

FIRST EDITION

# BUSINESS and SOCIETY

BUILDING SKILLS AND AWARENESS  
FOR THE WORKPLACE



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*Written and edited by*  
Megan Matthews and Jon Werner

# Business and Society

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Printed in the United States of America.

ISBN: 978-1-5165-2721-2 (pbk) / 978-1-5165-2722-9 (br)



# Business and Society

Building Skills and Awareness for the Workplace

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# PREFACE

This is a book designed to build awareness and skills concerning the modern workplace. It is particularly aimed at college students who are newer in their studies, and for those who are interested in how business and society interact. We address many topics that are widely discussed in other settings and courses, such as teams, ethics, diversity, and leadership. It is not our intention to provide comprehensive coverage of each of these topics, but rather to introduce and prepare students for future courses and life experiences where they will interact further with these topics. Throughout the book, you will see reference to career competencies that have been identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) as critical to individual success in the workplace. Thus, in addition to building awareness, we also seek to build practical skills, including basic issues concerning college-level writing, as well as make strides toward career planning and goal setting. The activities, questions, and reflections found in each chapter are meant to increase both awareness and skills (or competencies) concerning each topic that is covered. There has been so much discussion concerning how business and society interact, it is our hope that these chapters will spark interest and a desire on your part to learn more about these fascinating topics.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Megan Matthews and Jon Werner are co-editors of this book, and they, along with seven other individuals, have contributed chapters to the book. This is a book project born out of our own necessity to have something that fit what we wished to cover in our relatively new course entitled “Business and Society.”

We are most grateful to Dean John Chenoweth, for his support and encouragement, as this Business and Society course was developed for undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, as well as his support for us to write this book. We appreciate all the instructional staff who have taught, and are teaching, this course, as we further refine and develop the best content and structure for the course.

The Cognella team has been a delight to work with, including Jamie Giganti, Kristina Stolte, Susana Christie, Sean Adams, Tim Pike, Abbey Hastings, and Michele Mitchell. The Cognella team excels in “developing” a new book such as this one, and we are most appreciative of their strong support. Thank you for all that was done to make this process go smoothly!

Megan Matthews and Jon Werner, Co-Editors  
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

# DEDICATION

Collectively, we dedicate this book to individuals who are close to us (for many of us, this is our parents). These individuals helped to build our love of learning and moved us forward as lifelong learners. Thank you to each one listed—as well as to so many others not listed here!

Megan Matthews: Burt and Carlene

Jon Werner: Dorothy and Don

Kenyatta Barber: Les and Bessie

Dennis Baskin: Simon and Alice, Dr. McGregory and Dr. Pulliam

Ron Buchholz: Marvin and Anita

Stephanie Douglas: Sue and Kirk

Lynn DuPree: John and Brooke

Jim Schnaedter: Erin and Allison

Julie Woletz: Pete and Kathy

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# PART I

Overview of the Text

# C H A P T E R 1

## An Overview of Business and Society: *Building Skills and Awareness for the Workplace*

JON WERNER

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

When you finish this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the main topics covered in this text and course
- Understand the personal ethics that undergird all organizations, including business organizations
- Connect the topics of leadership and teamwork to your individual learner experience, both in college and in the workplace
- Understand the career exploration aspects of this course
- Understand that the following are skills that can be developed:
  1. oral communication
  2. written communication
  3. teamwork
  4. leadership
  5. critical thinking

### CAREER COMPETENCIES

In this chapter, the following career competencies are introduced:

- Critical thinking/problem solving
- Oral/written communication skills
- Teamwork/collaboration
- Digital technology
- Leadership
- Professionalism/work ethic
- Career management
- Global/intercultural fluency



FIGURE 1.1

## OPENING ACTIVITY

### REFLECTION: WHY ARE YOU HERE?

If you were reading this question in a philosophy course, you might be asked to address questions of your existence, or how you came to be on this planet at this time in history. However, as this is a business course, we are more practically focused in terms of why you happen to be studying this topic, at this time, and where you want to go next.

There are three “big” questions in life, namely, Where am I now? Where do I want to be? and How am I going to get there? (e.g., Laker & Laker, 2007). For many, an important first step is to get a realistic sense of the skills, interests, and aspirations you have at this moment in time. From there, the logical next step is to gain some sense of where you want to go next. What are your life goals? Your career goals? This can then lead to practical planning concerning how you can get from where you are now to where you want to go. As with most things in life, the challenge is in doing the “small” things needed to progress toward one’s goals.

