CHAPTER 3

BUSINESS EDUCATION – ETHICS AND NEW PROFESSIONALS

The third chapter in this series addresses ethics in the education of business professionals. The chapter will provide information for those who are newcomers to the field of business, and those who are experienced business professionals. The information for newcomers will provide an introduction to the culture of business education using English. For experienced business professionals, the activities and tasks will be a review of business, with new learning opportunities. Lessons will help teachers and students to learn more about this topic, and to know more about what we can do to improve business education in the cultural and professional settings where students live and work.

Employees and future employees should know about business ethics in order to perform ethically on the job. Standards of ethical conduct are a part of good business education and training in all geographical and business settings. In this chapter, we will explore some of the mechanisms used to teach business ethics in the United States.

For those teachers and learners in other geographical locations, adaptations are offered for use elsewhere. Teachers should feel free to adapt these materials as they see fit for use in the business and academic contexts in which they work.

In all cases, knowledge about the role and status of ethics in business is the responsibility of the teacher. It is imperative that teachers learn more about the sources of ethical behavior in business and/or professional settings. In many countries, government policy helps guide decisions on ethical behavior; in some cases, religion plays a role in ethical decision-making. In all cases, teachers should be sure they learn about ethical issues as those are addressed in the national, religious and historical contexts in which they are working as English language teaching professionals. For more information, contact your local, regional, provisional or national ministry, office of business affairs or other policy-making body.

These are some of the questions for business education that we will address in this chapter:

- What can academic institutions do to educate students interested in or enrolled in business-related classes about ethics?
- What do companies do to educate employees about ethics?
- How do employees learn to do a better job and to do it ethically?
- How do governments support training for ethical business practices?
- Where do employees get information when they face a conflict between keeping a competitive edge and maintaining ethical standards?
Success comes when companies create an innovative and supportive environment for new ideas. Chrysler’s former CEO Robert Eaton (1993-1998) has said, "The only way we can beat the competition is with people." We would add, "And the best way to compete is to train employees with ethics."

If a company’s goal is to become involved and succeed in the global marketplace, it will hire new employees who are well educated in all aspects of business, especially in business ethics. At the same time, employees who are in the workforce already must continue to learn through professional development opportunities. Ethics is a valuable topic for professional development among business professionals. With a workforce trained and committed to ethics, managers can be assured that ethical behavior and ethical practices will prevail in the workplace. Without training, business employees may engage in unethical business practices – without even knowing it. This chapter will introduce (and perhaps re-acquaint) teachers and students to some issues in business ethics. Teachers can use the activities to help students develop their own codes of ethics, as those relate to professional behavior in business.

Recent events in business worldwide have revised how universities and other institutions educate young business professionals. With the ethical crises faced by businesses worldwide in the last decade – in the United States and elsewhere – it is important for young business professionals (as well as their senior colleagues) to be aware of ethics and ethical behavior in business settings.

Most experts in international business ethics agree that young business professionals should know about and be able to apply ethical concepts to their work. Promoting ethical behavior is best done in the context of an educational program of study in business. It would be dangerous indeed for business professionals to learn about ethical concepts and behaviors after they have been indicted on charges of unethical conduct!

The following paragraphs describe some background information on ways in which business ethics is taught and learned in two contexts: in formal educational settings, like universities and colleges, and in company-sponsored, on-the-job training programs at work.

**How Business Professionals Learn about Ethics**

Business schools teach students about ethics using a variety of tools and activities. On the job, employees are required to enroll in ethics-related workshops and training provided by the company.

**Business Education and Ethics in Universities and Colleges**

In order to build ethical principles, business school faculty offer students a variety of opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in business ethics.
Here is a list of four common instructional tools for teaching business ethics in universities and colleges:

1. Case studies that require ethical judgment and knowledge about ethics in real-life company-based cases. (Several are listed in this chapter under [Internet Resources](#)).
2. Assignments that require students to learn about the ethical codes of conduct in several companies. Students talk, read and write about the issues that these codes raise inside the company and in business.
3. Tasks outside the classroom that require students to learn more about how businesses function ethically. Students are asked to visit and tour a company, interview a manager or other employees in a company, research the company’s history and ethical performance using a variety of resources: company policy documents, company archives, newspaper reports and magazine articles on the company, or the Internet.
4. Readings from a variety of business and professional sources (professional journals, popular magazines and newspapers, and company literature – electronic and paper) followed by discussions on the issues and values that these readings present. Familiarity with business ethics journals (both paper and on line) is an important part of business ethics education. Students are given assignments to find information and report back to the class.

