

# Workplace Bootcamp for Liberal Arts Majors

## Working with Other People

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# Guide to the Working World

**All through college, you've mostly been working for yourself and by yourself**

**In the business world, you'll be working with others – and not just people like yourself: Lib Arts, Creatives, Engineers, etc.**

**Let me introduce some skills you'll need...**



# dousguides

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- The 10 toughest interview questions
- Practical Career Strategies for Scientists and Engineers

## Welcome

### *Making the Transition from College to the Real World*



Congratulations on leaving or getting ready to leave college, grad school, or your post-doc. You've learned a lot, had fun and made friends. Now you're looking for a job and the reality is sinking in...

### **COLLEGE HASN'T PREPARED YOU FOR THE REAL WORLD!**

Admit it - you've had it pretty good. Sleeping until noon for a 1pm class, taking summers off, and you could do a half-assed job on a paper and take the C. That's going to change.

### **YOU'VE BEEN WORKING FOR YOURSELF YOU'VE BEEN WORKING BY YOURSELF**

"But I've had internships", you say. Sure, that's been a taste of life in the business world, but it was for a limited amount of time and the

## Search

Search this site:

Search input field with a "Search" button.

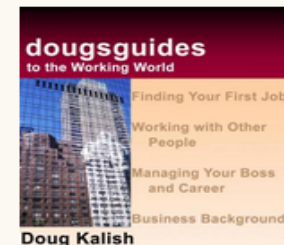
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## What would you do?

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- ▷ Managing Your Boss and Your Career
- ▷ Business Backgrounder
- About

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# What Can Lib Arts Majors Do?

Law, Management, Grant writing, Policy, Communications, Sales Support, Product Marketing, Research Administration, Education, Public Relations, Project management, Brand management, Recruiting, Training, Fund Raising, Grant administration, Health and Safety Operations, Compliance, IP management, Journalism, Regulatory Affairs, etc., etc.

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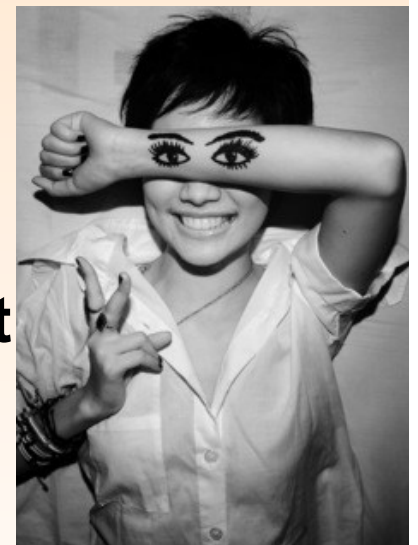
# Stereotypes of Engineers & Scientists

- **Conscientious and orderly**
- **Dominant, driven, achievement-oriented**
- **Independent, less sociable**
- **Emotionally stable**
- **Arrogant, self-confident**
- **Driven, ambitious**
- **Autonomous, introverted**



# Stereotypes of Creative People

- **Self-confident, possibly to the point of arrogance**
- **Enthusiastic, optimistic, dynamic**
- **Opinionated**
- **Not afraid to ask ‘dumb’ questions or make mistakes**
- **Don’t seek approval from others or society**
- **Don’t compromise on things they hold dear**
- **Flexible and tolerant of ambiguity**
- **Not politically motivated**
- **Dislike being bossed or policed**
- **Intense, absorbed, motivated and intelligent**



# Stereotypes of Lib Arts

- **Good communications, writing, problem solving skills**
- **Critical and analytical thinking skills**
- **Curious, open-minded, creative**
- **Collaborative (?)**
- **Taught how to learn, not what to learn**
- **See big picture**
- **Broad range of skills and interests**
- **Filled with esoteric knowledge**



# What Do Lib Arts People Find Difficult in Business?

- **Math**
- **Working in highly structured environments**
- **Collaborating -?**
- **Repetitive or boring jobs**
- **Accepting criticism from their ‘inferiors’**
- **Criticizing constructively**
- **Understanding when to argue and when to shut up**
- **Attending to detail**
- **Accepting ‘business’ decisions**
- **Handling emotionally charged situations**