Realize that this is a lifelong process, and that for very many of us (the author included), the path resembles much more of a jagged line rather than a clear and linear process. There is a chapter later in the text (Chapter 4) devoted to further expanding on these ideas. For now, it is enough that you consider what you hope to get from this book.

Here are some questions to think about as you begin reading this book:

1. If you have already indicated a preference, what is your current intended major? Why did you pick this?
2. If you have not yet indicated a preference concerning your college major, what topics or areas interest you at the present time?
3. Looking at the table of contents for this book, which topic do you find most interesting at this time? Why?

## INTRODUCTION

This text is aimed, first of all, at *exploration*. It is particularly aimed at learners who are newer in their university learning experience. Some questions that will be addressed include the following:

- What is the proper—or ideal—role for business organizations in society?
- How “should” business organizations conduct themselves in their interactions with customers, employees, government, and other external entities?
- What role do you want to play? For example, will you choose a major in business, and if so, which one?
- What is expected of you as a student in this class and in other university classes (business and otherwise)? What can you do now to prepare yourself and increase the likelihood that you will succeed in your future studies?
- What can you do to build your critical thinking skills while you are in college?

As you view the table of contents for this book, you see terms such as *teams*, *globalization*, *stakeholder*, *ethics*, *corporate social responsibility*, *diversity* and *inclusion*, *leadership*, and *career planning*. None of these are likely to be completely unfamiliar to you. Yet, how do they all fit together? What does this mix of terms mean for business organizations, for society as a whole, and for you personally? These are some of the issues that we will address and that you will be asked to grapple with in this course. Let us state at the outset that some students in the class will already know exactly what career path they wish to follow, while others are as yet uncertain or undecided. Wherever you are at the moment you read this, it is okay! This text can help those who are undecided gain a better understanding of all that is possible with a business major or minor. However, even for those who “know” that they wish to pursue a major in accounting, for example, or marketing, or information technology (IT), this text should give you a greater sense of how *your* major fits within the totality of business operations (and business majors). As presented in the sub-title for the book, a goal of this text is to build both your skills and awareness of these keys issues, so that you are well prepared for the workplace. Let’s take a quick look at the topics and chapters in this text. Here is a quick summary of the three sections in the book:

- Part I: Overview of the Text—Chapters 1 and 2
- Part II: Career Competencies—Chapters 3 and 4
- Part III: Foundations of Workplace Awareness—Chapters 5 through 9

## BUSINESS AND SOCIETY

In Chapter 2, Megan Matthews provides a “big picture” view of the book. She asks why one (meaning you) should study business and society, and if it isn’t enough to just know about one’s (your) intended major. Perhaps, quite obviously, the premise of this text is that it will help you to gain a fuller understanding of the various aspects of business, as well as how business fits together with the rest of society. While much of what we think we know about “business” comes from the study of larger corporations, there is an increasing emphasis

today on small- and medium-sized organizations, nonprofit organizations, as well as public-sector organizations. You should be aware of these three sectors as you move forward with your academic and professional lives.

Business organizations have often had a reputation that they do not do a good job of looking out for interests *other than* their own financial well-being or bottom line. Having said this, have you heard of the “triple bottom line?” An argument that is increasingly being made is that business organizations should care about people, profit, and the planet (Glavas & Mish, 2015). This is in contrast to the common notion that business organizations primarily focus on money (i.e., the “bottom line” of profitability). Noted economist Milton Friedman (1970) made a statement in this regard that is widely cited:

There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud (p. 6).

There has been an explosion of interest and writing on the topic of the “social responsibility of business” over the past 50 years. Whether an organization is run for profit, or as a nonprofit, some level of financial viability is necessary for its continued existence. Clearly, then, financial issues are vital to all types of organizations. Yet, the many scandals in business, government, and even religious institutions raise concerns over the individual participants in these organizations and how they conduct themselves. There is much that can and should be said concerning personal ethics, corporate social responsibility, and the growing emphasis on sustainability (Devinney, 2009). These topics are addressed more fully in this and later chapters of this book. Another concept that will be addressed in this text is the notion of various “stakeholders” for business organizations—rather than focusing primarily on stockholders (i.e., those who own shares in a publicly traded corporation). The fact that organizations of all size are increasingly operating in a global business environment is also addressed in Chapter 7.