**On the Job Training and Ethics**

Employers are required by law and by the company’s own ethical code to provide employees with opportunities for on-the-job training in specific job-related ethical concerns. Some of these training opportunities are considered to be a part of employee professional development. A few examples of on-the-job ethical training:

1. Training programs on ethical use of the Internet– In these training workshops, employees learn that the Internet is a new tool that can have many uses, some ethical, some unethical. With the advent of the Internet, massive quantities of information are available and can be used for ethical and unethical purposes. Employees are trained in ethical web use.
2. Personnel services – Employee education and training on topics such as ethical concerns related to health, environment, or corporate philanthropy decisions) and employee counseling.
3. Employee discussion groups on ethical issues – Human Resources or Personnel Department organizes informal employee discussions on topics of relevance and concern to management. In these informal settings, employees learn how to address ethical issues in accordance with the company’s Code of Conduct. Morale issues and other matters are aired in these informal settings.
4. Required workshops for all employees on sexual harassment awareness training – Employees attend workshops and participate in discussions on a variety of topics that influence workplace behavior and can help employees avoid being perpetrators or victims of sexual harassment.
CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Language classes are places in which interesting activities and discussions can lead to better understanding of ethics in business. In order to understand the importance of principles in business ethics, students work together using materials that are valuable for learning and interesting.

PRELIMINARY LESSON PLANNING

Materials:

- Prepare copies of these for all students: [Handout #1] and [Handout #2]
- Newsprint, poster board or other large paper
- Markers

Learning Groups:

Though individualized assignments and tasks can be effective learning contexts, research shows that classroom interaction on topics of high interest results in more learning and a better understanding of the content. The teacher makes decisions about how to best organize the learning experiences for students in the classroom.

Student groups are important for classroom learning. Students may be grouped in pairs, small groups (4-6 students per group), and half-class or whole class. Teachers may allow students to group themselves, or teachers can arrange the groups. Whatever the grouping scheme, how students interact – with whom, on what topics, and for how long – is an important aspect in planning a lesson. Variety of experiences is the key to effective learning in the classroom acquisition of language. So, adapting these materials for use with different learner groups (larger, smaller, self-selected, teacher-led, mixed proficiency or homogeneous proficiency groups) is a good idea for creating variety in the classroom and for effective teaching.

Vocabulary and Grammar:

Review readings and determine vocabulary and grammar points to be addressed. See Appendix A for a sample grammar review.
WARM UP ACTIVITY

(approximately 10-15 minutes)

Objectives:

To teach vocabulary and concepts critical to business education; to introduce students to new ways of learning about ethics

Procedures:

1. Explain to students that today’s lesson will be on the topic of business ethics education. Tell the students that they will have opportunities to learn new vocabulary and will discover new information about ways in which business professionals learn about business ethics.
2. Pair students. Here, it would be helpful to try to find two students who share a common professional or business interest (example: two students who are interested in accounting).
3. Give students instructions. Students brainstorm lists of ideas in response to the following question: In what ways can a new business professional learn about the ethical practices of a company? The students create as long a list as possible with their partners.
4. Student pairs share their lists with their classmates.
5. Teacher ‘wraps up’ by telling students that they have come up with some excellent suggestions. These include the following: ask a person who works in the company about the ethical practices of that company; check the Internet for information on a company’s ethical code and ways in which the code is maintained; survey members of the community about a popular company’s code of ethics; or, perhaps call or visit the company and ask for this information. Most companies have such a code and are likely to distribute copies of it.

Note: Encourage students to be as creative as they can be. The ideas presented above in #5 are just examples; your students will have many other ideas!

