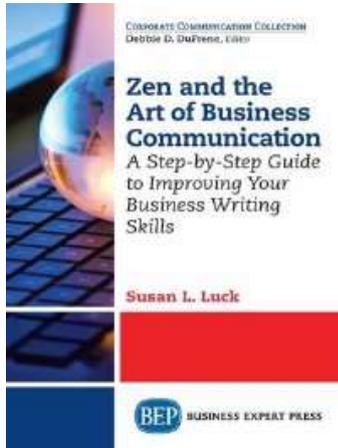


PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Zen and the Art of Business Communication: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Your Business Writing Skills***

Author: **Susan L. Luck, PhD**

Publisher: Business Expert Press

List Price: \$34.95 Format: Paperback, 202 pages

Publication Date: 2016 ISBN: 978-1-60649-956-6

Reviewer: **Susan E. Slawson, PhD, PMP, CSM**

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Introduction

In this digital age quite often your first communication with others, if not all your communication, is written: email, texts, blogs, social media posts, etc. Knowing how to write effectively is crucial, especially if you want to get ahead in the business world. One of the most important ideas to understand is that communication isn't about you, the sender – it is about the receiver of the message. This becomes clear in Dr. Susan L. Luck's book [Zen and the Art of Business Communication: A Step-by-Step Guide to Improving Your Business Writing Skills](#).

If absorbed and practiced the book offers guidance that will lead you to become a better communicator. Simple, straightforward instructions are shared that lead to concise and easy to understand communications that will showcase your professionalism. As the author explains: "...this book intends to ... provide you with the concept. Your job is to explore the details, apply them, and practice them."

Overview of Book's Structure

The book is broken up into an introductory chapter and 14 subsequent chapters. Each of the 14 chapters is dedicated to a specific topic. A closing chapter is not included.

The fourteen chapters cover a variety of topics including: focusing your message, knowing and targeting your audience, providing clarity and concrete messages, and identifying the goals of your communication. Additional chapters discuss the fear of writing, the importance of flow and getting the details right.

Important concepts are highlighted in text boxes and let you know to slow down and concentrate on the information. This makes it easier to revisit the main concepts of each chapter without re-reading the entire chapter.

Highlights

In today's frenzied business world all too often we find ourselves responding without really thinking about our message or adding any finesse. We are so busy crossing things off our To Do lists we neglect the reader and as a result our communication suffers. By applying Zen principles to our life, and in particular to our business communications, we can improve our writing skills and be more "mindful" by living in the moment.

Business writing is about clarity and critical thinking. Many people think they need to use large and obscure words to sound smart; however, precise language and a deliberate awareness of what you are trying to communicate result in a more professional image. As the author stated, "... sounding professional or smart comes from precision in language, simplicity in form and structure, and a conscious and deliberate awareness of what one is communicating."

The author isn't just writing from her own experiences but provides facts and figures to back up what she is saying. Detailed statistics, quotes and facts have been researched and are included in the book. Some will have flashbacks to English classes but a refresher course on some of the basic rules of writing is helpful.

The book is not a treatise on Zen Buddhist principles but Zen values are scattered throughout to reinforce ways to communicate better. "Good writing is not about just letting the words flow.... It's about deliberate, thoughtful, and accurate critical thinking, which comes only from deep awareness of what is around us. Zen, in other words."

Highlights: What I liked!

I liked the concrete examples – in one chapter different versions of the same sentence were shown. Each version emphasized different pieces of the sentence. The author then explained in which situation you would use each version.

Another good example was based on the Zen approach of acting deliberately (think before you act). The suggestion was to make good use of your email Drafts folder. Write an email message but instead of hitting Send move it to your Drafts folder. Continue on to your next email. When finished move this second message into the Drafts folder. While you are there, pull up the first email you filed. Reread it. Chances are good that you will find something to add or tweak. Send the first email after your review. Voilà, you have added less than 60 seconds to your day and your communication has improved.

Who might benefit from the Book?

The book has a very wide audience – anyone who communicates with others can benefit from the book. Even someone who is very technical or delivers mainly data results will need to communicate why that data is important, who it impacts, how it impacts them, etc. If you want to increase your professionalism, read this book and

then implement the suggestions the author makes. This book is good for someone just starting out in their career as well as someone who is well into their career.

Conclusion

Zen is not a religion; it is a method, an attitude about life. The Zen approach is a framework for this book about better business communication. While the book focuses on written communication most of the principles apply to any type of communication, and not just in business but also in personal communication. Concrete examples and step-by-step instructions are included but there are no exercises or homework.

In this digital world our public image is based on our written image. No matter how we communicate (via email, written reports, texts or other ways) we are judged by how well we use our words. Zen teaches that often the simplest way is the best way, but it also teaches that in simplicity we must find order. By combining these Zen concepts with the rules of good writing we can improve our communication skills.

For more about this book, go to: <http://www.businessexpertpress.com/books/zen-and-art-business-communication-step-step-guide-improving-your-business-writing-skills/>

Editor's note: This book review was the result of a partnership between the publisher, PM World and the [PMI Dallas Chapter](#). Authors and publishers provide the books to PM World; books are delivered to the PMI Dallas Chapter, where they are offered free to PMI members to review; book reviews are published in the PM World Journal and PM World Library. PMI Dallas Chapter members can keep the books as well as claim PDUs for PMP recertification when their reviews are published. Chapter members are generally mid-career professionals, the audience for most project management books. If you are an author or publisher of a project management-related book, and would like the book reviewed through this program, please contact editor@peworldjournal.net.

About the Reviewer



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Susan E. Slawson, PhD, PMP, CSM, is an IT project manager who delivers efficient and straightforward project solutions while developing and mentoring others. She is experienced at leading full life cycle software implementations and demonstrates pride and ownership in all of her deliverables. While being self-sufficient and operating under aggressive deadlines, she can manage multiple projects, priorities and budgets. Susan considers herself to be bilingual in the business world – she can speak equally well to business owners and technology resources.

Susan received her PhD from Carnegie Mellon University and promptly entered the workforce in management consulting. She has a varied background, including starting her own company and working for multiple industries such as professional services, healthcare, telecom, energy, financial services and retail. She is currently looking for her next opportunity while volunteering with the DFW Alliance of Technology and Women (ATW) and the Southlake Focus Group. She is a member of both the Dallas and Fort Worth PMI chapters as well as the club secretary for the Executive Toastmasters.

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