## COLLEGE-LEVEL WRITING

In Chapter 3, Lynn DuPree introduces you to expectations concerning college-level writing, with particular focus on writing for business classes. There are numerous style guides that can be used for college and professional writing, with those from the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) being two of the most commonly used guides. Here is a hint concerning success in college-level writing: Find out what style guide your instructor wishes for you to use, and then learn to master writing in that style! For many business courses and instructors, the preferred style will be APA. Whatever the preferred style, there are many good sources available to assist you, including simplified guides offered by university libraries (e.g., Citation Guides, 2018).

Perhaps it goes without saying, but you should be referring to this chapter throughout the course. Employers are seeking to hire graduates for particular purposes or jobs, and yet a

common demand is that these graduates are skilled in both oral and written communication. “Adroit” or skillful writing has been identified as a critical area for improvement for U.S. college graduates (Campbell & Kresyman, 2015).

## DEVELOPING YOUR CAREER

As mentioned in the opening reflection, in Chapter 4, Ron Buchholz and Stephanie Douglas introduce you to topics concerning career development, or more specifically, how each of you can develop your career over time. Throughout life, each of us should be seeking to develop the skills or competencies that are needed for success in whatever career path we choose. These include not only “obvious” items such as oral and written communication, teamwork, and leadership skills, but also things such as critical thinking, professionalism, and intercultural fluency (NACE, 2018). You hopefully are noticing the degree of overlap between the topics addressed in this course, and this list of career competencies. A goal of this text is to get you moving in a positive direction toward both academic and career success. There are things that you can start now, such as doing an informational interview with a professional in a field that interests you. Other activities include creating a professional resume or an online professional profile. Perhaps the most challenging part of this process is to spell out in more detail what success means to you, and then to think through what your success map looks like. Career development is not something that happens in a particular course, but is rather a lifelong activity. The idea is to see each of you grow in your career readiness, (i.e., that you attain the competencies you need to ensure a successful transition into the workplace). The list of career competencies from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) is highlighted at the beginning of each chapter to give you a sense of how each chapter contributes to your further development in these areas.

## WORK GROUPS AND TEAMS

In Chapter 5, Jim Schnaedter covers the topics of work groups and teams. Teams and teamwork will play a large role in your college experience, and for most of you, teams will be a major part of your work experience as well. There are many different types of teams in business organizations, with some that are ongoing and others that form and disband for specific purposes. What makes for a successful team? In this chapter, you will look at success factors relating to characteristics of the team members, the size and structure of the team, as well as the roles and norms that develop within each team.

Here is our immediate challenge to each person reading these words: whether you like it or not, you will be spending a good portion of your life working in teams. Why not start now to learn what is more likely to lead to team success, and then start engaging in the practices that promote successful team outcomes? As one example, student teams who understood and were committed to team goals and tasks, and who had greater intensity of effort toward team goals, received higher grades on a major group project in a human resource management class (Werner & Lester, 2001). If success in teams is important to your future work lives, why not begin now to practice and experience the factors that lead to successful team outcomes while you are still in college?

## LEADERSHIP

Stephanie Douglas highlights the topic of leadership in Chapter 6. Good leadership is vital to the success of any organization, and business organizations spend millions of dollars every year on management and leadership development. An enormous amount of writing and research has gone into describing and determining what makes leaders effective. When you think of a “good” leader, do you think of particular traits (e.g., self-confidence), behaviors (e.g., getting tasks completed), or something else? How important are power and authority to the success of a leader? What does effective “followership” look like? These questions are addressed in this chapter, and it is hoped that this will encourage you to think of your own skills and areas for development, as both an effective leader and follower.

## WORKING IN AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND GLOBALIZATION

In Chapter 7, Julie Woletz addresses issues concerning working in an international or multi-cultural environment, as well as globalization. It is vital to understand national culture, as well as how various cultures differ from each other. You will be introduced to the term *cultural intelligence*, which refers to a person’s ability to relate to other cultures. If you have ever traveled to another country, you know immediately how important it is to be able to relate in a healthy way with those who do things differently than you are used to. Globalization is a reality for almost all larger organizations in the world today and is increasingly critical for small- and medium-sized organizations as well. As this topic is discussed, we hope you will be curious about your own cultural intelligence.

