



THE WILKINS GROUP

# Tool Kit

Providing Tools for  
Productive Workplaces

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*If you are  
not good for  
yourself,  
how can you  
be good for  
others?*

## Technology is very demanding

**T**echnology ever so gently moves us forward, like it or not. Welcome to our first electronic newsletter. The start of a new millennium is a good time to embrace new technology.

Today the United States is made up of people from every part of the world. So, too, are our corporations. It is really time to learn about other cultures, to honor each other, to appreciate what each culture brings to the table, to work well together for mutual accomplishment and satisfaction and to achieve targeted business results.

Technology will push us even faster and harder. Competition will continue to be daunting. How do we know what to focus on? How can we be sure we are working on the right things? How do we find time for ourselves for leisure and renewal?

This issue addresses how to sustain your health in the workplace and communication training tips for the global marketplace.



## Sustaining your health in the workplace

**E**veryone in today's society lives and works in some kind of organization, group, or system, beginning with the family, moving into the school, the workplace, clubs and civic organizations.

Most of us spend the majority of our lives within organizations or relating to organizations. In fact, a person in today's society who cannot function organizationally is somewhat handicapped.

We need to understand every aspect of organization life. But...we need to move to a new level of understanding about the organizations in which we live and work.

Each person must take responsibility for finding his/her own inner point of physical, mental, spiritual and emotional balance. The degree to which we foster a balanced life, including time to nurture other aspects of our lives, is the degree to which we are able to be creative, innovative and productive at work. When there is balance between being and doing, creativity and productivity flourish.

People are looking to the workplace, where they spend most of their time, to provide more meaning. When it doesn't, the motivation to be creative is lacking.

There are techniques for

bringing meaning and renewal into all aspects of our lives, including work. Often the best ideas come during times when we allow ourselves time to refresh and renew. If you are not good for yourself, how can you be good for others?

How does one go about achieving a healthy balance?

**\* Know your performance style.** Accept your style and work with it. If it isn't working for you, consider changing it.

**\* Know your priorities.** Live by them, mindfully. Make a list and prioritize it. Different tasks have different values.

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# Soft skills key in the global marketplace

**I**nterpersonal skills are very important for working globally. Technical knowledge and practical skills are important, but they must be used within the context of teamwork, management practices, and communication. Technical rationality doesn't include or characterize the human element in organizations.

Consider communication. Even with electronic technologies, information about communication processes, and dedicated resources to foster better communication, managers still cite communication as one of their biggest problems. The technological aspect has made greater progress than the interpersonal aspect of communication. People still offend one another, make insulting statements, and communicate clumsily. Ineffective communication may cause people to dislike each other, be offended, lose confidence, refuse to listen, disagree, and contribute to a host of other interpersonal problems.

Here are four areas to consider in cross-cultural communication.

**SEMANTICS.** Some words don't translate the same across cultures.

In American meetings when we "table" a topic, it means postponing its discussion. In British meetings, "tabling" a topic means discussing it now.

**Tip:** Define terms before you start working together.

**WORD CONNOTATIONS.** Words mean different things in different languages. Negotiations between American and



Japanese executives can be frustrating because the Japanese word "hai" translates as "yes," but its connotation may be "yes, I'm listening," rather than "yes, I agree."

**Tip:** Explain what you mean by words and phrases

**TONE DIFFERENCES.** In some cultures,

language is formal; in others, it's informal. In some cultures the tone changes, depending upon whether a person is speaking at home, in social situations, or at work. Using a personal, informal style in a situation where a more formal style is expected is considered poor taste and offensive.

**Tip:** Learn what the appropriate style is in a specific situation

**PERCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES.** Different cultures view the world in different ways. In the United States, the finger beckoning sign means, "come here." In other countries, it means something different.

**Tip:** Know what words and signs mean to your audience before using them.

To succeed in today's global marketplace, businesses must include a broad range of perspectives and cultural mindsets. Businesses must honor cultural differences as they establish basic communication practices. Basic well-defined, agreed-upon communication processes enhance productivity, which allow companies to achieve their targeted business results.

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*"Our aspirations are our possibilities."*

*Samuel Johnson*

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## Sustaining your health in the workplace

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\* **Know your limits and live realistically within them.** You cannot do everything. No one can. Recognizing your limitations is not putting yourself down; it is a way to set realistic parameters to your work life. Be clear on performance expectations - what your employer expects from you and what you can reasonably expect from yourself.

\* **Meditate, or do something else, to reduce stress.** Most of us work in high stress occupations, so it's important to find ways to manage the stress. Practice some relaxation technique on a daily basis. Making it a daily practice helps you draw upon it when you need it.

\* **Separate the being from the doing.** Be careful when someone criticizes you for what you do. "You made a mistake" is very different from "you are a mistake." If the criticism is about who you are, then you need to consider whether the work situation is beneficial to your well being.

\* **Build in time for yourself.** Work cannot be your whole life. Family, friends, hobbies, relaxation and leisure all need to be part of your life.

\* **Check things out.** Ask clarifying questions. Don't guess. Get clear about what's going on. You can set boundaries for yourself no matter what is going on around you.

\* **Don't overreact.** If you discover something is making you nuts, it probably doesn't have to do with the matter at hand. It probably relates back to something or someone in your past. Before you act or react, try to figure out who or what it is.

Remember that organizations are composed of individuals, groups and systems. Greater awareness can move us to other options. Aware people begin to see a variety of ways in which they can be different individually and organizationally.



THE WILKINS GROUP

Consulting and Training

- Project Management
- Team Development
- Instructional Design
- Training and Facilitation

2182 Gill Port Lane  
Walnut Creek, CA 94598

925-937-6055; Fax: 925-939-2950

Email: Sheila@WilkinsGroup.com