**Chapter 2 Solutions to Activities**

**2.1 Soft Skills: Which Competencies Are More Desirable? (Obj. 1)**

Students should find a range of soft skills mentioned, including oral and written communication skills and team skills. But they will also find a combination of soft skills and character traits mentioned such as “must be able to coordinate communications and work with staff, customers, vendors, independent contractors, writers, and designers”; “must provide daily project-management coordination across multiple project-related activities”; “must be a self-starter, highly motivated, well organized, and detail oriented”; and “must work well in a diverse environment.”

**2.2 Soft Skills: Personal Strengths Inventory (Obj. 1)**

Your students should submit a list of four categories of soft skills. Encourage them to frame statements that will be useful when they prepare a résumé later in the course. For example, under “Thinking and problem solving,” a student might write, “Learned new spreadsheet program and prepared cost projection for remodeling office,” or “Learn new software applications quickly and with little training.”

**2.3 Reaching Group Decisions: Majority, Consensus, or What? (Obj. 1)**

More than one strategy may be appropriate for these situations. The authors’ recommendations follow.

a. Majority would work, but consensus would be better.

b. Majority

c. Authority rule with discussion

d. Consensus

e. Majority

f. Minority

g. Majority would work, but consensus would be better.

h. Minority

**2.4 Resolving Workplace Conflicts: Apply a Plan (Obj. 1)**

Students should apply the following six-step procedure: (1) Listen to each person's position. (2) Understand the other's point of view. Ask questions and paraphrase what you hear. (3) Show a concern for the relationship. Show an understanding of the other person's situation and needs. (4) Look for common ground. Look for a solution to which both sides can agree. (5) Invent new problem-solving options, if necessary. (6) Reach an agreement based on what's fair. Encourage students to role-play two or more of the scenarios.

**2.5 Workplace Conflict: The Perils of Groupthink (Obj. 1)**

Answers will vary.

**2.6 Groupthink: Fastest Decision May Not Be Best (Obj. 1)**

a. This group seemed too eager to make a quick decision. It failed to consider alternatives, and the chair was too invested in his recommendation.

b. The following conditions can lead to groupthink: team members with similar backgrounds, a lack of methodical procedures, a demand for a quick decision, and a strong leader who favors a specific decision.

c. Groups can avoid groupthink by striving for team diversity in age, gender, background, experience, and training. They should encourage open discussion, search for relevant information, evaluate many alternatives, consider how a decision will be implemented, and plan for contingencies in case the decision doesn’t work out.

**2.7 Meeting Malaise: Beyond Contempt (Obj. 2)**

Answers will vary, but most will support the advice provided in this book. John Hollon, author of “Meeting Malaise” [(2007, November 5). *Workforce Management*, p. 58] admits that “structured, tightly focused meetings with a clear purpose and goal can serve a business purpose.” He acknowledges that meetings can be “a road map to focus the participants on what needs to get done.” Another author has this advice for leaders, telling them to get out of the way and keep meetings to a minimum: “Go through your calendar. If you find a group meeting that is solely for your benefit, cancel it. This will signal to your team members that you value their time and that they should value it, too. If you aren’t sure about the meeting’s value, announce that you are going to miss it once and see what happens. If the meeting doesn’t take place, you have your answer.” [Tolany, B. (2012, March 27). 3 quick questions to help readers get out of the way. Smartblog on Leadership. Retrieved from http://smartblogs.com/leadership/2012/03/27/3-quick-questions-to-help-leaders-get-out-of-the-way]

**2.8 Evaluating Meetings: Productive or Not? (Obj. 2)**

Students may analyze the meeting by using the following template to conclude whether the meeting succeeded or failed.

**Getting Ready for the Meeting**

a. Was the meeting truly necessary?

b. Were the right people there according to the purpose of the meeting?

c. Was an agenda distributed?