ACTIVITY #1

(approximately 20-25 minutes)

Goals:

• To demonstrate the importance of business ethics education to students
• To teach new vocabulary
• To help students begin to determine their own ethical values

Procedures:

A. Tell students that in order to better understand the importance of business ethics education, they will begin a series of activities in which they will follow a model in developing a guide for teaching about ethics.
B. First, review the content of Appendix B, "An Incomplete Guide on Professional Ethics." Complete this step by distributing copies of Appendix A, one per student. Students can work in the same pairs here as they did in the Warm Up Activity.

Note: Teachers may wish to adapt the content of Appendix A to accommodate either (or both) the students’ interests/background and language proficiency.

C. Read aloud the items on the chart in Appendix A. Ask students to think of one additional item to add to the list (#4 or #5). Note that #1 to #3 will vary according to the context; these items are provided as samples, and should be used for brainstorming and creating one’s own "Guide for Teaching About Ethics."

ACTIVITY #2 - READ AND EVALUATE THE CASE STUDY

(Approximately 20-30 minutes)

Goals

- To use English correctly in meaningful ways
- To describe gift-giving practices and the ethical implications in international business settings
- To improve vocabulary skills

Procedures:

1. Warm up for Activity #2: Discuss educational systems and practices, since those are carried out in the students’ work or school environment.
2. Teacher describes an educational experience he/she has had. Then, the teacher solicits ideas from the students, such as: "What are the appropriate courses for learning about ethics in business for employees in your school/employees in your company?" Generate a class discussion on this topic. Get students to talk about this, without making judging comments. Ask students if they know about ethical business practices. Try to avoid saying “That is correct” or “Your answer is not right.” Rather, listen with an open mind. Encourage listeners to repeat, summarize and/or paraphrase what a speaker says. Try to link students’ words with the seven principles presented earlier in this chapter.
3. Ask students to complete the Questionnaire on Ethics in Education [Handout #2].
4. Tell students that they will read a description of a real-life situation in which gift giving is the subject of ethical judgment.
5. Do a round robin reading of the Case Study.
   Note: In a round robin reading, each student has a copy of the text and reads one paragraph followed by the next student reading the next paragraph, until all students have had the opportunity to read once. Teacher correction here is on reading comprehension.
6. Now, check for understanding. Make sure that students understand the short Case Study. See [Handout #3] for a list of questions for students to answer (either in pairs, groups or individually). Give instructions for multiple-choice and reading comprehension assessment. Ask students to read the questions first and then to re-read the passage.
7. Solicit responses from students using their answers to the comprehension questions. Then, provide correct answers. Make certain students understand the case study. Note: If students do not seem to need the comprehension ‘test,’ omit Handout #3 and go on.

8. Ask students to discover their own and others’ attitudes towards ethics education. Note: Teachers may or may not wish to encourage students to summarize the questionnaire here.

9. Write a list of ways in which students can learn about ethics in business settings.

**Teachers’ Notes for the Case Study**

The following notes will be helpful to the teacher who decides to use this case with students in a business ethics lesson:

**What Are the Relevant Facts?**
1. Kate Johnson has joined the sales force at Best Building.
2. Best Building has submitted a bid on a bill of materials.
3. Kate is responsible for developing Best Building’s bid.
4. Jack, Kate’s boss, has provided copies of competitors’ bids.
5. The copies came from someone else, “an insider,” who has access to the competitors’ business dealings.
6. Jack has ordered Kate to underbid the competitors.

**What Are the Ethical Issues?**
- Can Kate avoid using the bid information and still comply with Jack’s orders to be the low bidder?
- Should Kate be concerned about using the competitors’ bid information, seeing that it came from a Best Building employee?
- Does using the information put Jack and/or his company in jeopardy?
- If everybody in the construction industry acts this way, should Jack?

**Who Are the Primary Stakeholders?**
Best Building, Best Building employees, Best Building competitors, Best Building customers, the competitors, the competitors’ customers, Kate, Jack and the employee who passed inside information.