# What can you do?

## **ADMIT:**

- **Good organizational, research and communications skills aren't enough: "You have to have something to put your work in." (Coddington, Vogue)**
- **Different types of people bring different and essential skills to the task**
- **Emotional situations are a way of life and cannot be avoided**

## **DO:**

- **Understand and accept the needs of the business**
- **Learn skills to help you cope with different and difficult people and situations**

# Topics

**Projects (in brief)**

**Meetings (in brief)**

**Dealing with Difficult People**

**Business Cultures**

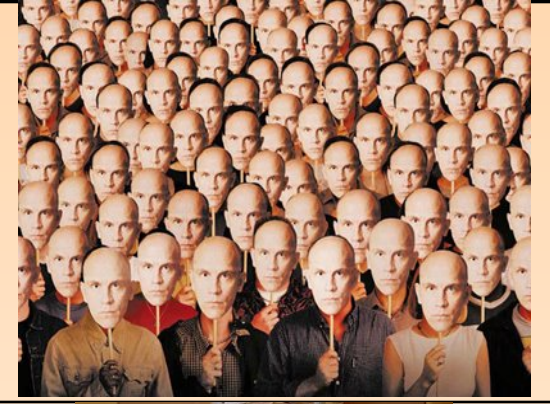
In the media world, here's how the people across the top view the people on the side...

Creative

Editorial

Publishing

Creative



Editorial

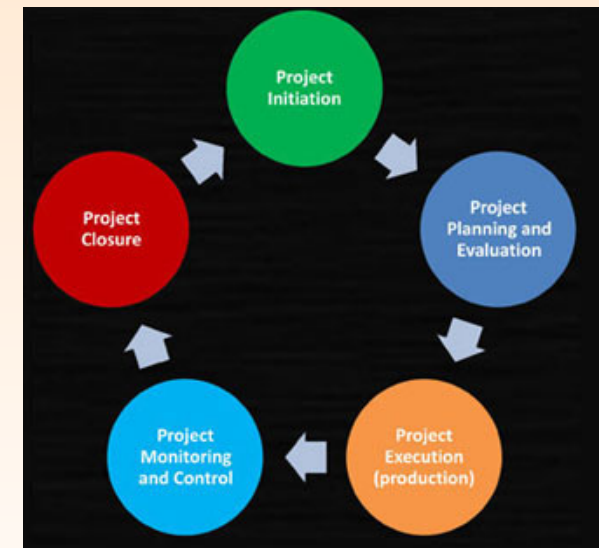


Publishing



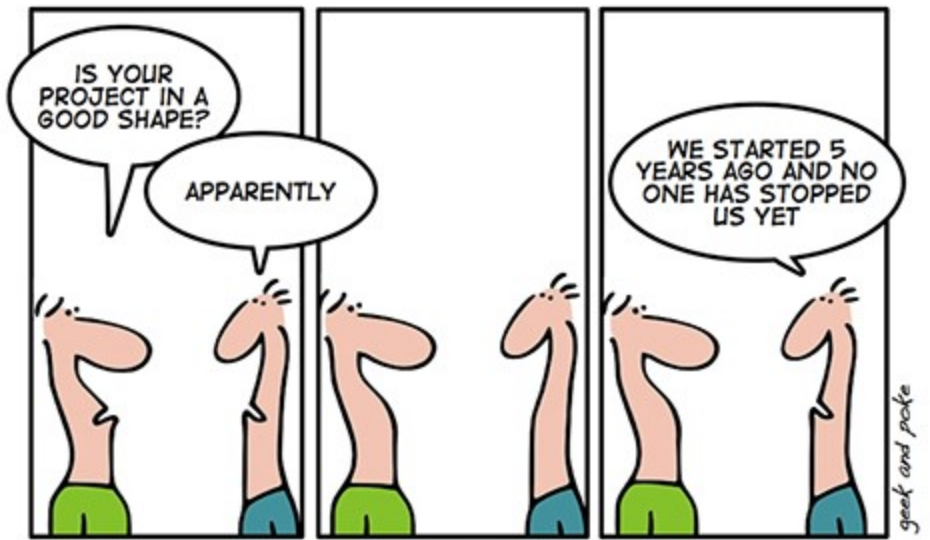
# Lifecycle of the Ideal Project

- **Conception**
- **Recruiting**
- **Kick-off or Sunrise meeting**
- **Project Planning**
- **Milestones, goals and progress meetings**
- **Delivery**
- **Post-mortem or Sunset**