**Conducting the Meeting**

a. Did the meeting start on time?

b. Did the meeting chair open with an introduction of the topic, a summary of topics, possible solutions, a tentative agenda, and/or a review of ground rules?

c. Did the chair provide suggestions for moving the meeting along?

d. Was conflict dealt with successfully? Did the chair keep control of the meeting? Did committee members make their points without attacking each other?

e. Was the decision made by consensus or by vote? Were minority views encouraged and tolerated?

f. Did the meeting end on time or whenever consensus was reached, according to the ground rules agreed on?

**Ending the Meeting and Following Up**

a. Were decisions reviewed, action items discussed, and/or a schedule for completion established?

b. Were committee members reminded to follow through on action items?

**Virtual Meetings**

Students may want to explore the following questions and add their own observations:  
a. What technology was used to connect the participants? Was it effective overall?

b. Did the group experience any technical difficulties? If yes, how were they addressed?

c. Did participants introduce themselves in the beginning and each time they spoke?

d. Were surrounding noises kept to a minimum? Did all participants seem attentive?

e. Was the meeting productive overall? Was its length adequate?

**2.9 Stand-Up Meetings: Keeping Business Meetings Short and Sweet (Obj. 2)**

Answers will vary. Students may come up with creative methods to ensure turn-taking and participation by instituting a system of sanctions and rewards. They may realize that not all companies or industries may be able or willing to hold supershort daily stand-up meetings. Rather, this type of quickie meeting seems most suitable for highly creative, design- and tech-heavy occupations that enjoy a great deal of independence. Conversely, following the military example, tightly run, somewhat authoritarian organizations might do well with standing meetings. As for punishing tardiness and other transgressions, it seems that small penalties such as paying $1 into an office coffee kitty or being subjected to a mildly humiliating or unflattering activity such as singing a corny song would suffice. You could try stand-up meetings at the beginning of class to capture students’ attention when making important announcements or giving instructions.

**2.10 Virtual Meetings: Improving Distance Meeting Buy-In (Obj. 2)**

a. Setting a more reasonable start time for the Seattle office would have shown courtesy to the West Coast participants.

b. Asking participants to log on early helps to avoid delays in starting a virtual meeting.

c. Reminding participants of ground rules such as turning off or muting cell phones and not checking e-mail during a virtual meeting encourages people to focus and be more involved.

d. Using interactivity helps prevent group members from losing interest. A technique such as “round-robin” would have elicited more active participation and discouraged multitasking on the other end.

e. Distributing materials prior to a virtual meeting allows participants to prepare questions and be more involved during the session.

**2.11 Virtual Meetings: Connecting by Skype to Clarify an Order (Obj. 2)**

This simulation should proceed smoothly as long as each participating student has created a Skype account and downloaded the Skype connection software or app. Students could be asked to create or be given brief scripts, each defining the individual participant’s role and motivation. This should help the students to assume Mr. Been’s and his caller’s personas. The script could also include instructions detailing the botched order and its correct version. Each participating student should create or receive his or her own script, thus allowing parties to respond spontaneously and realistically to each other. One Skype conversation partner should step outside and converse by Skype in a quiet area to minimize interference and noise. With the right software, Skype conversations can be recorded and reviewed. Information about Paramount Fitness products is available on the company website. After the Web conference, the class should discuss the interaction between the partners in the United States and those in the UK. For added interest, additional players with various tasks could be added to create a multiuser teleconference with or without video.

**2.12 Web Conferencing: Take a Quick Tour (Obj. 2)**

This engaging video makes Web conferencing sound simple and easy.

Step 1. Schedule a meeting by using Outlook, the WebEx site, or IM.

Step 2. Meet your participants online. They do not need to have WebEx to join. They merely click a link in your announcement e-mail or IM. They can join the teleconference by computer or phone.

Step 3. Show and tell involves sharing your desktop with participants. You can show documents, presentations, or applications. Everyone sees the same thing at the same time.

Students may question whether WebEx is the best choice for small conferences. Perhaps other programs should be investigated such as Skype.

**2.13 Rating Your Listening Skills (Obj. 3)**

This quiz focuses attention on good listening techniques as presented in the textbook. Although some of the answers are obvious, an interactive quiz presents an alternative learning mode that can pique student interest and reinforce good habits.

