

TRAINING FOR A JOB



In this chapter, interviewees talk about what kind of training they have had for their jobs.

1. THE LIBRARIAN

Well, I went to college. Um, I attended the University of Michigan, and my studies at the University of Michigan were in journalism. I started out thinking I wanted to work in newspapers or maybe advertising or something like that. Um, then my career took several turns over the years and I ended up here in Washington—I'd grown up and gone to school in the **Midwest**—um, and it turned

out that the journalism background that I had is very useful no matter where—where you go. And where I am now, the ability to communicate clearly and succinctly to members of Congress who don't have a lot of time to absorb the information that they need, that's a very useful skill that I have. So I-I continue to use the journalism even though I'm not, strictly speaking, working in journalism now. But I, then I also went to graduate school and got grad—, got a graduate degree in environmental studies, and that was where I sort of merged the journalism and the, uh, and the environmental interest.

2. THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR (LINGUISTICS)

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR: I teach linguistics here at Gallaudet University, um, specialize in language acquisition of children, first language acquisition. So how children, um, go between the ages of one to five, they seem to pretty much get down all the grammar of the language that they're exposed to and that there's mistakes that they make along the way but surprisingly few. Um, my specialty is children who are exposed to and learning **American Sign Language** as a first language, although this year I've started working with children who are bilingual, who are exposed to both American Sign Language and English, just to see whether their development looks different from that of monolingual English or monolingual **ASL** learners.

I-I didn't really have the normal training I think that most people in this field have. I went through biology and French as **my undergraduate** and then graduated with that and decided that I'd like to go into linguistics, so started graduate school in linguistics. Um, I happened to work for a woman whose research project was the acqui-

sition of ASL, so that's how I sort of fell into it and got my training along the way, um, so I guess normally it would be nicer to have an undergraduate in linguistics but that wasn't always available, so . . .

INTERVIEWER: Did you find the transition, how did you find the transition?

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR: Oh, very awkward. It was, uh, I think that I-I was naive going into linguistics thinking that since I loved languages and they were easy to learn that, uh, linguistics would just be a lifelong career of learning lots of languages and having the excuse to do it as much as I wanted. Um, I was getting away from biology because I felt like it was too analytical and there was too much memorization and too much theory. It turned out that there was actually a lot more of that in linguistics than in biology so, um, I fell right back into a theoretical field but it still has to do with languages, it still maintains—retains—some of that pleasure of learning languages and being exposed to languages and having the excuse of doing it as your job, so it wasn't as bad as it could have been.

3. THE EMT

EMT: Uh, EMT course is a, is a simple course, relatively; it's a sixteen-week course, it's, you go to school about maybe two days a week, four hours a day. So, for someone who was interested in the **EMS** field, it would be really good because they—they don't have to really have a—long—periods of time in classrooms or long training periods. It's just a lot of reading involved and a lot of information just about, you know, various aspects of the body, just the systemic systems and just what to do for



'em, what you need to do. So basically as an EMT, my-my thought of it is, whatever your situation is, **I gotchu**. You know, it doesn't matter—if you got a headache, I gotchu; if it's a gunshot, I gotchu; **diabetic crisis**, I gotchu; if you just lonely and don't feel good, I gotchu. That's the EMS state of mind.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have to take additional training and education?

EMT: I have to do, um, **continued medical education**. Every two years, we're required to take a **refresher course** and to accumulate **CME** credits throughout the years. I've also been trained as a **medic**, um, since then, which was another additional year of schooling but now is a collegiate program, which is a two-year program now, um, so you-you have to continue-continuously study. One thing about the medical field—when you take this as a career, you accept the fact that you're a student for life. As long as you're in this field, you will have to learn, you—because things change every few years—so you have to keep up with new curriculum, new technology so you're-you're a student for life in this.

4. THE SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

[Interpreter: What kind of training do you have to teach ASL—your skills, certification?]

I do have a certification, Ameri—, from the American Sign Language Teachers Association. You have to go through their courses, fill out a form, an application form, how many hours you have of teaching experience and your methodology, how you would teach certain subjects, aspects of your curriculum—that’s all on the application form—and then they send you a certificate. You start with a provisional certificate and then after you have some experience with that, then you take an exam that they send you—they have several questions on the exam such as how do you evaluate your students’ **signing** abilities, things like that, so you would explain that and send that back to them. They’ll look it over and, uh, three evaluators look that over and if all of them feel that you’re qualified, then you get another certificate, but your goal is to move up to the top level, which is a professional certificate. And right now I’m in the graduate program in linguistics, and I feel like that will really benefit me, uh, for the professional certificate because I’ll be able to analyze the language a lot better and that will help me with, uh, getting up to the professional certificate. That along with my experience teaching here at Gallaudet.

5. THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

Well, there’s always the importance of having a basic education, uh, in terms of high school. I went to, uh, high school in New Jersey, and I went to a **vocational-technical high school** initially that was focusing on technical electricity, and I still **dabble** with electricity on the side. Um, after completing school, I didn’t immediately

go to college; I started off working for an insurance company for about seven years and later went back to school. I went to, uh, an adult college at first, Thomas Edison State College in New Jersey, and a lot of the experience at that college was working on portfolios and demonstrating life experience to receive credit for college-level work that you have. Um, after that, I attended, uh, New York University for graduate school—I have a master’s degree in deafness rehabilitation and along the way, uh, I became interested in sign language—this is somewhere between high school and attending college.

6. THE CHEMIST

CHEMIST: Well, I actually have a doctorate in organic chemistry, and I started off at **EPA** as a chemist, but I knew before I went to EPA that I wanted to start doing more policy work so, um, while I was finishing up, I took some econ-economic classes, too. So I started off doing chemistry and then I moved into melding my scientific background with, uh, doing more policy issues, and it’s been pretty interesting and it’s very useful at an organization like EPA, having a strong scientific background.

INTERVIEWER: Why is that?

CHEMIST: Um, because you really understand the issues and there are a wide range of scientific issues and it’s, y-you have enough of a grounding in science, let’s say with chemistry to understand the toxicology, which is really important at EPA, some of the environmental, uh, science—and I think it’s much easier to learn the policy aspects than for a policy person to learn the scientific aspects, so. And it’s a good sort of, uh, balance to be able to work in both worlds and to work with both scientists

and with the lawyers and the other policy people because they do think differently, and you end up being a bridge between the two. It's-it's quite interesting.

7. THE OFFICE MANAGER

OFFICE MANAGER: Typically, what we needed, we need, is a bachelor's degree—um, you can substitute that for experience—and then you just learn on the job, that's what it was. For instance, my bachelor's is in Spanish and French. I haven't used that in—as a matter of fact—since I've graduated. So, um, and you don't need Spanish and French to-to purchase so, um, just a matter of learning . . . you know . . .

INTERVIEWER: On the job.

OFFICE MANAGER: On the job, on-the-job training.

8. THE ENTREPRENEUR

ENTREPRENEUR: Uh, all self-taught. I graduated from high school and other than that, I have no formal education. Um, I studied other successful businesspeople in the United States, uh, bought some tape programs and audiovisual tools, and, uh, just followed their footsteps.

INTERVIEWER: What about learning how to run a skydiving school?

ENTREPRENEUR: Same thing. I went somewhere, took some skydiving lessons, became a skydiver myself, then, uh, bought a couple airplanes, and hired some people that were already rated and knew how to instruct people and

basically learned from them over the years how to obtain all the ratings.

INTERVIEWER: Do you repair the airplane yourself?

ENTREPRENEUR: Yes, I do.

INTERVIEWER: So how did you learn to do that?

ENTREPRENEUR: Uh, when I was a kid, my father was a maintenance man at a factory—pretzel factory—and he could fix everything, and I kinda just learned from him. And I think it's more of an attitude than a skill, the mindset that there's nothing I'm unable to do, eliminate the word *can't* from your vocabulary, and believe you have the power to find the information to create the knowledge to accomplish whatever needs to be done.

9. THE MECHANIC

INTERVIEWER: What kind of training or education did you need for this job?

MECHANIC: Um, I had to go to two classes, um, one on tires, learning what tires, um, more of like the tires that, uh, sizes, the meanings, um, what type of tires are right for this vehicle or not. And the other class was just like an orientation, saying, “These are your days off, um, **these're** your benefits, which you get after you work so long, and you get raises so many times a year.”

INTERVIEWER: How long did the training class for learning the tires [last]?

MECHANIC: [Six] hours. I mean, it was just a long class and afterwards, we just sat down and watched a video. We, uh, showed the instructor that we can change tires and balance 'em and repair 'em.

