

Skills 360 – 10 Most Important Words in Business (Part 1)

Discussion Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the qualities of a good business leader?
2. Which qualities or skills do you think you need to improve to be a better businessperson?
3. Do you have special words or phrases that you have found especially useful in business or work?

Vocabulary

Characteristic: a personal quality or feature of a person; "In my opinion, honesty is one of the most important characteristics of a good friend."

Fierce: very strong, intense, or tough, often used to describe "competition"; "Competition in the wireless sector just got fiercer when the government approved three new carriers."

Get a leg up: to gain an advantage over another person or company; "One great way to get a leg up in a new market is to partner with a local company."

App (application): software, especially for smartphones or tablets; "The new Yahoo weather app for Android is really slick and very user-friendly."

To go gangbusters: to become very successful or sell very well, especially for a product or business; "Ducati sales went gangbusters last year, as demand for motorcycles increased to record levels."

To convey: to show or communicate, often indirectly; "Don't underestimate the power of a good suit to convey a sense of professional authority."

Headlong: quickly and carelessly, often used with the verb "rush" or "run"; "Instead of rushing headlong into this partnership, let's look carefully at the other company's history and management."

To play devil's advocate: to argue for an opinion you don't necessarily agree with, just to test the strength of an idea or create discussion; "Mark sometimes frustrates people by disagreeing with everything, but he's just playing devil's advocate."

Fired up: very excited or emotional about something; "Union leaders got fired up when management suggested reducing holiday time through the busy period."

Bright idea: a good or smart idea or plan; "Some managers don't realize their employees are full of bright ideas because they never ask them what they think."

Balanced perspective: a viewpoint or way of looking at something that considers all opinions and arguments; "I know this opportunity looks great, but let's bring some people in from finance and R & D and get a balanced perspective."

Casually: informally or in a relaxed way; "While you may speak casually with your co-workers, you should change your conversational style with your manager."

Sincerity: if something is done or said with "sincerity" it is done with true and honest emotion; "In all sincerity Debbie, you've been the best assistant I've ever had."

To mind our manners: to act politely and respectfully; "Our HR manager has reminded us to mind our manners at the Christmas party because some executives from HQ will be there."

Diplomatic: speaking in a sensitive way that doesn't offend or upset anybody; "It is important to be very diplomatic when delivering negative feedback to employees."

To criticize: to say what is incorrect, wrong, negative, or bad about something; "Many people at the staff meeting criticized the planned change to working hours."

Magic: if something is very useful, effective, or powerful, sometimes we say that it is "magic"; "The new Sparklo is a magic little device that will remove even the worst stains from carpets and clothing."

Genius: a "genius" is someone who is extremely smart, and a "genius" *at* something is someone who does a particular thing very very well; "Let's call Brett in here. He's a genius at coming up with good product slogans."

Ambition: the desire, energy and motivation to do something or become successful; "Jane has a ton of energy and ambition, and I'm sure she'll rise quickly in the company."

Territory: an area; companies often divide their market into different territories, served by different people; "Each territory holds an annual meeting, and all of them come together every two years for a national conference."

Drive: energy and motivation; "Law school is really tough, and without the proper drive, there's no way you'll graduate."

Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and it's great to have you back for a new season of podcasts from Business English Pod.

For today's lesson, I want to take a look at 10 key skills or **characteristics** that every successful business leader needs. You've probably heard this kind of list before, but I want to do something a bit different. I've matched these key skills with simple but powerful words or phrases that you can use every day. In business, competition is **fierce**, and you want every advantage you can get, right? So let's find out how you can **get a leg up**.

Okay, for the first one, let me give you a couple of situations. Say your boss tells you her plan to reorganize the office. You love the idea, and you want to show your enthusiasm. Or say your business partner comes up with an idea for a new **app** that you think could **go gangbusters**. You want to **convey** your energy for the idea, right? So what can you say? How about "Let's do it!" This is a great way to show your enthusiasm and energy. And without those qualities, you can't go anywhere in business. Just ask the folks at Nike.