**2.14 Listening: Recognizing Good Habits (Obj. 3)**

Students should be able to name five good and five bad listening behaviors. They should clearly identify the situation and participant for each item on their lists. This activity presents an excellent opportunity for you to make students more conscious of how listening habits differ in people around them. You should also be able to discuss techniques for improving poor listening habits.

**2.15 Listening: An In-Person or Virtual Social Media Interview**

The answers will vary. Students could brainstorm and discuss their interview questions in class or prepare questions at home. Then they could approach their interviewee in person, by phone, by e-mail, or via LinkedIn or Facebook. A special word of caution when contacting professionals on LinkedIn: Warn students not to relentlessly pursue random strangers, but to work from within their own established LinkedIn circle of professional acquaintances or, in turn, their acquaintances’ contacts. This assignment could be done orally or in writing (e-mail, memo) individually, in small groups, or in class. The task could be expanded to a group oral presentation or written report.

**2.16** **Listening and Nonverbal Cues: Skills Required in Various Careers (Objs. 3, 4)**

Student teams should generate lists of listening and nonverbal cues that include some of the following: good eye contact, avoiding being distracted by others while listening, not interrupting, taking notes, paraphrasing instructions, asking pertinent questions in a nonthreatening manner, leaning forward, and showing empathy and compassion. *Critical listening* involves judging and evaluating what you are hearing. *Discriminative listening* is necessary when you must identify main ideas and understand an argument. Teams should generate different cues and behaviors reflecting these forms of listening in relation to the professional role they are analyzing.

**2.17 Nonverbal Communication: Body Language (Obj. 4)**

The following body movements do not necessarily mean the same thing when used by different individuals. Remember that to a certain degree nonverbal communication can be culture or subculture specific, and context always plays a major role when you interpret this type of communication. Students may have other interpretations, but these body movements can be construed to mean the following:

a. Whistling, wringing hands: nervousness or fear

b. Bowed posture, twiddling thumbs: boredom

c. Steepled hands, sprawling sitting position: contemplative or relaxed

d. Rubbing hand through hair: frustration or nervousness

e. Open hands, unbuttoned coat: relaxed

f. Wringing hands, tugging ears: upset or nervous

**2.18 Nonverbal Communication: Universal Sign for *I Goofed* (Obj. 4)**

This is a good exercise for teams. Suggest that team members take turns demonstrating each of the nonverbal messages described here. They should then discuss how effective each would be. Of course, some would be quite dangerous if they require taking your hands off the steering wheel. Be sure to discuss with students the difficulty of cultural implications. Although a gesture might be effective in one country, it might not work in another.

**2.19 Verbal vs. Nonverbal Signals (Obj. 4)**

Although this is a neat trick, it hardly proves that nonverbal signals are ALWAYS more meaningful than verbal signals. The truth is that nonverbal signals nearly always depend on context. That is, the situation, setting, and accompanying verbal signals are necessary to interpret nonverbal signals appropriately. Much nonverbal communication is ambiguous without verbal explanation to interpret it. One conclusion that might be drawn from this demonstration is that visual aids (gestures demonstrating an action) can help or hinder a listener in following instructions.

**2.20 Nonverbal Communication: Signals Sent by Casual Attire (Obj. 4)**

This activity can be expanded into a research paper topic. A variation on this activity relies on student experiences. Instead of conducting interviews in the community, they can conduct a forum among students who work, asking them to comment on casual-dress policies in the jobs they have had. Activity 7.5 in Chapter 7 also relates to casual dress.