# Lifecycle of the Typical Project

- **Enthusiasm**
- **Disillusionment**
- **Panic**
- **Search for the guilty**
- **Punishment of the innocent**
- **Praise for the non-participants**



# How Do Projects Succeed?

- **Someone is in charge**
- **The project is well-defined**
- **The goals are understood by everyone**
- **The timetable is realistic**
- **People are committed and accountable**
- **Management is engaged**
- **The skills and resources needed are available**
- **The 'client' is part of the solution**



# Meeting etiquette and discipline

**Every meeting needs:**

- **Defined purpose**
- **Leadership**
- **Time constraints**
- **Agenda**
- **Summary and action items**



# What to Do When Good Meetings Go Bad

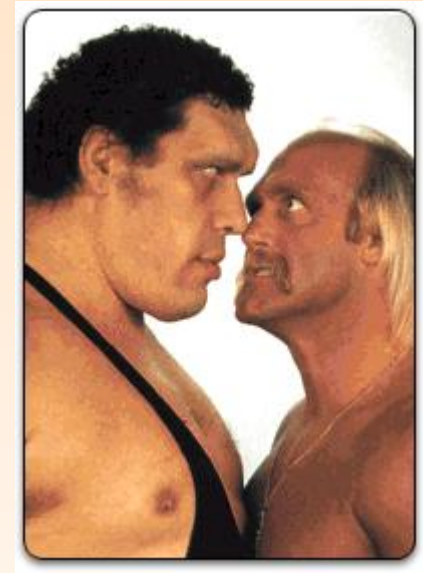
- **Interruptions:** “Should we reschedule this meeting?”
- **Interruptors:** “Please let me make my point.”
- **Showboating:** “You’re obviously very knowledgeable, but I have some questions.”
- **Email, texting, and cellphones:** “Can we please focus on the current challenges?”
- **Feeding frenzy:** “I think we understand the issues and it’s time to move on.”
- **Just plain boring:** “Maybe this is a discussion topic that doesn’t require all of us.”





# Working with Difficult People

- **Demanding**
- **Judgmental or critical**
- **Hostile or angry**
- **Passive Aggressive**



# The Way to Deal with Difficult People

## 1. Find something to ***AGREE*** with

-- you must establish rapport, disarm

## 2. ***EMPATHIZE*** with them

-- let them know you understand what they're saying (even if you disagree); use positive body language, repeat some of their words

## 3. ***INQUIRE*** to get more information

-- clarify, redirect focus of discussion; switch from confrontation to information gathering

# Guidelines For Dealing with Difficult People

- **Don't take anything personally**
- **Let angry people vent**
- **Listen without interrupting**
- **Make eye contact**
- **Use their name**
- **Apologize for real or imagined offenses**
- **Take ownership of mistakes quickly**

# Dealing with Demanding People

**Fred: “I know we agreed that the layout deadline was next week, but I’m going to need it by tomorrow. OK?”**

**Freida: “No, that’s not possible.”**

**Fred: “Make it happen, because otherwise I don’t think we’ll get it published in time.”**

**Freida: “We agreed on the deadline and it’s up to you to figure out how to get in printed in time.”**

**Fred: “Look, I want the layout tomorrow and that’s final.”**

**Freida: “Tough.”**

**Fred: “????”**

20



# What Could Fred Say To Defuse the Situation?

**Fred:**

**“I know that we agreed to a deadline next week (AGREE) and you were working hard towards it. (EMPATHIZE)”**

**“I’ m concerned now that the printing will take longer than we thought. Is there some way we might speed up the layout? Can I get you some help? (INQUIRE)”**