INTERVIEWER: And then, during-during your training process, when you start working, are you supervised or do you have a **probationary period** or do you . . . ?

MECHANIC: Yeah, we have a ninety-day probationary period, which, um, we're just looked over after, um, just-just make sure we do everything right the first time so we can be set off on our own.

DEFINITIONS

American Sign Language (ASL): A form of manual communication used by deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States. ASL is an autonomous linguistic system structurally independent from English. It is different from sign languages used in other countries, such as Italian Sign Language or Japanese Sign Language.

continued medical education (CME): Additional education required in some medical fields beyond the basic education that is required to enter the field. This additional education is necessary in order to stay aware of new information and changes in a given field.

dabble: To do something or participate in something in a less-than-serious or fully committed way.

diabetic crisis: A medical emergency caused by too much or too little blood sugar in a person's body.

'em: Common shortened pronunciation of *them*.

EMS (Emergency Medical Service): A field of health care that focuses on providing emergency medical care to sick or injured individuals. The term *EMS* is usually used in reference to those who first respond to an accident or a crisis (first responders), such as EMTs or paramedics.

EMT (Emergency Medical Technician): An allied health professional who is responsible for responding to medical emergencies and providing initial first-aid care and transportation of the sick or injured persons to a medical facility.

EPA (Environmental Protection Agency): An agency of the U.S. federal government that is responsible for protecting human health and safeguarding the environment.

I gotchu: In standard speech, *I got you*. A colloquialism that means “I’ll take care of you” or “I understand what you mean.”

medic: See **EMT**. This can be short for *paramedic*. A paramedic is similar to an EMT, but with additional education and training. The term *medic* is often used in the military to refer to a person, similar to an EMT or paramedic, trained to give medical assistance in battlefield or combat situations.

Midwest: A term used to refer to the central portion of the United States.

my undergraduate: Here, the speaker means her majors (fields of concentration or specialization) in college.

probationary period: In the employment world, some predefined period of time at the beginning of a person’s employment during which the person has to demonstrate that he or she can do the job for which he or she was hired.

refresher course: A course designed to update a person’s knowledge of a particular subject.

signing: The use of sign language.

these’re: Contraction of *these are*.

vocational-technical high school: A kind of secondary educational facility that specializes in teaching skills and crafts that will facilitate helping the student obtain employment in some kind of trade, such as carpentry, auto mechanics, welding, plumbing, or electricity.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. What kind of training do these speakers have?
2. Which job requires the most training and why?
3. In which jobs does the training relate directly to the work?
4. Describe the training required for your job.
5. Describe the training that was required for a friend's job.
6. What kind of on-the-job training have you had?
7. Identify three words or phrases in this chapter that are new to you, and write a sentence with each one.

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COMMUNICATION AT WORK



In this chapter, interviewees talk about communication issues they encounter at work.

1. THE UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATOR

Well, I work here at Gallaudet University. Uh, right now, I'm the special assistant to the president and that's been for a couple of months. Before that, I was a professor of education, teacher training.

Meetings in my life? Well, they start about, what, seven o'clock in the morning? Uh, I mean, I have meetings every day with the president of the university. Those

are the meetings where I do the listening. I meet with other people where I get to talk more or **sign**. Uh, because of some of the things that the university is going through right now, there's a lot of listening and listening for messages that are not the spoken or the signed messages, but they're the messages that, **reading between the lines**, the feelings that people are expressing but not saying. So a lot of my meetings are, uh, for both of us, therapeutic.

2. THE ACCOUNTANT

Meetings? Uh, we don't really do a lot of meetings. Um, I know other work environments do. In public accounting, a lot of it is working on your own or in a small team. Uh, there are meetings with clients, and those are either formal or informal, but those are useful because if they're in a meeting setting, they kind of have to answer your questions and-and make some progress. Meetings in our own office are not, we don't have a lot of formal meetings, uh, and I think what meetings we do have tend to be more of the **team building**, um, than any kind of useful thing. Everything now is, you know, you figure it out by **e-mail** or some informal thing in the hallway rather than in meetings.