**2.21 Nonverbal Communication: Comparing and Contrasting *Casual* and *Business Casual* (Obj. 4)**

Team reports defining *business casual* will probably include some of the following information: Women should wear skirts, slacks, blouses, and jackets. Skirts should be no shorter than 2 inches above the knee. Hosiery should be worn in the fall and winter. No sandals or open-toed shoes, jeans, shorts, or hats. Men may wear dress slacks, button-down shirts, and jackets and ties (optional). Women should avoid leggings, spandex pants, casual and short shorts, ultrashort skirts, camisoles, sportswear T-shirts, jeans, sweats, athletic shoes, and thonglike flip-flop sandals. Men should avoid garish print sport shirts, sportswear T-shirts, sport team jackets, jeans, sweats, athletic socks, hiking boots, athletic shoes, and sandals.

**2.22 The Silent Language of Tattoos: How Much Self-Expression on the Job? (Obj. 4)**

The wisdom of permanent body adornment aside, most people would probably still agree that it is unwise to risk rejection when applying for a job simply for the sake of showing off a tattoo. Even young people may agree that it may be opportune sometimes to conceal tattoos and piercings that can be hidden. The discussion could be interesting if students manifest strong opinions for openly and proudly wearing their body art or, conversely, against doing so. You may want to conduct a poll, openly or anonymously, to find out whether the statistics in your class match the findings of the Pew study. Also, you could ask whether students perceive any limits to the types of tattoos most Americans would accept. How do they view inked decorations that are, for instance, very large, carry an obscene or otherwise controversial message, or appear on the neck and the face? Can students safely rely on a generational change that will eventually render the concern about tattoos in the workplace moot? A discussion of body ink and piercings on the job could lead to a debate about other forms of self-expression in the workplace and the snap judgments by others we are risking when we insist on sending strong nonverbal messages.

**2.23 Nonverbal Communication Around the World (Obj. 4)**

Students should be able to find a number of gestures and their meanings discussed at various websites. Here is one example: “The fingertip kiss, in which the tips of the thumb and fingers are kissed and quickly moved forward away from the face, is a sign of affection and may be used as a greeting in Sicily and Portugal. The fingertip kiss is not used often in Italy and the British Isles, but it is common in France, Germany, Greece, and Spain to signify praise” (J. S. Martin and L. H. Chaney, *Global Business Etiquette*, Praeger, 2006, p. 53).

**2.24 Guide to Business Etiquette and Workplace Manners: Sharpening Your Skills   
(Obj. 5)**

Students are encouraged to take the pretest and study the 17 business etiquette topics presented at **www.cengagebrain.com.** Instructors will find a complete discussion guide plus three posttests under *Teaching Materials* in the instructor’s materials at **www.cengagebrain.com.** A discussion guide also appears in this Instructor's Manual.

**2.25 Business Etiquette: Breaking the Smartphone Habit in Meetings (Obj. 5)**

(a) Short policy statement: In using a smartphone or other wireless device, be professional. Respect others.

(b) More complete policy:

* Turn your smartphone off or on vibrate. Keep it off the meeting table.
* Don’t look at it during a meeting or conversation.
* Don’t respond to a call, e-mail, or text during a meeting or conversation.
* If you are expecting an important call, let the person or meeting facilitator know in advance.
* Leave the room if you must take a call or respond to an e-mail.
* Shut the door quietly when you exit and enter the room.
* Apologize if you do interrupt the meeting.
* Use your e-mail “out of office” assistant, and change your voice message to let people know you are not available.
* Post a sign if the organization has a “no cell phone” area or zone.

[Based on Harr, M. (n.d.). Smart phone etiquette—How smart are you? Retrieved from http://ezinearticles.com]

Another source suggests three general strategies to minimize disruptions from mobile devices in meetings:

1. **Start at the top**. When the most important people in the meeting room put their phones away, others are inclined to do the same.
2. **Set expectations**. Explicit instructions requesting smartphones to be put away—with information on where and when to check for messages—puts everyone on the same page.
3. **Schedule frequent breaks**. When meeting participants know they will be able to check messages every 45 minutes to an hour, they are more willing to put their phones away.

[O’Brien Coffey, J. (2011, September). How to manage smartphones at meetings. *Executive Travel Magazine.* Retrieved from http://www.executivetravelmagazine.com/articles/how-to-manage-smartphones-at-meetings]