

Abax - Review

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Business Listening and Speaking

Definitely worth considering for the motivated business student.



This is a no-nonsense business skills book for in-service intermediate level students and covers a lot of ground. The 15 units themselves contain few thematic surprises; we moved from work habits and small businesses, via company organization and meetings, to selecting staff and holding interviews. Other units deal with promotion and marketing, business ethics, tourism, different work styles and negotiating. There are also chapters on business in sport, the pros and cons of the European Union, charities as business, and technology. These have new material and new angles on these themes.

The units are full to bursting and provide a great deal of language practice in short personalized speaking opportunities or quick listening activities. Each unit offers a wealth of practice in a variety of formats, with each page containing three or four activities. In chapter one, students are invited to discuss in pairs how they could make their working styles more efficient, what important different aspects of job satisfaction may have, and how stressful their working lives are.

This is supplemented by six listening tasks and a sensitivity task where pairs choose a new occupation for another member of the group, based on his or her strengths and working preferences.

Two particularly interesting features of the book are the emphasis on salient phonological features of natural English in the listening clinics that occur in each unit, and the references to websites on topics related to the themes of the chapter. The listening clinic opens with an awareness-raising listening on reduced forms and the role of word stress in introducing new information. This is followed by shared consonants, as in 'ba-d-ecision' for 'bad decision', and contracted forms. Other units introduce vowel-reduction, lost consonants, British and American /r/, contrastive stress, weak forms, and intonation practice with such features as rising and falling intonation as a sign of completion of an utterance. The listenings offer a good range of accents of British, American and other world Englishes, which is also welcome.

Gripes include the visuals: there is colour in the book, but not in the illustrations. Then again, it is refreshing to find a book where content wins over decoration, and language practice is more important than the looks that big budgets can buy. Citizens of Wales might be surprised to find that their country has largely vanished in the hand drawing of Europe on page 21, but I'm sure this is not intentional!

Tapescripts are given at the end of the book, as are the keys to the exercises and - another very useful feature - there is room for vocabulary notes unit by unit with the helpful prompts 'meaning/ examples/related words'. Definitely worth considering for the motivated business student.

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