

Business Communications Final Paper

Most Valuable Concept and Application

I truly valued the chapter on interpersonal communication and emotional intelligence (EQ). These are invaluable concepts that should be internalized and demonstrated within the workplace. They are also valuable concepts in everyday life. Active listening, self-management and self-awareness are all covered in this chapter, and all are concepts that I would like to improve and continually work on. A key underlining aspect of EQ is empathy. Since we are hardwired to *feel* before we *reason* the book warns against emotional hijacking. Emotional hijacking is when your emotions take over your behavior and you react without thinking. This concept is similarly reflected in a book that I'm reading written by Dale Carnegie entitled "How to Win Friends and Influence People". The author discusses how to avoid "arguing for the sake of winning" and instead taking the approach of understanding where the other person is coming from. Instead of reacting impulsively or angrily, finding common ground can help lead a potential enemy to understand their errors and become an ally.

According to the book, the top 2 most important skills that business recruiters look for are 1) oral communication and 2) listening. These are two essential interpersonal skills to master in my role as a sales representative. Corporate recruiters rated listening as a particularly important skill when hiring for management positions-- valued higher than presentation and writing skills. In my day to day as a salesperson, active listening is probably the single most important part of my job. It's always challenging for me to completely focus on the conversation at hand and not multitask, particularly when I need to take notes on the conversation. The book quotes a person by the name of Michael Hoppe from the Center for Creative Leadership who breaks down active listening into six parts 1) paying attention 2) holding judgement 3) reflecting 4) clarifying 5) summarizing and 6) sharing. These are specific and actionable skills that I will try and remember moving forward in life.

Moving forward I will try to enter all conversations eager to learn about the ideas of the other person. In the words of Dale Carnegie who wrote "How to Win Friends and Influence People", one should strive to "show genuine interest" in others. Any customer call ought to be my entire focus while on that call. The customer or prospect should not feel rushed during any business meetings, and they should feel as though their issues and concerns were truly heard. I'll strive to both maintain focus and take my time with others. Active listening involves reflecting on the ideas and emotions of others and is not passive. It also involves expressing your own perspectives and feelings.

Active listening is about first understanding the other person before being understood, fostering dialogue, and asking good questions. In sales, we call asking good, open ended questions the customer "discovery" within the sales process. This is where you gain details

regarding the core of your customer or prospects needs and pains. Understanding where a prospect is coming from is critical in my industry and is necessary for the duration of your relationship with this customer.

Another key takeaway regarding how to interpret self-awareness based on the book was to always strive to accurately understand “your emotions as they occur and how they affect you.” Highly interesting were the statistics showing that most people think they are self-aware, while most actually are not. I want to improve upon my ability to both feel and reflect simultaneously as outlined in the text. The ability to speak up when nervous is very important in my view because—whether it’s discussing commission plans or providing insight about a large deal—there are so many critical business meetings in the sales world where you need to speak up for yourself or others.

What did I want to learn?

In full transparency I wasn’t sure what I would learn in a business communication course. I found the insights that I gained to be insightful, practical, and immediately actionable. Personally, there wasn’t anything that I was expecting to learn that I did not learn. When I joined the course, I was an open vessel prepared to receive and hopefully retain knowledge. That said, this book covered so many topics – some expected and some unexpected -- that it will be impossible to retain everything. I’m very happy that I took this course and am thankful for the many gems that I will take away from it.

Areas for Improvement Within the Course

Although the group meetings were a major milestone and important aspect of the class experience, the frequent group gatherings with random class members may not have been necessary. Some students either weren’t present or were unresponsive and didn’t participate. I understand that this could be the result of having a completely online environment and that many students may not feel comfortable speaking up in group or public settings. In the future, requiring students to participate in a mandatory fashion would make the breakout sessions far more conducive to discussion. Perhaps requiring each student to provide at least one idea would be beneficial to the overall conversation in these sessions. The group and individual projects should continue to be a part of the curriculum. I did like having the group project precede the individual project. Allowing the opportunity for students to select their own group members was an important part to the overall curriculum as well.