## ETHICS AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

In Chapter 8, Kenyatta Barber expands on our coverage of ethics and corporate social responsibility. When there are allegations of improper behavior by individuals in high-level business or governmental positions, it is easy to think, “What is wrong with *those people?*”—or to ask, “What were they thinking?” All of us come with some set of morals and values, often through what we learned in our home or upbringing, or from those who are most influential to us. We bring these values and ethical beliefs into our everyday lives, including work, academic pursuits, and even personal interactions. While whole courses have been developed concerning ethics and corporate social responsibility, one goal of this course is to have you think through your own ethical values, and how this can help you navigate your life in the future (Gosenpud & Werner, 2015).

There has been considerable criticism of business schools in universities, with a central argument that business schools have not done enough to promote ethical thinking and behavior on the part of their students and graduates (e.g., Floyd, Xu, Atkins, & Caldwell, 2013). As one response, you will find that ethics and ethical behavior will be addressed in many different ways throughout your academic studies. In Chapter 8, global ethical issues are addressed in more detail and you will go further in understanding corporate social responsibility and the triple bottom line. One global response to educating business leaders about ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability is the United Nations’

Principles for Responsible Management Education, or PRME (pronounced “prime”), with a major focus on sustainability and environmental issues (Greenberg et al., 2017). Especially in this past decade, sustainability has been an increasing focus within business courses. This is a most interesting time in world history to be studying business ethics, corporate social responsibility, and sustainability!

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

In Chapter 9, Dennis Baskin addresses the topics of diversity and inclusion in the business environment. The United States is increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, first language spoken, and a host of other variables. The Latin phrase *E pluribus unum*—out of many, one—appears on the Great Seal of the United States. Sadly, U.S. history is filled with examples where there has been more struggle than success in living out this statement. The treatment of indigenous peoples (Native Americans), slaves, and immigrants from a wide variety of countries dominated early U.S. history. Especially since the 1960s, the United States experienced a greater governmental or legal focus on addressing discrimination in areas concerning race and gender. Governmental agencies such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, or EEOC, have been established to monitor and enforce national civil rights laws (Overview, EEOC, 2018).

Yet, diversity is much more than simply avoiding discrimination. Business organizations are increasingly focused on inclusion, which is a more proactive effort to explicitly include individuals from diverse backgrounds. This is often referred to as diversity management, and it is vital that you are aware of what leading organizations are doing to have a diverse pool of talent within their organization. There is so much more to this topic than simply “staying out of trouble with the law.” It is our hope that this chapter will further your understanding of how business organizations, in particular, can promote diversity and inclusion in a manner that, as Roosevelt Thomas has stated “works for all employees” (Thomas, 1991, p. 10).

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

We hope this opening chapter has encouraged you that, wherever you are presently and wherever you want to go, there is something in this course that can assist you on your life and career journey. Each chapter will begin with an opening activity. This may be a case scenario, or a reflection on topics addressed in that chapter. At the end of every chapter, you will find the following sections: “What Have We Learned?,” “Key Terms and Concepts,” “Comprehension Questions and Activities,” “Writers’ Workshop,” and references. The “What Have We Learned?” section summarizes key points from the chapter, and the “Key Terms and Concepts” section provides definitions for content in that chapter. We urge you to make use of the comprehension questions and activities to further your understanding of the chapter content and to go further in your study of chapter content. The writers’ work-

shop gives you a practical writing assignment related to each chapter. Finally, the references show what sources were used in each chapter. These end-of-chapter resources should help you to build both your awareness and skills throughout this course.

