

TEXT BOOKLET

Cambridge English Skills Test: Business

Reading

Sample Test

Access Arrangements Version

SUITABLE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED CANDIDATES

PART 4

TEXT FOR QUESTIONS 9 – 13

EFFECTIVE TEAM WORKING

Teamwork is changing. Instead of being one connected group working face-to-face, with a fixed set of members, modern teams are often spread out geographically with varying membership. Consequently, members often create subgroups of people in the team that they work most closely with. Then, each subgroup views themselves more positively than the others, which can lead to tension across the wider team. When teams are forced to interact remotely, there's also the potential for mixed messages: walking into a face-to-face team meeting we immediately sense the mood of everyone in the room, but on videocalls these non-verbal clues are lost.

For effective teamwork, establishing a team with the right mix and number of members and balance of skills is vital. It's not essential for every individual to possess superior technical and social skills, but overall, the team needs a healthy dose of both. Diversity in knowledge, views, age, gender and race can help increase creativity. Adding members is one way to achieve this, but increased size brings the risk of poor communication, limiting contributions. Teams should be made up of the minimum number of people possible and team leaders should ask themselves what unique value each person brings to the group.

Meetings are a vital part of teamwork and the first 10 minutes can be key to their success. Even with a packed agenda, team leaders should consider leaving this time free, to give participants opportunities to discuss matters not directly related to roles and responsibilities in the current project, rather than encouraging them to arrive at their leisure. This helps everyone develop a more complete picture of new or distant colleagues for a more positive working environment. Any awkward moments can be avoided by sticking to 'safer' topics of conversation, like work and travel, rather than family life, particularly when new members join the team.

Teamwork can be used across a range of business activities, including both long- and short-term projects. It's unlikely that every project will be equally creative or inspiring, and giving the whole team responsibility for the task from beginning to end is one way of ensuring the smooth running of the project. Another way of achieving this is for team leaders to state up front what actions and attitudes are, and are not, acceptable, which is particularly important when teams operate across different cultures or membership changes over time.

It goes without saying that a team must have shared goals. Teams cannot be inspired to work well without first knowing what they're working towards. Modest goals don't provide sufficient motivation. They need to be challenging, without being so hard to attain that the team becomes discouraged. They may have to be adapted to suit the changing needs of the project, a

decision for the team leader, drawing on their past experience. However, reaching the goals should have rewards, either professional or personal, so that everyone cares about achieving them.

PART 6

TEXT FOR QUESTIONS 16 – 20

WORKING FOR GLOBAL BUSINESSES

The business environment today can most definitely be described as one that's global and interconnected. This is why the majority of medium-to-large companies often look to expand their operations to other countries. One clear benefit of doing so is the ability to extend their customer reach. Businesses will find this difficult, however, if their employees don't have international experience to bring to the table. (16) _____ Such individuals add value to businesses and provide a competitive advantage in the global marketplace.

It's not only businesses that benefit from being global and having an internationally minded workforce. Employees benefit from having contact with clients or colleagues from all around the world. (17) _____ The resulting interpersonal skills are useful in all business contexts, both at home and abroad. It therefore pays to develop a workforce that is truly a melting pot of cultures. The company that I work for deliberately aims for an even, 50/50 split between local and international employees for this very reason.

In order for a business to operate successfully as a global enterprise, it needs to allow for cultural variations in workplace settings. (18) _____ For instance, there may be a culture of flexible working in one country that

is quite alien to the culture of a business that is headquartered elsewhere. If this is the case, the business would be advised to adjust the way it operates in the foreign country. Leave allowances are another common area for negotiation, as there is quite a lot of variation globally in the number of days employees are given annually. (19) _____ This is when business operations might have to cease in some countries.

Most global businesses I know have little trouble recruiting staff to work for their various international branches. This is because a significant proportion of staff at some point in their lives consider moving overseas for work. Being able to work in a new environment and exploring unfamiliar countries – and being paid to do so – are understandably attractive propositions for many people. (20) _____ Whatever the reason, spending a period of time overseas will always boost employability by enriching a CV and providing a wider perspective on things that would be difficult, if not impossible, to acquire otherwise.