



## business philosophy

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ILLUSTRATION BY NOLI NOVAK

# Communication Is Good Business

Small business owners and corporate ladder climbers should recognize there is more to business than the ubiquitous MBA. Certainly having an MBA is essential for specific job descriptions, as well as for upward mobility in many corporations. As the number of MBA graduates rises, so do the number local schools offering MBA programs and even online MBA programs.

However, there's an equally important alternative that can be applied directly to the world of business—the Master of Arts in Communication Studies. Here's the reason: Nothing happens until somebody communicates something to someone else.

Everything we do in business is about effective communication to another individual, a group, an organization or to the masses. Our messages are intended to inform, guide, persuade, build relationships and close the sale. The soft skills such as effective communication are just as important as the hard skills.

Effective business communication is a three-legged stool made up of the message, the delivery method and the recipient. Often, the message is not the only thing being communicated. Recipients also pick up cues from the message tone as well as the way the message is delivered. If just one of the three legs of the stool is unevenly matched, wobbly or missing, the stool is unstable and something unexpected can happen. Communication can be impaired or lost completely, and miscommunication can result in unintended and costly consequences.

When considering effective business communication, many people make the mistake of applying it only to the most obvious—their company's outgoing advertising and marketing messages.

Taking such a limited view, however, eliminates the majority of the communication messages a company generates such as internal communication and messages to partnering

companies, vendors and suppliers. Messages are communicated daily by everyone in the company in the form of one-on-one conversations, memos, mail, e-mails, not to mention countless meetings, both virtual and face-to-face.

When framed this way, the importance of studying effective communication is evident and vital to both entrepreneurs and corporate managers alike.

But attending graduate school requires a completely different mindset than the experience of entering college out of high school. Instead of applying and hoping to be accepted, now you have the confidence and maturity to do the interviewing. Interview the department chair, meet some of the professors, visit a class and ask for graduates of the program as references. Also, find out if the program is set up to be friendly to your current business life. For instance, I looked for flexibility of electives so that I could create my own area of emphasis that was important to me. In performing the coursework, I was able to immediately apply what I learned in the real world.

By obtaining a graduate degree in communication studies and putting what you learn into practice in your everyday life, you can differentiate yourself and your company.

For small business owners, it is a matter of credibility in the business world and leadership within the company. If understanding and applying effective communication is important enough for the owner of the company to obtain a master's degree in the field, you can bet the company functions at a higher level than most.

In the corporate world, even if you already have an MBA, you might want to consider getting a second degree. Employees can set themselves apart in a competitive corporate environment or become more valuable to the company as an expert in an often ignored but essential field of study. **KCB**



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