**What Are the Possible Alternatives (for Kate)?**
- Use the competitor information as Jack ordered.
- Inform Jack’s boss about the competitor information.
- Inform Best Building about the competitor information.
- Complete the bid without using the information.
- Kate can resign in protest.

**What Are the Ethics of the Alternatives?**
Ask questions based on a “utilitarian” perspective (costs and benefits). For example:
1. Which alternative would provide the greatest benefit?
2. Who would incur costs and who would benefit from each alternative?

**Ask questions based on a “rights” perspective. For example:**
1. What rights are being violated by the use of competitor bid information?
2. What obligation does Best Building have to protect competitor bid information?
3. Which alternative provides the greatest respect for all of the stakeholders’ rights?

**Ask questions based on a “justice” perspective (benefits and burdens). For example:**
1. Does the use of the competitor bid information violate the principles of justice?
2. Which alternative is consistent with the principles of justice?
3. Does inside information destroy the fairness of the competitive bidding process?
What Are the Practical Constraints?
1. What are the legal ramifications of obtaining competitor information in this manner?
2. Will the competitors catch on if Best Building continues to get all the big jobs?
3. When such practices typify an industry, should one person “rock the boat”?
4. What are the dangers in blowing the whistle?

What Actions Should Be Taken?
1. What actions should Kate take?
2. What ethical theories and/or principles should guide Jack in his decision?

COOL DOWN ACTIVITY

(Approximately 10-15 minutes)

Goals:

- To build on an atmosphere of trust and respect for others’ ideas
- To close the lesson

Procedures:

1. Summarize what we have done. Be certain to include another verbal listing of the Definition of Ethics in Business Education.
2. Ask students to choose one of the parts of the definition and discuss a way in which he/she might address it in his/her work/school life.
3. Ask why ethics is an important subject for international business education professionals to address.
4. Finally, ask students to share their reflections and questions about business ethics in education. What did they find interesting? What principles or concepts do they want to know more about?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

1. In Activity 1 or Activity 2 send students out of the class to complete the charts.
   Note: Never send students outside the class to do an activity for which they are not fully prepared and confident in their ability to complete. In preparing students for these activities, a teacher model is a good idea, followed by role-plays in class.
2. Ask students to choose a company and do research on their education programming (internal) and/or education requirements (prior to employment or to obtain promotion on the job). Students will do this activity outside the class using company literature and archives, library resources (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and professional literature and the Internet. Help students to become independent learners about business ethics education!
3. Visit one of the web sites listed in this chapter. Present a model case study. Ask students to create a case study for use in teaching about business ethics education.
4. *Ways of Expanding on Activity #1:*

Teachers might want to expand on this activity by asking students to share their definitions with others (outside the class). Encouraging students to engage in authentic electronic exchanges can do this. Try this web site to start:


*Online Ethics Center for Engineering and Science*

Students can write comments to the website owners and ask for responses. Note: Students are very likely to receive responses! Possibilities abound for extending these online interchanges between your students and website owners!

5. *Possible Ways of Expanding Activity #2:*

Students might use the questions in their handouts to conduct a survey of 20 or more individuals in the community. Tally the results, create a graph and interpret it.

In this expanded lesson, students will have the opportunity to work together on tallying results, creating a graph and interpreting it. For example, student groups may be assigned to present the raw data from their surveys to the class.

This lesson is a powerful way for students to “own their new knowledge.” Teachers will need to prepare clear guidelines and rubrics for preparing the presentations so students know exactly what is expected of them. There are instructions and rubrics provided both for presenters and for listeners.

Instructions for presenters should include length of presentation, how the group members will interact (and share the time), and what type of presentation equipment can be used. Rubrics should include a system for scoring the students’ work. How to get an A: Students will receive 10 points (A) for a 1) well organized, 2) engaging presentation with 3) examples and humor that demonstrates their 4) full understanding of the principles of business ethics. How to get a B: Students receive 8 points (B) for meeting three of the four criteria above; how to get a C: Students receive 6 points (C) for meeting two of the four criteria above; and finally, D: Students receive 4 points (D) for showing up! F is for students who fail to complete the activity.

