

Foreword

Everyone knows that English is now essential for international business. But how can non-native speakers use their English as effectively as possible, in order to develop successful business relationships and, ultimately, improve the performance and the bottom line of their organisations?

That is the basic question that Bob Dignen has been seeking to answer over the past ten years, both in his training for York Associates, and as a regular contributor to *Business Spotlight*, the bi-monthly magazine for German speakers who need English in their jobs.

The idea for this book grew out of a series of around 50 articles by Bob that have appeared in the Business Skills section of *Business Spotlight* over the past decade.

My collaboration with Bob on these articles - as his editor and occasional co-author - has continued the close partnership between York Associates and Spotlight Verlag publishing house that goes back to the mid 1990s. My personal thanks for this creative partnership go to everyone at York Associates, and particularly to Nick Brieger, Jeremy Comfort, Steve Flinders and, of course, Bob himself.

I am delighted that Bob's insightful articles - adapted and updated for this book - can now reach a wider audience. They make up a unique body of work looking at the business skills needed in the global workplace of the twenty-first century. They include, but go well beyond, the standard skills areas of socialising, telephoning, email, meetings, etc. And they combine advice on behavioural and language skills in a relevant and user-friendly manner.

This book contains invaluable advice for anyone whose first language is not English who needs to communicate internationally in English. But it also contains important insights for *anyone* working internationally, whatever their first language.

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Introduction

Who is this book for?

Communicating Internationally in English has been written primarily for non-native speakers of English with a level in English of intermediate and above. The purpose of the book is simple: to help you to communicate more effectively in English at work. The book will also be helpful to business English and communication trainers of such non-native speakers. And native speakers of English can also learn a thing or two about how to improve their communication skills.

The benefits of this book

The first part of the book will enable you to get your message across more clearly when speaking. It will also help you to listen in ways that will create better understanding with colleagues and business partners. We look at how to communicate with native speakers, and also with people whom you may regard as 'difficult'.

In the second part of the book, we give you ideas on how to improve core business communication skills - building relationships, networking, influencing, making decisions, managing conflict and building trust.

The third part looks at different aspects of virtual communication, including advice on how to write better emails and how to manage conference calls.

The aim of the book is not to make you a perfect English speaker. Many native English speakers are not very good at communicating internationally despite the fact that they speak the language (more or less) correctly. Their English is often less effective than that of non-native English speakers: it can be over-complex, spoken too quickly, and full of confusing vocabulary and abbreviations. Your goal should be to use the English you know to communicate clearly and respectfully to others.

Communication is situational

All communication is situational, which means that there are no dos and don'ts in international communication: you need to adapt your message and the way you communicate to each specific situation. The book does give you guidelines and strategies for effective communication with examples of language for you to consider (in the **What do you say?** sections at the end of most chapters). But it is up to you to decide what to say and how to say it, according to your assessment of the specific context. Each situation has three main elements:

1 Culture. Think about the values, behaviours and communication styles that you are likely to meet in each different situation. Try to understand the different attitudes to time, to organisation, to teamwork, to decision-making, to relationships and to hierarchy, which shape how people communicate. It is not only national cultural differences which can have an impact on your chances of successful communication. Organisational culture, professional culture and other layers of culture can also be significant. When you have analysed the cultural context in which you are working, then you can decide how much you need to adapt your own communication style to that context.

2 Person. Consider the unique individual(s) in front of you. Cultural knowledge gives you only very general information about attitudes and behaviours. Try to understand the specific personalities of the people you work with and to adapt your communication style and strategy to these individuals as well.

3 Business context. Professional people work to get results. The business context may lead us to cooperate with some people, but may put us into conflict with others; so skills like influencing and managing conflict are also essential when we work internationally. We always have to think about the business environment when we choose our communication strategy; and we have to balance our interests against those of others. At York Associates, we call this 'achieving results through relationships'.

This book is primarily written for people communicating in English for business internationally. However, I have been told that my training is not international but *inter-human*. In other words, you will also be able to apply many of the ideas and approaches in this book in your own language, and in private as well as in business contexts. After all, communication doesn't stop when we leave the office.

Feedback

Good communicators always ask for feedback. So please let us know your thoughts, whether positive or negative, after reading this book. We want to learn from you too, so we look forward to hearing from you.

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