A key element in effective learning is—you! Are you coming into this course with an expectation of learning? What can you learn from the instructor, the text, the activities, and from others in the class? Here are some key points from this opening chapter:

- Business organizations have often had a controversial role in society. Concepts such as the “triple bottom line,” where there is a focus on people, profits, and the planet (sustainability) have grown in popularity as a response to past actions by some business organizations.
- One critical skill or competency to success in college is written communication. Accept the fact that this is a skill that can be continuously developed and improved. Accept feedback from your current instructors so that you can express yourself more clearly and persuasively.
- This course is meant to be one more step forward for each individual in his or her own career development process. It is a process, a journey! Perseverance is key.
- The gap between what has been written about leadership and how leadership is put into practice is enormous. Every person should strive to increase his or her own leadership effectiveness, whether he or she is presently in a leadership position or not.
- College life, and a high percentage of work in modern business organizations, requires individuals to work together effectively in teams. Teams can excel and succeed, and there are principles that you can and should learn to help you succeed in the teams with which you participate.
- Multi-cultural, global, and international issues impact individuals, business organizations, and all societies. Individuals can grow in their cultural intelligence, concerning how they interact with those who are different from themselves.
- Ethics starts with individuals. The increasing focus on corporate social responsibility (CSR) emphasizes ethical issues and responsibilities on the part of business organizations.
- Diversity and inclusion encompass so much more than simply “following the laws” to avoid discriminating against any particular type of person. Many leading organizations today embrace diversity and inclusion as part of their model for organizational success.

We have created this textbook with the goal of increasing the likelihood that each of you will succeed in college, and in life. That’s an ambitious goal, isn’t it? Growing your awareness for all aspects of business can help you in determining (or affirming) a choice of a major. Perhaps you never even thought about a particular major (e.g., economics, human resource management, or supply chain management), and so learning about the various business majors will help you in that way. The ultimate goal is to help you build the skills or competencies you need to succeed in the workplace—in whatever capacity that is. This is called “career readiness.” As we begin the journey in this particular class, we close with this quote from tennis great Arthur Ashe:

Success is a journey, not a destination. The doing is often more important than the outcome – Arthur Ashe (Arthur Ashe Learning Center, 2018).

## Key Terms and Concepts

**Business and society:** the rising expectations of business by society, and how business relates to society today

**Career readiness:** the attainment and demonstration of requisite competencies that broadly prepare college graduates for a successful transition into the workforce

**Corporate social responsibility (CSR):** an organization’s obligation to maximize its positive impact on stakeholders and minimize its negative impact

**Cultural intelligence (CQ):** a measurement of one’s non-academic abilities, relating to mental, motivational, and behavioral abilities as they relate to differences in culture

**Inclusion:** the degree to which an employee feels like an esteemed member of a group or organization in which his or her uniqueness is highly appreciated

**Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME):** a United Nations initiative to emphasize sustainability goals in business school students’ education

**Sustainability:** an economic focus that considers future generations, not just the present, and involves long-term gains, not just short-term success

**Stakeholders:** any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives

**Stakeholder management:** intentional actions taken by business leaders to create an organizational culture that learns about and works with all stakeholders in a strategic, ethical way

**The three sectors:** **For-profit**, which are organizations created to generate profit for owners or shareholders. **Not-for-profit** (also called nonprofits), which are organizations created to accomplish a charitable purpose. **Public**, which are educational and governmental agencies, designed to serve the public good

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITY

### Questions:

1. In your opinion, what is the ideal role for business organizations in society? Does this differ from what you have seen as the “actual” role that businesses play in society, and if so, how?
2. Go back and review the quote by Milton Friedman (on p. 6) concerning the social responsibility of business. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this quote concerning how business should relate to society in general?
3. When you hear the word *sustainability*, what comes to your mind? What are some issues pertaining to sustainability that you would like to learn more about?

4. What are some of the frustrations that you have experienced when working in student groups? What are ways to overcome the challenges of working in groups in this or other college classes?
5. Which topic mentioned in this chapter do you find most interesting at this time? Why?

*Activity:*

1. As you start this course, on a five-point scale (with five as best), what is your evaluation of your own degree of competence in the following areas:
 

a. oral communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
b. written communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
c. teamwork skills	1	2	3	4	5
d. leadership skills	1	2	3	4	5
e. critical thinking skills	1	2	3	4	5
f. degree of professionalism	1	2	3	4	5
g. intercultural skills	1	2	3	4	5

## WRITERS' WORKSHOP

If requested by your instructor, compose an email to your instructor explaining why you have chosen business as your major and how you think this course may assist you in attaining your goals. Create an appropriate subject line, salutation, and closing, and use a level of formality that you think would be acceptable between a student and professor.

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### *Figure Credit*

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