Instructions for listeners include: Listen to the presentation. Ask questions. Make sure to follow rules for appropriate classroom behavior.

Fill out the half sheet below using your best efforts to a) evaluate ethically; and b) provide specific examples for feedback for the presenters to use:

3=Strongly agree; 2=Not sure; 1=Definitely not!

____I thought the presentation was really well organized.

Note: Whatever score you give, make sure to write down here an example of something the presenter specifically said (quote him/her) or did (describe exactly what he/she did)

Example: I gave you a 1 because you kept moving back and forth from one item to another on the handout and I could never figure out where you were.

____I thought the presentation was engaging.
Note: Again, give an example to help the speaker know why you gave the score you gave. For example: “You said ‘um’ 56 times in 3 minutes! I found it a little hard to follow your ideas as a result.

___ Your humor was well utilized.

Note: Why? For example, “I gave you a 3 on this one. That story you told about the person who filled out the questionnaire in the disco was very funny and I appreciated use of humor in your presentation as a result.”

___ I could see that you really understand the principles we learned in this class.

Note: What did you see? For example, “When you addressed the principle of “Keeping an Open Mind,” you said that the questionnaire respondents seemed to have trouble with it and that’s why they gave it a low score on the “Importance” criterion. I could tell that when you explained your thoughts on what was behind the responses on that question that you showed the class that you really understand “keeping an open mind.” Your explanation helped me to better understand that principle, too! Thanks!

6. Have student read a book on business ethics education. One new one is of potential use to students and teachers of English to speakers of other languages for its careful attention to presenting clear and concise language for what is (sometimes) a very complex subject:


Business Ethics Now provides assistance to employees by taking a journey through the challenging world of business ethics at the ground level of the organization rather than flying through the abstract concepts and philosophical arguments at the treetop level. By examining issues and scenarios that relate directly to their work environment (and their degree of autonomy in that environment), employees can develop a clearer sense of how their corporate code of ethics relates to operational decisions made on a daily basis.

INTERNET RESOURCES

The Internet resources listed below provide useful information to those wishing to know more about ethics in business education programs. United States Office of Government Ethics: [http://www.usoge.gov/](http://www.usoge.gov/)

Useful information for business ethics educations from the United States government office tasked with the responsibility of assuring ethics in all US government work.

Vanderbilt University Center for Ethics: [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/CenterforEthics/cases.html](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/CenterforEthics/cases.html)

This site contains many case studies in business ethics for use with students and for you, too (Teachers’ Notes included!) Use these materials to help students apply principles of ethical business practices, as described in this chapter. Topics include these in the category of business ethics: computer use and technology use, engineering, journalism cases, education and military ethics.
Characters: Kate Johnson, New salesperson for Best Building commercial building supply firm and Kate’s boss, Jack Thomas

Kate Johnson has recently joined the sales force of Best Building, a construction firm specializing in residential building and renovations.

Contractors in the United States, such as Best Building, (and those elsewhere, too) issue requests for bids for a bill of materials required to construct a commercial project.

Kate’s job includes reviewing the bill of materials and developing her firm’s bid.

Kate’s new boss, Jack Thomas, gave Kate a request for bids. The request involved the construction of a kitchen and basement renovation in a large home owned by a well-known local attorney and his wife.

Kate immediately set about costing out the materials specified in the bill.

The day before the bid was due, Jack came in and handed Kate two brown envelopes. Jack said the envelopes, which contained copies of the bids from Best Building’s two main competitors, had just been received from their inside man. Jack also said that the Best Building bid must be just under the lowest bid from the competition. If they were to win this bid, Best Building had a good chance of getting additional jobs in the future in the same upscale downtown area.

Best Building was always the lowest bidder on major jobs; competitors were allowed to win a few of the smaller jobs so as not to create suspicion.

When she got the information from Jack, Kate didn’t say anything. She was surprised and wanted to think over what her response would be.

The next day, Kate came to work early and went directly into Jack’s office to say that what had happened wasn’t really right.