# A Better Way?

**Fred: “I know we agreed that the layout deadline was next week, but I’m going to need it by tomorrow. OK?”**

**Freida: “Fred, that’s a big request so it must be important to you. Has something changed?  
[AGREE, EMPATHIZE, INQUIRE]”**

**Fred: “I’m concerned now that the printing will take longer than we thought.”**

**Freida: “How much longer do you think it will take? Are we talking about a day or two, or more? Could I get some help with the layout?” [INQUIRE]”**

# Even Better

**Fred: “Frieda, I’ m getting really nervous about how long printing will take. I know we agreed on having the layout done next week. Is there any way we can have the layout done sooner? Even a couple of days would help. If we got you some help, would that speed the process?”**

# What Would You Do?

**You've agreed to find the art director for a project. You've talked to a few, but no one has gotten back to you with a commitment. At the project meeting, the others are impatient:**

**Them: "We need to make a decision today."**

**You: "Not going to happen. I'm still looking." (wrong)**



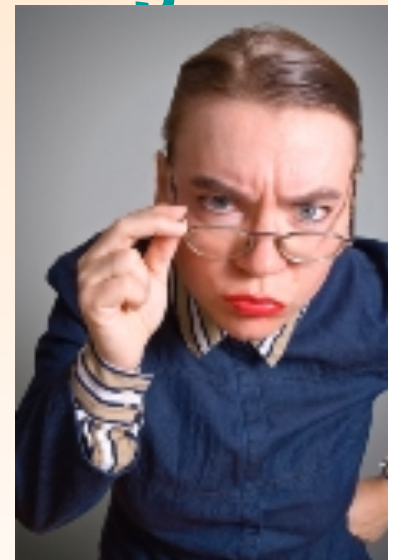


# Dealing with Critical and Judgmental People

**You're on a project when one of the other team members comes to you and says:**

**“You really screwed this project up royally. We're going to have to re-do everything you've done. You're a parasite.”**

**How do you respond?**



# Dealing with Hostile or Angry People

- **Do not defend, explain or justify**
- **Change the focus to the hostility**  
“You seem pretty upset right now..”
- **Agree**  
“You must have a good reason for being so upset.” “Well, this wasn’t the best work ever did..”
- **Empathize**  
“It sounds like you’re pretty upset”  
“I can understand that would make you angry”
- **Inquire**  
“Can you tell me what I did that was so upsetting?” “How would you have handled it?”



# Dealing with Hostile or Angry People

**“I just got the printing bill for this project and it’s twice what you told us! Didn’t you negotiate a fixed price??? Are you a complete idiot? The difference is coming out of your pocket!”**

**Wrong: “The printer promised me there wouldn’t be any overruns so we didn’t need a fixed price. There must be some misunderstanding. And you’re the idiot if you think I’m paying the difference.”**

# Dealing with Hostile or Angry People

- **Agree** – never say “you’re wrong” – try “In my opinion..” “I see it differently..”
  - Try “I can see that you are upset. I’d like the chance to tell you how I see it. I respect your view, but I look at it differently.”
- **Use the person’s name**
  - “Jim, I see you’re mad and I’d like to hear what you have to say..”
- **Keep eye contact to keep control**
- **Let the anger run its course** – listen, nod, empathize (or call for a time out): “Can we talk about this in an hour?”
- **When you do speak, don’t let them interrupt.**
  - “I’d like to finish what I’m saying”
- **Ignore attacks**



# What Would You Do?

**You and a co-worker submitted similar story ideas to the editor. She says:**

**“You jerk! You knew I was working on a review of Berkeley taco trucks. You stole my idea! It’s totally unethical! There’s no way I’m going to let your piece get published!”**

# Passive Aggressive Behavior

**Exerting control or expressing hostility by doing nothing:**

- **Repeatedly postponing an important meeting**
- **Not providing agreed-upon information or results**
- **Refusing to discuss or admit there is a problem**
- **Withholding support by not showing up**
- **Sitting silently in a team meeting**
- **“Forgetting” to communicate important or useful information**