In a first client meeting, uh, we **wanna** make sure—our main thing is to get—we have to understand how their accounting system works, uh, a brief understanding of who **the players** are and who does what, um, who has access to the system, **whatta** they do. Uh, the biggest thing for what I do is finding out where the problems are, what are they trying to get us to achieve. Uh, so it's, you have to understand the system and then what they want to see happen. Uh, and it could be, uh, I'm not getting the kind of reports that are useful or it could be, uh, I'm not getting them when I need them, or, you know, it's these

kinds of things but you j— have to find out from them, uh, what they're looking for which is often not necessarily easy to find out. They don't often know what they want you to do, they just know there's a problem, and it's not working, uh, but that's—that's the meeting, uh, in the beginning.

In those settings—and this is for if a group is already a client—it's the first meeting with, you know, they've—they've signed an agreement, right? Uh, it's a little bit of an interview where you're asking them questions but **the point** of it is really to get them to talk. Uh, we don't necessarily have specific things; you have some specific things you need to learn, but it's more the more they talk, the more likely it is that they'll **stumble upon** what it is that's really bothering them that led them to call you in the first place.

3. THE ENTREPRENEUR AND THE SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST

ENTREPRENEUR: Everyone, from all walks of life, all nationalities, race, creeds, and colors, a variety of products and services that I offer entails just about every walk of life. And, uh, in those dealings, you need to be a **chameleon**—I think has helped me. When someone walks in my tattoo shop with a suit and a tie on, I address them in a different fashion as I do the guy who pulls up on his motorcycle. And the same here with the skydiving. And I think it's the same in communication when you're speaking with someone. I find myself usually tending to speak very fast because I want to get my point across quickly and don't want people to have to wait, but some people have a hard time perceiving or getting your meaning because you're going too fast, and I find myself—you have to slow down

when you're talking to that person. And then, on other occasions, if you're in a slow or relaxed or tired state and your story or conversation is **dragging on**, I can sense the person on the receiving end is getting **antsy** and they want me to step up the pace of the conversation a little bit. I think that's very important when you're communicating with someone, is to present the information to the person in the best way that they're able to receive it.

We go out and we're disappointed with **customer service**—and I guess it's because we're not in the customer serv—, well, we are, every—, we believe everyone's in the customer service industry and—and I think—and some universities have done studies, as you're probably well aware—that your ability to climb the **corporate ladder** in your job and career is more to do with your ability to deal with people, whether they're above you, below you, the customer, the client, uh, your boss, your subordinate, et cetera.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ENTREPRENEUR: And we, we both do the same thing, you know. We're trying to see how much humor does the person need to have, how much serious do they need to have, should we talk fast, should we talk slow, should we use little words, big words, to give the person whatever they need to make them feel comfortable. And our jobs are very-very different but we both basically do the same thing.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: When you go out and someone has a customer service job, we-we both get very upset when you know . . .

ENTREPRENEUR: You walk in and their only job is to stand behind the counter and help you and they're unable to perform that task.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: You walk in, they don't even look at you or they don't acknowledge you or say, "Hello, I'll be right with you." You know, it-it gets both of us very upset.

ENTREPRENEUR: Yeah, that's interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Because you're frequently, very—I mean, on a daily basis—on the, you're on the other side of that.

ENTREPRENEUR: Yeah, well, my job is to take you to jump out of an airplane or to fix the airplane or to give you a tattoo or to pierce your body. Her job is to, you know, help the surgeons to fix your body, but yet we're both very well **in tune with** giving everyone around us what they need to make them happy and comfortable. So, when we go to a restaurant and the waiter's only job is to make us happy, they don't have to prepare the food or wash the dishes or clean the table, **all's** they have to do is make us happy. If they're unable to do that, it's very disappointing and it makes for an unpleasant experience. And then we find ourselves usually not going back to a place like that. And I think that's one attribute to my success of all my businesses—I've always worked very hard to make sure everybody is happy and content and gets what they need, outside of the product and the service.

INTERVIEWER: Do you, in situations like that, do you say something or do you just **let it go**?

ENTREPRENEUR: Just let it go. We don't wanna . . .

INTERVIEWER: Seen it before.

ENTREPRENEUR: Yeah, we don't want to **cause no stink**.