Now, enthusiasm is great, but you also need *balance*. You can't rush into everything **headlong** without careful consideration. It's often impossible to *undo* a bad decision, and every room needs someone to **play devil's advocate**. So when everyone is getting **fired up** about your colleague's latest **bright idea**, you can provide that balance. When he lists the advantages of his plan, you can say "on the other hand" before pointing out some things he might have failed to mention. In this way, you show a more **balanced perspective**.

Next, I want to talk about a pair of simple words that we all know, but many of us don't use enough. That pair of words is "thank you." And I don't just mean saying thanks **casually** and automatically. I'm talking about looking someone in the eyes, maybe shaking their hand, and saying with all **sincerity** "thank you." It might be for a business lunch, for someone's time, for someone's purchase, or for someone's service. And what does saying thank you show? It shows respect. And believe me, I know that business can be tough, but you'll go much further if you learn to show all the respect that you yourself like to be shown.

Yes, business and work life can be tough, but we still need to **mind our manners**. And at a very high level, minding our manners means being **diplomatic**. Someone who is diplomatic can disagree, can negotiate, can **criticize**, can express displeasure, and do all of these things while still being polite and respectful. The **magic** expression here is "Yes, but..." As in, "yes, I understand your point, but there's something else we need to consider..." My friend Dave is a **genius** at this. He can make you feel great about your opinion, but still reject it. Like this: "Yes, Julie, I think that's a really *fantastic* idea. But in this situation I don't think it will be possible..."

Okay, so we've done enthusiasm, balance, respect, and diplomacy. There's one more for today, and it's the characteristic of every successful entrepreneur. It's something people like Bill Gates and Steve Jobs had a ton of. It's *ambition*. And the simple word that I want to encourage you to use properly here is "yes." When your boss asks if you think you might want to help expand the company into new *territory*, what do you say? You say "yes." And when your friend asks you if you want to create a business to market the fantastic piece of technology that you built in the garage, what do you say? You say "yes." Ambition is the *drive* to go out and be successful and get what you want. And the way you get that is not with the words "well" or "maybe." It's with the word "yes."

Now I realize some of you might be thinking that "no" is also an important word. You're right. It is. But you'll have to wait for next time to find out exactly what quality that word represents.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the myBEOonline.com website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a complete transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

Review

1. Tim mentions a situation in which your business partner has a great idea for a new app. Why does he mention this situation?
 - A to give an example of a situation that requires enthusiasm
 - B to demonstrate the need for careful decision-making
 - C to compare ways of reacting to new ideas
 - D to introduce the idea of respect

2. Which of the following qualities is demonstrated by the phrase "on the other hand"?
 - A respect
 - B diplomacy
 - C ambition
 - D balance

3. What does Tim NOT say about the expression "thank you"?
 - A It should be done with sincerity.
 - B It can be used in various situations.
 - C It should become casual and automatic.
 - D It demonstrates respect.

4. Which of the following is the best definition of "diplomatic"?
 - A being polite even when other people are not
 - B able to criticize while still showing politeness and respect
 - C capable of making others feel good about their ideas
 - D providing positive balance to the toughness of the business world

5. According to Tim, ambition is the characteristic of every successful _____, such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.

6. Which of the following are words or phrases that Tim recommends using? [choose all that apply]
 - A "Yes"
 - B "Go for it!"
 - C "Thank you"
 - D "Let's do it!"
 - E "Bright idea"
 - F "I understand your point"
 - G "On the other hand"
 - H "Maybe"
 - I "Yes, but..."

Review Answers

1. Tim mentions a situation in which your business partner has a great idea for a new app. Why does he mention this situation?
A to give an example of a situation that requires enthusiasm
2. Which of the following qualities is demonstrated by the phrase "on the other hand"?
D balance
3. What does Tim NOT say about the expression "thank you"?
C It should become casual and automatic.
4. Which of the following is the best definition of "diplomatic"?
B able to criticize while still showing politeness and respect
5. According to Tim, ambition is the characteristic of every successful **entrepreneur** such as Bill Gates and Steve Jobs.
6. Which of the following are words or phrases that Tim recommends using?
A "Yes"
C "Thank you"
D "Let's do it!"
G "On the other hand"
I "Yes, but..."

Online Practice

Click the "Launch" button to open the **online practice:**