# Dealing with Passive Aggressive People

- **Agree**
  - “I’m sure you have a good reason for not meeting with me to develop the marketing plan...”
- **Empathize**
  - “I can understand that you might not want to talk about this right now...”
- **Assure**
  - “I’m confident that we’ll be able to work productively on this together...”
- **But don’t force it. Wait if necessary**
- **Be non-judgmental; ask open-ended questions**
- **Don’t give up; be positive**
- 31 **Communicate deadlines and consequences**

# What Would You Do?

**The art director hasn't submitted a design yet. It is two weeks before going to press. He has repeatedly said the work would be done on time.**





# Recognize Yourself?



# Disagreements



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# “I” vs “You” Statements

**“You”**

**“I”**

**“You never show up on time for meetings”**

**“I’m frustrated from having to wait for you”**

**“You don’t appreciate all the hard work and long hours I put in”**

**“I’m feeling unappreciated and taken advantage of”**

**“Your work is garbage”**

**“I’m concerned that we won’t have a good publication if the quality of your work doesn’t improve.”**

# Your Turn

**“You”**

**“I”**

**“You’re an idiot”**

**“I disagree”**

**“You’re a bully and a  
loudmouth”**

**“I’m offended by what  
you said”**

**“You never listen”**

**“I don’t feel heard”**

**“Your work is sloppy  
and useless”**

**“I need higher quality  
work from you”**

# Disagreements

**Fred: “I can’t believe you want to publish this short story – it’s long and boring and reads like a 10 year-old wrote it. None of our readers will be interested in this.”**

**Attack**

**Defense**

**Freida: “I think the simple style is unique and refreshing and contrasts nicely with the crap you are suggesting.”**

**Escalation**

**Fred: “Ok, tell you what. How about if we just retitle the mag ‘Literature to Put You to Sleep’ ?”**

37



# What would you do?

**You've been working on a marketing plan for three weeks with a co-worker. He thinks the plan is done and wants to move on to another assignment. You think there is about a week's worth of work on the competitive landscape left for the two of you.**

**Him: "It's a wrap. This plan is finished. I'm done with this."**

# More Disagreements

**Her: “I read your plan for the book launch. It’s crap.”**

**You: “I sure am having trouble with this. I guess this isn’t what you had in mind. What specifically is the problem?”**

**Her: “Everything – it’s just wrong.”**

# How would you rephrase this?

**“That may not be the stupidest thing I ever heard, but it’s definitely in the Top Ten. Are you a complete idiot?”**



# Business Cultures

- **The business culture and the people you work with have more impact on your job satisfaction than your salary**
  - **If you are a cooperative, conflict-avoiding person at a competitive, confrontational company (or vice versa), you will be miserable**
- **Most people don't find out about the culture until it is too late**

# Cultural Stereotypes

- **Power Culture**
- **Role Culture**
- **Task Culture**
- **Person Culture**

(From Charles Handy, Understanding Organizations, 1976)

**+ Academic Culture**

# Power Culture

- **Power is concentrated among a few people**
- **Relationships matter more than titles**
- **Few rules and not much bureaucracy**
- **Common in fashion, film, and publishing and early stage startups with charismatic leaders**

**Do you make relationships easily, like less-structured environments and don't mind politics?**

# Role Culture

- **Power comes from your title or role**
- **Highly-structured organizations**
- **Policies and procedures are formalized (ritualized interactions)**
- **Innovation and independence discouraged**

**Do you like well-defined jobs with explicit expectations?**

# Task (or Team) Culture

- **Teams are formed to take advantage of individuals' expertise**
- **Skills are highly valued; incompetence is not well tolerated**
- **Independence, innovation, critical thinking and team skills are essential**
- **Demanding timeframes and challenges**

**Do you have a problem-solving mentality and are you able to work in unstructured environments with changing objectives?**

# Person Culture

- **The expertise of individuals is more valuable than the organization**
- **Power derives from how much business you generate**
- **Can be a loose collection of practices with shared and/or dedicated resources**

**Do you want to be (or work with) a lawyer or accountant in a small practice?**

# Academic Culture

- **Power derives from your credentials, your ability to argue and your results, probably in that order**
- **Your reputation outside the organization may count for more than your reputation inside the organization**
- **Frequently oriented toward technologies, not products or markets**
- **Transition to a product-based company may be difficult**