4. THE IT PROFESSIONAL

IT PROFESSIONAL: Customer service—we're in a world nowadays—is growing devoid of customer service. And I think that when people realize that they can sit down, pick up the phone nowadays, the **land line** and talk to you to get an answer, that actually is tremendously beneficial nowadays. Even people in IT—my supervisor, who is five years younger than me, has said, “Oh, I tell you, people in these e-mails drivin' me nuts!” Because it can be, it's—it's—sometimes it's overkill—it becomes overwhelming, you know, and he-he's-he has more technical skills than I do and he says, “**Y'know**, just-just give me a call, y'know, just give me a call, so much easier, I can talk to you about it.” And it's, and it's a little more entertaining. We-we get tired of the monitor after eight hours and when you have a good level of communication and a good level of customer service and you can talk to these people and they **sorta** understand what you're going through, even so, if, even if you have a bad day, you might be able to explain it to a person and then get an extra day of work involved.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

ENTREPRENEUR: So, that's—those things—I think are imperative.

5. THE TRAVEL AGENT

I mean, it's a, dealing with public is **pretty interesting**. That, uh, most of the time, uh, my energy goes into trying to understand the temperament of that person. And, uh, once I understand and I feel comfortable about it, that I know that this person cares about, uh, what am I giving you, because, by the, by the way, what I give, any other travel agent will also give. I mean, it's the same cruise ship, it's the same cabin, it's the same bed, so what am I adding? It's only—my evaluation is—it's the service I can provide or I understand where-where their fears are, what they like, what they don't like, so put everything into perspective. If somebody says, "I-I heard that when you go to cruise, you come back **adding weight**." So I know that the person's, uh, basic concern is weight, or "Do I have to eat or do I have to go to every dinner or do I have to do this or I'm trapped if I have to do anything else?" So I need to explain that it's not just the food on cruise; there's entertainment, I mean, there is, there-there-there are clubs, you can go for exercise, so I need to talk from the perspective of health, cruise, healthy cruise, so. Uh, it's pretty interesting to-to understand how, uh, how people react to the same thing, which is vacation, and, uh, it makes me—it makes it—more interesting because I-I come from India, and, uh, I have not studied in America, I have not gone to college or in any school in America, so for me to understand American culture, it, the-the-the local day-to-day jokes **doesn't come to me that easy**, so I n—, I-I need to understand that.

6. THE SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST AND THE ENTREPRENEUR

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: I deal with the community, so everybody that makes up our community, which can be pretty wide range of people. Uh, and the hard part for us is, it's sort of similar to what you said, some people come in, they're nervous, they need you to joke around and make them relaxed; other people come in, they don't want to see you joking around, it makes them nervous and think that you're incompetent, so you have, you have to get a feeling for the person and the patient and what what they're **gonna** need from you.

ENTREPRENEUR: That's a good elaboration on what I was saying, and I find the exact same thing, you know. And-and say when you're conversing with someone, some people want you to joke around and be humorous and be funny and other people want things to be . . .

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: [Professional.]
ENTREPRENEUR: [Logical] and literal.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh. And-and you see people at a very difficult time in their lives.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: Yes. They're-they're nervous, they're-they're worried, and, you know, they-they need some support from us and . . .

ENTREPRENEUR: This is interesting. I think in essence, this part of our job is the same 'cause when someone's getting a part of their body pierced or a tattoo or jumping out of an airplane, it's a very dramatic part in their life and they need you to be this person who she's describing to you. Some people need to see super professional, serious and

other people need to see lighthearted humor or some variation of those. That's interesting.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: And we want them to feel comfortable so they'll come back to our hospital and you know, we can be a community hospital, so . . .

ENTREPRENEUR: And we want them to come back because we want their money.

7. THE RETIRED POLICEMAN

RETIRED POLICEMAN: It was some pretty rugged training when I went through the police academy, and I'm sure that was to prepare you for dealing with the public. And the problem with the police department is, most of your—you know, they say in business, the customer is always right? Well, in our business, mostly the customer was always wrong, so they weren't too happy about, you know, you stopping them and, uh.

But I-I was lucky when I got out of the police academy, you-you got to ride with, uh, a experienced trooper, and I was fortunate enough to get a guy who really had a lot of **street smarts** and common sense and one of the first things he taught me was, when you stop somebody or you're dealing with somebody, just imagine that you're in his shoes and what kind of, what kind of action would you like taken against you, you know. And he said, "You have a lot of power with that badge. Don't abuse it."

