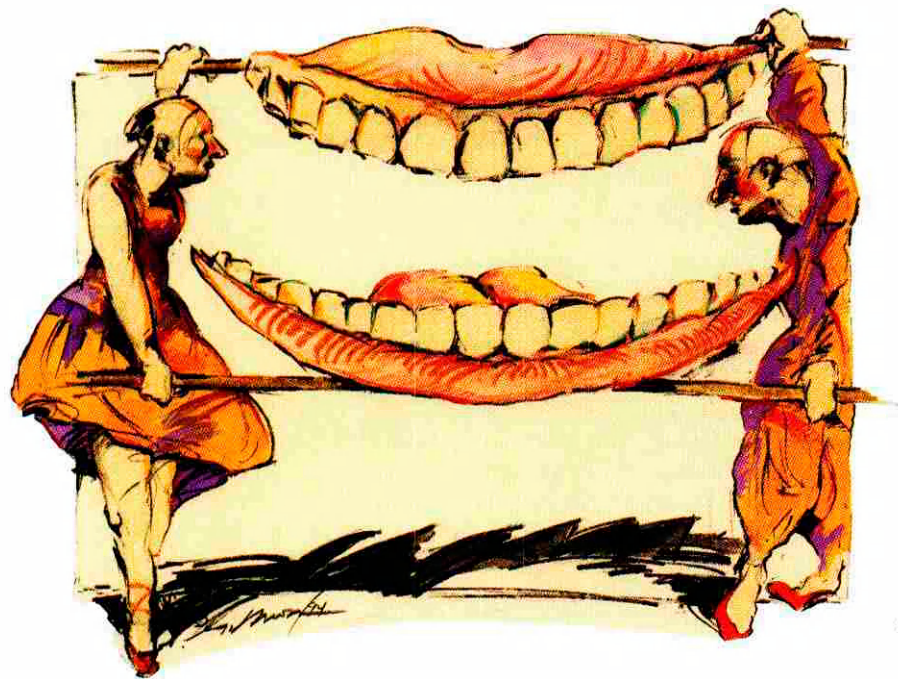
Business students nationwide are learning to speak the language of a global economy, thanks to specially designed foreign-language courses, reports Victor B. Herr for Purdue University's news service.

More than 200 universities, including Georgetown, Georgia Institute of Technology, Duke, Northwestern, Illinois, Pennsylvania State, and Purdue offer business-language programs, Herr writes. Business-language courses focus on the vocabulary and customs of business.

"NAFTA and GATT are prime examples of the direction the world is turning," says Christiane Keck, head of Purdue's Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and associate director of the Center for International Business Education and Research. "More and more [business students] are realizing the business world truly is a business 'world,' and to compete and be successful you must understand people from other countries—both in language and culture."

Purdue offers business-language courses in German, Spanish, and French. Soon, the school will add classes in Russian and Japanese. Introductory courses teach everyday conversational skills and address the history of the language, culture, and people. Later courses cover special topics, such as banking, specific business terms and practices, and the courtesies involved in typical business transactions in the target countries.

Alan D. Ferrell, director of management placement for Purdue's Krannert School of Management, says between 10 percent and 15 percent of the school's graduates take



Geoffrey Moss

jobs in foreign countries.

"Add these to the number of individuals from foreign countries living and working in the United States, along with foreign companies doing business here," he says, "and it becomes evident just how beneficial these courses are."

Words of Wisdom

Want to get ahead? Take note of these simple career lessons, excerpted from *Never Confuse a Memo With Reality*, by Richard A. Moran (Harper-Business, 1993).

- ◆ Lesson 32: Remember that the purpose of business is to make or do something and sell it. The closer you can get to those activities, the better.
- ◆ Lesson 33: If you're in a staff job, get line experience by jumping at assignments out in the trenches.
- ◆ Lesson 77: Understand the core of the business and bond with it. Don't take a job at Nintendo if you hate video games.

Language skills are a must for business leaders in a global economy.

In Practice

- ▶ Lesson 82: Seek rotational assignments, especially one that will put you in a key operational role or close to the seat of power in corporate headquarters.
- ▶ Lesson 112: When the note on the refrigerator says it will be emptied this Friday, get your salad dressing. Cleaning the refrigerator is the one corporate initiative that's *always* fully implemented.
- ▶ Lesson 220: Avoid being assigned for longer than a year to the human resources department.

The Baldrige Award: Quality and the Bottom Line

The U.S. Commerce Department has changed and streamlined the criteria for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award for 1995 to focus more sharply on quality as an integral part of performance management, says the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which administers the program.

"Quality cannot be seen as separate from overall performance or the bottom line," says Curt Reimann, head of the Baldrige award program at NIST, which is a unit of the Commerce Department's Technology Administration. "It must be woven throughout all of a company's business practices."

According to Reimann, the criteria are designed to help companies deliver ever-improving value to customers and improve overall company performance and capabilities. Two awards may be given each year in each of three categories: manufacturing, service, and small business. Congress established the award in 1987.