**Which is more important to you: a good technology or a stable job?**

# Determining the Culture

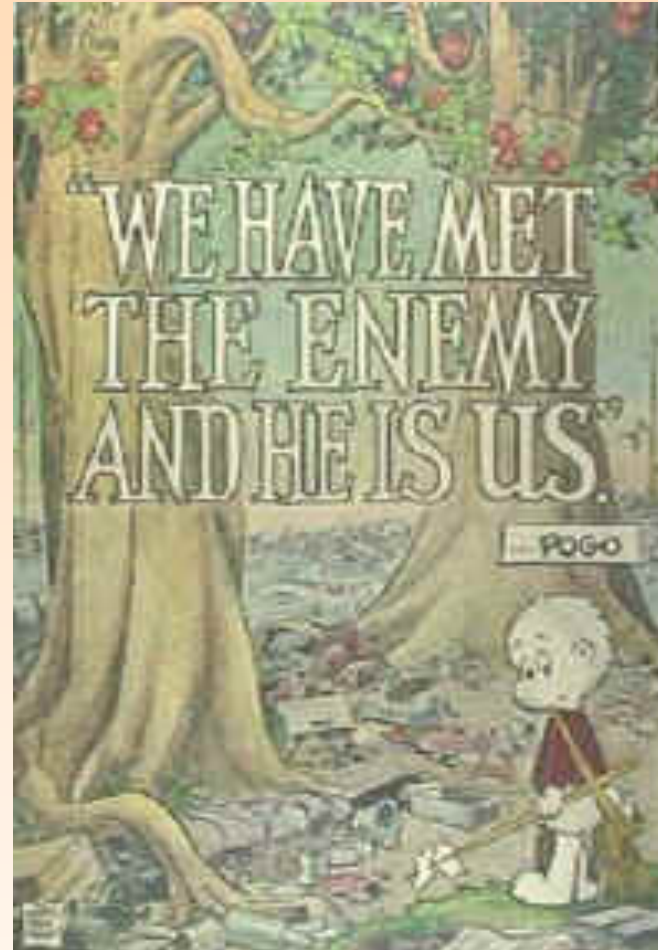
## (Observe and Ask)

- **What's the place like when you walk in?**
- **“How would you describe the culture here?”**
- **“Does office politics play a big part in getting things accomplished?”**
- **“Is there an orientation program?”**
- **“What brand or image is the company trying to project?”**
- **“How do the people who make the stuff get along with the people who sell it?”**



# Take-away Lesson

- **Working with the interpersonal skills you were born with is like working with the research and writing skills you were born with**
- **Skills for dealing with difficult people and situations are a prerequisite to becoming a productive contributor, team member, and mentor**



# In the history of human relations...

**...no problem has ever been solved by being ignored.**

**Don't avoid problems or hope they will go away.**

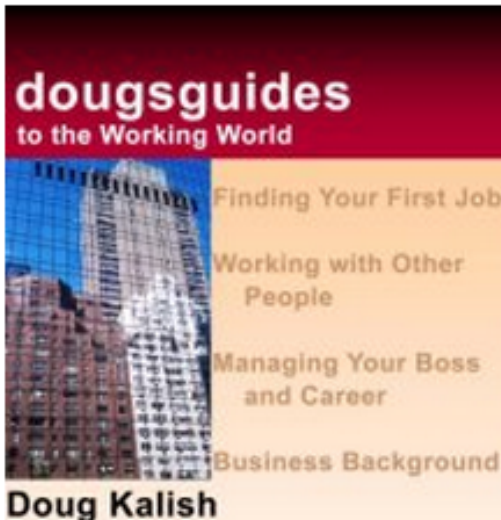


# Finally.....







**Liberal Arts majors CAN (and DO) work successfully in the business world.**

**For more tips on finding a job, managing your boss, and dealing with tough situations, visit:**

**[www.dougsguides.com](http://www.dougsguides.com)**



Doug Kalish

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