Business Bootcamp for Liberal Arts Majors

Working with Other People

Doug Kalish
All through college, you’ve mostly been working for yourself and by yourself.

In the business world, you’ll be working with others – and not just people like yourself: Lib Arts, Creatives, Engineers, etc.

Let me introduce some skills you’ll need...
Making the Transition from College to the Real World

Congratulations on leaving or getting ready to leave college, grad school, or your post-doc. You’ve learned a lot, had fun and made friends. Now you’re looking for a job and the reality is sinking in...

COLLEGE HASN’T PREPARED YOU FOR THE REAL WORLD!

Admit it - you’ve had it pretty good. Sleeping until noon for a 1pm class, taking summers off, and you could do a half-assed job on a paper and take the C. That’s going to change.

YOU’VE BEEN WORKING FOR YOURSELF
YOU’VE BEEN WORKING BY YOURSELF

“But I’ve had internships”, you say. Sure, that’s been a taste of life in the business world, but it was for a limited amount of time and the...
What Can Lib Arts Majors Do?

Law, Management, Grant writing, Policy, Communications, Sales Support, Product Marketing, Research Administration, Education, Public Relations, Project management, Brand management, Recruiting, Training, Fund Raising, Grant administration, Health and Safety Operations, Compliance, IP management, Journalism, Regulatory Affairs, etc., etc.

In a wide range of companies and industries:

www.cacareercafe.com/cool-connections/
Stereotypes of Engineers & Scientists

- Conscientious and orderly
- Dominant, driven, achievement-oriented
- Independent, less sociable
- Emotionally stable
- Arrogant, self-confident
- Driven, ambitious
- Autonomous, introverted
Stereotypes of Creative People

• Self-confident, possibly to the point of arrogance
• Enthusiastic, optimistic, dynamic
• Opinionated
• Not afraid to ask ‘dumb’ questions or make mistakes
• Don’t seek approval from others or society
• Don’t compromise on things they hold dear
• Flexible and tolerant of ambiguity
• Not politically motivated
• Dislike being bossed or policed
• Intense, absorbed, motivated and intelligent
Stereotypes of Lib Arts

- Good communications, writing, problem solving skills
- Critical and analytical thinking skills
- Curious, open-minded, creative
- Collaborative (?)
- Taught how to learn, not what to learn
- See big picture
- Broad range of skills and interests
- Filled with esoteric knowledge
What Do Lib Arts People Find Difficult in Business?

- Math
- Working in highly structured environments
- Collaborating -?
- Repetitive or boring jobs
- Accepting criticism from their ‘inferiors’
- Criticizing constructively
- Understanding when to argue and when to shut up
- Attending to detail
- Accepting ‘business’ decisions
- Handling emotionally charged situations
What can you do?

ADMIT:

• Good organizational, research and communications skills aren’t enough: “You have to have something to put your work in.” (Coddington, Vogue)
• Different types of people bring different and essential skills to the task
• Emotional situations are a way of life and cannot be avoided

DO:

• Understand and accept the needs of the business
• Learn skills to help you cope with different and difficult people and situations
Topics

Projects (in brief)
Meetings (in brief)
Dealing with Difficult People
Business Cultures
In the media world, here’s how the people across the top view the people on the side...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
<th>Publishing</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Creative Image" /></td>
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<td><img src="image4" alt="Creative Image" /></td>
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Lifecycle of the Ideal Project

• Conception
• Recruiting
• Kick-off or Sunrise meeting
• Project Planning
• Milestones, goals and progress meetings
• Delivery
• Post-mortem or Sunset
Lifecycle of the Typical Project

- Enthusiasm
- Disillusionment
- Panic
- Search for the guilty
- Punishment of the innocent
- Praise for the non-participants
How Do Projects Succeed?

• Someone is in charge
• The project is well-defined
• The goals are understood by everyone
• The timetable is realistic
• People are committed and accountable
• Management is engaged
• The skills and resources needed are available
• The ‘client’ is part of the solution
Meeting etiquette and discipline

Every meeting needs:
• Defined purpose
• Leadership
• Time constraints
• Agenda
• Summary and action items
What to Do When Good Meetings Go Bad

- **Interruptions**: “Should we reschedule this meeting?”
- **Interruptors**: “Please let me make my point.”
- **Showboating**: “You’re obviously very knowledgeable, but I have some questions.”
- **Email, texting, and cellphones**: “Can we please focus on the current challenges?”
- **Feeding frenzy**: “I think we understand the issues and it’s time to move on.”
- **Just plain boring**: “Maybe this is a discussion topic that doesn’t require all of us.”

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Working with Difficult People

- Demanding
- Judgmental or critical
- Hostile or angry
- Passive Aggressive

(Based on “Lab Dynamics” by Carl and Suzanne Cohen)
The Way to Deal with Difficult People

1. Find something to *AGREE* with
   -- you must establish rapport, disarm

2. *EMPATHIZE* with them
   -- let them know you understand what they’re saying (even if you disagree); use positive body language, repeat some of their words

1. *INQUIRE* to get more information
   -- clarify, redirect focus of discussion; switch from confrontation to information gathering
Guidelines For Dealing with Difficult People

• Don’t take anything personally
• Let angry people vent
• Listen without interrupting
• Make eye contact
• Use their name
• Apologize for real or imagined offenses
• Take ownership of mistakes quickly
Fred: “I know we agreed that the layout deadline was next week, but I’m going to need it by tomorrow. OK?”

Freida: “No, that’s not possible.”