The criteria for 1995 focus on key areas of business performance:

- ▶ customer satisfaction and customer retention
- ▶ market share and new-market development
- ▶ product and service quality
- ▶ financial indicators, productivity, and operational effectiveness and responsiveness
- ▶ human resource performance and development
- ▶ supplier performance and development
- ▶ public responsibility and corpo-

rate citizenship.

"Companies that successfully build all of these into their business practices should see tangible results, including improved productivity, market share, and financial performance; better employee relations; and greater customer satisfaction," says Reimann.

You may order a single copy of the 1995 award criteria, free, from NIST; call 301/975-2036 or fax your request to 301/948-3716. For a packet of 10 copies, contact the American Society for Quality Control at 800/248-1946 by telephone or 414/272-1734 by fax; the price is \$29.95 plus postage (ask for item number T998).

Virtual U

A "virtual" university offers concrete advantages to Texas Instruments in Dallas. The university reflects TI's efforts to decentralize operations, integrate its marketing and communications functions, and tie professional education closely to employees' day-to-day work.

Patterned after the concept of a virtual corporation, the graduate-level curriculum brings together business professors and other marketing experts to deliver 16 advanced marketing and communications courses specially tailored to the firm's needs, culture, and strategies.

The program kicked off a year after TI dispersed most of its corporate marketing staff among its various business units and retained only a core group at headquarters in Dallas. The move was part of the Baldrige-winning company's efforts to vest decision making in cross-disciplinary work teams.

The shift was intended to forge closer ties between marketing-staff members and their internal customers. Still, "we were very concerned that as we entered a new organizational model, the culture that helped build TI's image and persona in the marketplace could be dissipated," says John Tammaro, senior strategy manager of TI's marketing communications and design group.

To keep the marketing "fraternity" together and to enhance TI's market-

ing messages, Tammaro says, "we decided we wanted to assume an aggressive training program." In most corporations, Tammaro notes, most marketing training comes from on-the-job learning, occasionally supplemented by off-site courses.

"Learning, if it is to be right for the student or employee, must get as close to real work as possible," says Tammaro.

Tammaro worked closely with Charles Patti, a dean and business professor at the University of Hartford, to develop the curricula and recruit the faculty.

For its kickoff, the university attracted about 60 participants—twice the number expected. At the close of its first semester, students gave the university high marks. Eighty-nine percent described the classes as relevant to their careers, 88 percent rated the overall curriculum as excellent or good, and 68 percent rated the university concept and plan favorably.

Instructors use a portfolio of learning strategies, including lectures, case studies, cooperative learning, and "action-based" projects. To help turn theory into application, instructors focus on current TI marketing initiatives and issues.

Trainees travel to Dallas every five weeks to attend the one- or two-day courses. Following each course, trainees break into smaller workshops to relate the material to specific on-the-job problems and decide how to integrate the material into workplace processes and practices. The entire curriculum takes 18 months to complete. TI expects soon to launch a version of the university for its European and Asian operations.

By bringing marketing-staff members together regularly for training, the university enables them to sustain the advantages of a tight-knit corporate unit while sharing information and challenges from their new vantage points within business units, Tammaro explains.

The diverse student body represents a range of business units and functions, as well as a sprinkling of suppliers, which further promotes the cross-pollination of ideas, one of Texas Instruments's goals for decentralization.

"So, though we are in the early stages of this curriculum, [the university] meshes well with how we are doing our business day to day," says Tammaro. "We're learning as we go how a learning structure can support organizational goals."

Going Casual

Certain types of organizations may benefit from the adoption of relaxed codes for dress and behavior. But others should stick to business as usual for attire and office interactions, says a researcher from Pennsylvania State University.

David Morand, an assistant professor of management in Penn State's School of Business Administration, in Harrisburg, talked about formal and informal conventions in organizations. His remarks were made at an American Academy of Management meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Informality can help foster creativity and camaraderie, so organizations

that prize innovation and close teamwork might aim to create a relaxed atmosphere in the office, Morand said.

But some other businesses are unlikely to gain any advantage from a workforce clad in Hawaiian shirts and Birkenstock sandals. For instance, banks, insurance companies, and law firms would probably do better to maintain more formal tradi-

INFORMALITY CAN HELP FOSTER CREATIVITY

tions. Formal behavior and appearances indicate a serious attitude toward work, help regulate conflict, and help diminish the likelihood of favoritism.

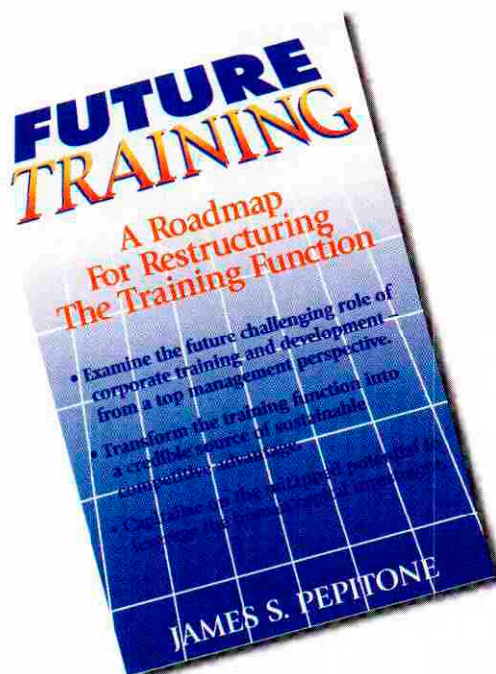
Advised Morand, "Going informal involves philosophical and psycho-

logical changes that normally conventional businesses should seriously consider before taking the plunge."