And I **took that to heart** and I st—, I think to this day that that probably kept me out of more *trouble*. And by trouble I mean going into a bar fight or whatever. I-I got into very few physical confrontations where I actually had to do something. A lot of people threatened you but he, and there again, he taught me, you know, you, most

people you can reason with. And if you go in with an attitude and he's got an **attitude**, there's gonna be a fight. So you have to defuse the situation, try to see his point of view, if-if he has a legitimate point of view. And one thing that comes to mind, I remember a truck driver delivered some product to a-a business in Annapolis and he was supposed to be paid at the time he made the delivery and the guy didn't—wasn't gonna pay him—but he wanted him to drop the product, which was a boat, I believe. So they got into an argument and he pulled out a **tire iron**. And the guy was probably my size, about, outweighed me by a hundred pounds at least. And this guy was upset. So I get there, so he, you know, I step out of the police car, here's a Maryland state trooper standing in front of him, so now he thinks that the guy that doesn't want to pay him has called me so now I'm gonna team up with that guy to nail him. So he's standing there with a tire iron. And I looked at 'im and I thought, "This guy can cause a lot of problems." So I, first I got, I stayed away from him, I didn't get too close to him, and I said, "Tell me the situation." So the businessman explained his part and-then the truck driver explained his part. He said, "This is what I was told to do," and he said, "I'm not leaving here without the boat." And I, so-so I told him, I said, "Well, I think this guy has a legitimate gripe"—the-the truck driver. And I could see him relaxing then, you know, and then finally I said, "You know, what you need to do is put the tire iron down," I said. "There's-there's not gonna be any need for that, nobody's gonna get hurt here." And after about twenty minutes we got it calmed down and the guy got in his truck and left with the boat and the business owner had to call the company and say, "Hey, well, I'm gonna make other arrangements," but he just thought he was gonna strong-arm this guy. Had I walked in there with an attitude, probably both of us would have

been laying on the ground with a big dent in our heads from that tire iron.

INTERVIEWER: Mmm.

RETIRED POLICEMAN: And I saw other police officers who would approach that situation like that with a-an attitude and they always got into trouble. We had one trooper that I worked with, he was constantly calling for help, and all because of his attitude.

8. THE CHEMIST

CHEMIST: Uh, some of them, people are briefing me, so they'll come in, they'll have sent up a-a briefing paper, the briefing paper will have background, will lay out the issues, uh, will present options, uh, often a recommendation, uh, so I need to make a decision and it either gets raised up one level or it'll just get implemented after the decision. Sometimes, uh, briefing my, uh, direct boss on an issue that has been run through me with, or my staff and so, you know, and we discuss the issue, implications on other parts of the agency, that's, you know, the higher, the higher you **brief up** or you go up, the broader the look is across an organization. Um, sometimes we meet with, uh, folks from other agencies, um, **NGOs**, sometime, um, with industry, sometimes with other countries because of the international work with, um, with mercury. So it really is, it's a lot of meetings and a lot of . . . and I'm-I tend to be an introvert so, you know, at the end of the day, it's, "Let-let me write a document," you know, stay in my office and write and catch up, catch up with my e-mail and . . .

INTERVIEWER: Are you—in these meetings—are you in-charge of the turn taking and communication and, or-or it depends?

CHEMIST: I think it-it depends. So, um, I-I don't think they're very formalized in a lot of meetings, um, I don't run a lot of, uh, more basic mee—, I don't mean more basic meetings, but when you're doing the initial analysis, when you really do need the **turn taking**, that's really important. The-the meetings that I'm mostly at, somebody will be going through a document or an issue and then other people will say, "Well," you know, "let me add this or let me add that," but it's often the person who's doing the briefing and whoever is the decision maker where there's the most interaction.

9. THE SIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER

INTERVIEWER: Do you have—as part of your teaching—do you have to have meetings with, uh, other teachers or with your supervisor and what, what are, what are the meetings like?

TEACHER: Yes, I-I had, I recently had another meeting with an **ASL** teacher here and at the beginning of the semester we all get together and talk about the best approach, the best methodology to use for teaching, what kind of evaluations we give, what kind of exams. We have, we see examples of good tests and bad tests and discuss the pros and cons of each, um. We also discuss policies for **ASL** teachers, like, for example, if one teacher is sick, how do you go about getting a **sub** for that class. Also, one of my favorite things is how to teach **classifiers** in **ASL**, so we discuss that and each—we **brainstorm** different ideas for how to teach that, based on our experiences. Also, if

there's some problems with students, how to handle that as well.