Fred: “Make it happen, because otherwise I don’t think we’ll get it published in time.”

Freida: “We agreed on the deadline and it’s up to you to figure out how to get in printed in time.”

Fred: “Look, I want the layout tomorrow and that’s final.”

Freida: “Tough.”

Fred: ????
What Could Fred Say To Defuse the Situation?

Fred:

“I know that we agreed to a deadline next week (AGREE) and you were working hard towards it. (EMPATHIZE)”

“I’m concerned now that the printing will take longer than we thought. Is there some way we might speed up the layout? Can I get you some help? (INQUIRE)”
Fred: “I know we agreed that the layout deadline was next week, but I’m going to need it by tomorrow. OK?”

Freida: “Fred, that’s a big request so it must be important to you. Has something changed? [AGREE, EMPATHIZE, INQUIRE]

Fred: “I’m concerned now that the printing will take longer than we thought.”

Freida: “How much longer do you think it will take? Are we talking about a day or two, or more? Could I get some help with the layout?” [INQUIRE]
Fred: “Frieda, I’m getting really nervous about how long printing will take. I know we agreed on having the layout done next week. Is there any way we can have the layout done sooner? Even a couple of days would help. If we got you some help, would that speed the process?”
You’re on a project when one of the other team members comes to you and says:

“You really screwed this project up royally. We’re going to have to re-do everything you’ve done. You’re a parasite.”

How do you respond?
Dealing with Hostile or Angry People

- Do not defend, explain or justify
- Change the focus to the hostility
  “You seem pretty upset right now..”
- Agree
  “You must have a good reason for being so upset.” “Well, this wasn’t the best work ever did..”
- Empathize
  “It sounds like you’re pretty upset”
  “I can understand that would make you angry”
- Inquire
  “Can you tell me what I did that was so upsetting?” “How would you have handled it?”
Passive Aggressive Behavior

Exerting control or expressing hostility by doing nothing:

• Repeatedly postponing an important meeting
• Not providing agreed-upon information or results
• Refusing to discuss or admit there is a problem
• Withholding support by not showing up
• Sitting silently in a team meeting
• “Forgetting” to communicate important or useful information
### “I” vs “You” Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“You”</th>
<th>“I”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“You never show up on time for meetings”</td>
<td>“I’m frustrated from having to wait for you”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You don’t appreciate all the hard work and long hours I put in”</td>
<td>“I’m feeling unappreciated and taken advantage of”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Your work is garbage”</td>
<td>“I’m concerned that we won’t have a good publication if the quality of your work doesn’t improve.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You”</td>
<td>“I”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You’re an idiot”</td>
<td>“I disagree”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You’re a bully and a loudmouth”</td>
<td>“I’m offended by what you said”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“You never listen”</td>
<td>“I don’t feel heard”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Your work is sloppy and useless”</td>
<td>“I need higher quality work from you”</td>
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## Disagreements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fred: “I can’t believe you want to publish this short story – it’s long and boring and reads like a 10 year-old wrote it. None of our readers will be interested in this.”</th>
<th>Attack</th>
</tr>
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<td>Freida: “I think the simple style is unique and refreshing and contrasts nicely with the crap you are suggesting.”</td>
<td>Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred: “Ok, tell you what. How about if we just retitle the mag ‘Literature to Put You to Sleep’?”</td>
<td>Escalation</td>
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Business Cultures

• The business culture and the people you work with have more impact on your job satisfaction than your salary
  – If you are a cooperative, conflict-avoiding person at a competitive, confrontational company (or vice versa), you will be miserable

• Most people don’t find out about the culture until it is too late
Cultural Stereotypes

• Power Culture
• Role Culture
• Task Culture
• Person Culture
  (From Charles Handy, Understanding Organizations, 1976)

+ Academic Culture
Power Culture

• Power is concentrated among a few people
• Relationships matter more than titles
• Few rules and not much bureaucracy
• Common in fashion, film, and publishing and early stage startups with charismatic leaders

Do you make relationships easily, like less-structured environments and don’t mind politics?
Role Culture

- Power comes from your title or role
- Highly-structured organizations
- Policies and procedures are formalized (ritualized interactions)
- Innovation and independence discouraged

Do you like well-defined jobs with explicit expectations?
Task (or Team) Culture

- Teams are formed to take advantage of individuals’ expertise
- Skills are highly valued; incompetence is not well tolerated
- Independence, innovation, critical thinking and team skills are essential
- Demanding timeframes and challenges

Do you have a problem-solving mentality and are you able to work in unstructured environments with changing objectives?
Person Culture

- The expertise of individuals is more valuable than the organization
- Power derives from how much business you generate
- Can be a loose collection of practices with shared and/or dedicated resources

Do you want to be (or work with) a lawyer or accountant in a small practice?
Academic Culture

- Power derives from your credentials, your ability to argue and your results, probably in that order
- Your reputation outside the organization may count for more than your reputation inside the organization
- Frequently oriented toward technologies, not products or markets
- Transition to a product-based company may be difficult

Which is more important to you: a good technology or a stable job?
Finally….

Liberal Arts majors CAN (and DO) work successfully in the business world.

For more tips on finding a job, managing your boss, and dealing with tough situations, visit:

www.dougsgguides.com
Getting ready to leave college for a real job? Feeling overwhelmed? I can help with that.

It’s simple. Just hit the ‘Like’ button (follow the arrow) then sign up to receive ‘dougsguides to the Working World’ as an ebook. You’ll find everything you need to thrive and survive in your first job... it’s that easy.