ISA Online

An interactive communications service sponsored by the Instrument Society of America kicked off in September. ISA is a nonprofit society of professionals concerned with measurement and control, including technicians, managers, researchers, and educators.

ISA Online features technical updates, membership news, industry standards, forums, directories of ISA services, electronic mail, Internet mail service, and ISA journals. ISA members also have free access to IndustryNet, which offers business news and updates on products and technologies. IndustryNet is offered by the Automation News Network, which also developed ISA Online. For more information, contact ISA, 919/990-9247.



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Red Cross's "Institute Without Walls"

The American Red Cross has recently created the Charles Drew Biomedical Institute to deliver high-quality training to the organization's 15,000 employees. The institute is named for the late Charles Drew, a doctor and scientist

whose work in blood collection, plasma processing, and transfusion therapy laid the foundation for the blood-bank system.

Elizabeth Dole, president of the American Red Cross, said at the dedication ceremony that the institute's vision is "to approach our common responsibility for safe and plentiful blood as a collaboration between

industry and government, among competitors, and across occupational divides for the good of the American people."

Nancy Kuhn, the institute's national director, described it as an "institute without walls." She said the institute will use the latest technologies to deliver state-of-the-art training across the country to Red Cross employees (and eventually to people outside the Red Cross) in four areas: management development, quality, biomedical technology, and education and training.

For more information on the new institute, contact Felix Perez, media relations, American Red Cross, 431 18th Street NW, Washington, DC 20006; 202/639-3216.



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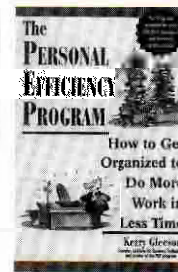
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MANAGING STRATEGIC CHANGE

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Doing It Now



Do you often feel as if you never have enough time to do everything that you should be doing? Kerry Gleeson, founder of the Institute for Business Technology, suggests a

solution. He calls it the do-it-now approach to personal efficiency.

Start by getting yourself organized, Gleeson advises. Here is a five-step plan:

1. Get started. Go to your desk and go through every single bit and piece of paper on your desk or anywhere near your working space. Pick up the first piece of paper and determine what it is and what must be done to process it to completion. Do whatever is required to complete that task, and get that piece of paper off your desk so you never have to look at it again. If a task is going to take you several hours to complete, schedule a time to do it.

2. Determine what tasks ought to be done and decide what must be done to process each task to completion. Take the task as far as you possibly can. If you run into a roadblock, get clever. Ask, "How can I get this done another way?" If you decide to pass the task on to someone else, remind yourself to follow up.

3. Stop shuffling endlessly through the same materials over and over.

In Practice

Eliminate to-do piles and to-do-later piles. Act on an item the first time you lay your hands on it.

4. Redefine the word "pending." Pending does not mean something to do later. Your "pending" box is for things you can't do now, not for things you don't want to do now.

5. Stop procrastinating. Procrastination eats up more time in the workplace than practically anything else. The trick is to be as clever about completing work as you've been about avoiding it.

The tips appear in Gleeson's book, *The Personal Efficiency Program: How To Get Organized To Do More Work in Less Time* (John Wiley, 1994; \$14.95).

Dumpsters, Ducks, and Customer Service

When Omni Hotels employee Anthony Powell dove into a dumpster to retrieve a guest's lost plane ticket, it wasn't because rummaging through trash was in his job description. And Tom Ulrichs, bellperson, wasn't just doing his job when he drove 120 miles to the airport to make sure a guest arrived safely.

Omni Hotels recently honored Powell, Ulrichs, and 85 other employees (Omni calls them "associates") for going above and beyond the call of duty in order to serve guests. Omni's empowerment philosophy gives every associate the power to bend the rules in order to best serve guests. Any associate may nominate a colleague as a service champion; an awards committee screens the nominations.

Other Omni service champions:

- ▶ an employee who helped a guest who was having a heart attack
- ▶ one who chased a guest to return a \$100 bill that was dropped in the hotel driveway
- ▶ an associate who rescued a baby duck that was stuck in the loading-dock trash compactor.

This month's "In Practice" was compiled by Erica Gordon Soroan and Catherine M. Petrini. Send items of interest to "In Practice," Training & Development, at 1640 King Street, Box 1443, Alexandria, VA 22313-2043.

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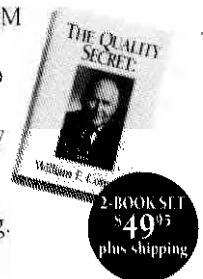
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