DEFINITIONS

adding weight: Usually expressed as *gaining weight* or *having gained weight*.

all's (all): A colloquialism that is a contraction of *all is*.

antsy: Slang for *restless, nervous*.

ASL (American Sign Language): A form of manual communication used by deaf and hard of hearing people in the United States. ASL is an autonomous linguistic system structurally independent from English. It is different from sign languages used in other countries, such as Italian Sign Language or Japanese Sign Language.

attitude: In this context, a preconceived idea or disposition, usually negative.

brainstorm: To say or present ideas as they are thought of or as they come to mind.

brief up: To give a briefing or report to superiors.

cause no stink (usually cause a stink): To create a disturbance or disruption.

chameleon: A kind of lizard that can change its color to match its surroundings; also used to mean a person who is able to readily adapt to his or her surroundings or different situations.

classifiers: Signs used in American Sign Language to show the movement, location, or appearance of an entity.

corporate ladder: Metaphor for the path that leads to promotion and advancement in the business world.

customer service: In business, addressing and meeting the needs of the customers or clients.

doesn't come to me that easy: There are some things that the speaker doesn't understand immediately.

dragging on: Continuing for an extended period of time in a less-than-desirable way.

e-mail: Electronic communication sent over the Internet or local computer networks. (Often compared with snail mail, which is regular paper communication sent through the postal system.)

gonna: Going to.

in tune with: Being aware of another person's needs or feelings; empathetic.

IT (Information Technology): Equipment, devices, or infrastructure used for transmitting, storing, or processing electronic data.

land line: A telephone connection made over a wired network instead of a wireless one.

let it go: To dismiss or ignore something without taking any action concerning the situation or what happened.

NGO: Nongovernmental organization.

the players: In this case, the phrase means "the participants." It does not mean members of a sports team or competition.

the point: The purpose or the objective.

pretty interesting: Very interesting.

reading between the lines: Inferring meaning or obtaining information from something that is said or written beyond the literal meaning of the message.

sign: To use sign language.

sorta: A common colloquial pronunciation of *sort of*.

street smarts: Education (not formal), knowledge, and awareness that come from experience or living or “being on the street.”

stumble upon: To find or to become aware of something by chance or by accident, rather than intentionally or by design.

sub: Substitution; substitute (here, a substitute teacher).

team building: A process of developing camaraderie and cooperation among people who work together.

tire iron (or lug wrench): A tool used to remove the nuts that hold a tire on a vehicle.

took that to heart: To have taken something very seriously and remembered it to use as a point of reference or guiding principle.

turn taking: Exchanging opportunities to talk, one person after another.

wanna: Want to.

whatta (or whadda): Slang for *what do*.

y’know: Colloquial pronunciation of *you know*.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Which jobs require a lot of meetings?
2. Which jobs require the most interaction with the public?
3. In which jobs is customer service important and why?
4. What kind of communication is required for your job?
5. What is meant by customer service?
6. Describe a good and a bad customer service experience that you have had.
7. Identify three words or phrases in this chapter that are new to you, and write a sentence with each one.

DRESSING FOR WORK



In this chapter, interviewees talk about what kind of clothes they wear to work.

1. THE LIBRARIAN

LIBRARIAN: Well, I wear professional business dress, um . . .

INTERVIEWER: Is there a **dress code**?

LIBRARIAN: Not, not specifically but I always try to be dressed in a, in a suit, perhaps, or, um, some, certainly

not casual clothes at all. Um, even if I think I'm going to be sitting in my own office working all day, I never really know that that's the case because I could get a call in the middle of the day saying, "Can you come over in half an hour to talk to the senator or the congressman about **such and such?**" and I don't want to be wearing **casual Friday** kind of clothes, uh, on an occasion like that.

2. THE ACCOUNTANT

It's—the **dress**—has really changed. Uh, when I started just ten years ago—at a different firm, I was in Baltimore—uh, you had to wear a suit and tie every day, uh, in the office, uh, because what we do is, we're—we're in the office some of the time and at client sites some of the time. Uh, in the office now, it's, you know, it's **business casual**, so it's slacks and a shirt. Uh, and on Fridays, you can pay five dollars to give to charity and wear jeans, so it's really **eased up**. Uh, but coming up, you had to wear a suit every day in the office.