Jack said that this is the way things are done in the construction industry. The firm with contacts stays in business. He said Kate had to learn – “Now,” he said, “you’re working with ‘the big boys,’ and you have to learn how to play the game.”
## My Definition of Ethics in Business Education

**Student name_______________________________**

Write down words that come to mind when considering the phrase above. Write anything you want. You only have a few minutes; so write fast!
Questionnaire: Ethics in Business Education

Ask several friends these questions. Select friends who have completed a business education degree, certificate or in-house course. Then, compile the results and report back your results and your interpretation of those in class.

1. Did you study business ethics in your class?
2. If so, what did you learn in that class? If not, would you like to take a business ethics class? If so, what would you like to learn in that class?
3. If you were to design a business ethics course, what would you include in the curriculum?
   a. Moral duty
   b. Rights
   c. Justice
   d. Moral reasoning
   e. Social responsibility
   f. Capitalism
   g. Corporate governance
   h. Safety and risk
   i. Whistle blowing (you learned about this topic in an earlier chapter!)
   j. Truth in advertising
   k. Workers’ rights
   l. Global issues
Reading Comprehension Questions: Case Study on Best Building

Answer T for True and F for False. Then, explain your answer in a brief paragraph.

Note: Use the list of seven principles (for example, “This is False because Jack violated the principle of “meeting obligations” when he…”).

1. ___ There should be no conflict at Best Building since all parties appear to be educated in ethical business practices.

2. ___ Decisions about ethical behavior are best left to individual businesses and should not be addressed in educational institutions.

3. ___ I prefer to have rules about ethical behavior provided for my use in international business.

4. ___ All businesses should be required to educate their workers in ethical behavior.

5. ___ Business schools and universities in individual countries should not be required to include ethics in their instructional programs of study.

(Back to Activity #2)  (Back to Lesson Extensions)
### Grammar Overview – Some Useful Rules and Ways of Using Them to Discuss International Business Ethics

The grammar rules that appear below may be of help to students and teachers in identifying areas of accuracy in grammar usage. Other grammar rules will be presented in later chapters.

**Grammar Point #1:**

Example Sentence from the text of the case: "When Kate protested that using the information was not right, Jack said that this is the way things are done in the construction industry."

This sentence is a good example of the use of the adverbial. We use this form frequently.

Rule: Use a *when* clause to introduce the topic. After that, change your sentence structure to avoid repeatedly using “When..., ...” Use varied sentence structure.

**Grammar Point #2:**

Example Sentence from the case: “The firm with contacts stays in business.”

This sentence demonstrates the use of a very short, concise sentence that makes and drives home the point being made in the case. Use short, clear sentences to emphasize and summarize important points in your writing and speaking, too!
An Incomplete Guide to Educating Ourselves on Business Ethics

In order to make ethical decisions, we need information and facts about the problem. Business ethics educators guide us to find the information and facts we need as a part of university based business education, as well as a part of being informed employees. Here is an incomplete guide to educating ourselves on business ethics. Consider your knowledge about the information in each section. Then, consider the suggestions of ways of getting that information. Finally, add other items to the guide (see #5 and #6), as is appropriate to your context of business study and/or employment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Needed</th>
<th>Where to Find Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. History -- Facts about the history of the company/institution</strong></td>
<td>Company library, archives, friends working in the company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Practices/Procedures -- Information about company policies on ethical issues</strong></td>
<td>Friends working in the company, Internet, company documents (Personnel or Human Resources Department), consumer advocacy groups, newspaper reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* hiring practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>* policies on sexual harassment, occupational health issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>* environmental policies</td>
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<td>* whistle blowing history</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Company investments and charitable contributions</strong></td>
<td>Internet, newspaper reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Company plans for the future</strong></td>
<td>Company executives, newspaper reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. _____________________</strong></td>
<td>________________</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6. _____________________</strong></td>
<td>________________</td>
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### A Guide for Teaching About Business Ethics

List all possible ways in which the two groups identified below (newcomers to business and experienced business professionals in this area/field) might learn about business ethics in the region and context in which that person lives/works.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newcomer Resources</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources for Experienced Business Professionals</th>
</tr>
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[Back to Preliminary Lesson Planning]  [Back to Internet Resources]