The other side of it is when you're at clients, you have to mirror . . . uh, the guideline we always tell people is you **mirror what the client does** and just **take it up one little notch**. Uh, the first day you're at a client, you always, you al—, I always wear a tie. Um, but, uh, a lot of our clients—we do a lot of work with **nonprofits** in **D.C.**—in a lot of nonprofits in D.C. are, they're, it's not that formal a work environment, they don't want to see you coming in in a suit and tie every day, um, so, uh, you have to mirror that a little bit but, but step it up a tiny bit.



3. THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

Depends on where I'm working. I—as a, as a sign language interpreter—I'm in a number of different settings. Uh, oftentimes, thinking back on my experiences in New York, I was on **Wall Street** and so, of course, that would mean a suit and tie. Uh, if I'm in court working as an interpreter, suit and tie, because the appearance, your-your dress should **mirror the environment** you're in. Uh, I also work in medical settings and so, if it's in surgery, for example, one day you're in scrubs, which is something quite different. Um, I've also done Broadway shows—I'm working on a show right now, a Broadway show, *The Color Purple*, to interpret, and it's probably going to depend on what the people on stage are wearing. And so, the dress, it changes according to the environment that you're in, and so pretty much, what I do is, the night before, I look and see where I'm headed the next day and just try to find something to wear that would correspond with the setting that I'm going to be in the following day.

4. THE IT PROFESSIONAL

IT PROFESSIONAL: For this interview, I was obviously clean shaven, wore a full suit, tucked-up **goatee** just so that I personally don't want to have somebody judging me for something that may look out of **corporate America**. They may not be like that and in, for instance, uh, now, since I have the job, I could get away with wearing this probably five days a week. I don't think anyone would say anything. And in th—, IT industry, it's a little more lenient. Obviously, the computer world's changed quite a bit and, uh, you know, companies like Google allow you to wear **flip-flops** or have many different things, uh, going on. And our company's not quite like that but it's sort of lenient in the IT department. [I guess . . .]

INTERVIEWER: [So you wear] business casual to work?

IT PROFESSIONAL: Business casual, I wear business [casual . . .]

INTERVIEWER: [You don't] wear a suit to work?

IT PROFESSIONAL: I do not wear a suit and since I've started there, I've not worn a tie, once. I've, I wore a suit to interview in and a tie, and you know, full-full suit to interview in, and I have not worn anything but a **button-down shirt** and maybe some khaki casual pants.

5. THE SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: Well, I'm lucky: I can wear whatever I want in and then I change into **scrubs**, uh, at work, so I-I don't have to have any work clothes, which is nice.

INTERVIEWER: Does the hospital pay for your scrubs or do you have to buy **'em**?

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: They, no, they-they supply 'em and they wash 'em and so we go in, we put the scrubs on, and then, uh, at the end of the day, you take 'em off and there'll be another pair for **ya**.

6. THE MECHANIC

INTERVIEWER: What kind of clothes do you wear in the course of your job?

MECHANIC: I mean just-just the uniform, a shop uniform with a dark blue/black pants and black shoes, boots type things, just to make sure your feet are comfortable.

INTERVIEWER: Are there, uh, are there things you shouldn't wear to work, in terms of comfort or safety or . . . ?

MECHANIC: Um, I guess street clothes is something you shouldn't wear **'cause** they just get dirty too quick. And jewelry is another thing that you shouldn't wear, 'cause, like, if you touch a car battery with a ring and touch the other part with your car—or the other part of the car—it will actually weld the ring on the battery.

INTERVIEWER: I guess you've seen that happen to a few people.

MECHANIC: Uh, my dad's friend, it happened to him once, and he had a burn mark all the way around his ring finger.

INTERVIEWER: So, do you have to buy your own work clothes?

MECHANIC: No. They're supplied to us; we get two weeks worth of clothes. We wear them one week while the other week, they're being washed.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have to wash them or does the company wash them?

MECHANIC: Um, I tend to **wash 'em** myself due to the fact that they charge twelve dollars to wash 'em.

INTERVIEWER: You save a little money.

MECHANIC: Just a little.

DEFINITIONS

business casual: Dress attire that is not completely formal, but not totally casual. For men, this usually means a dress shirt and slacks (but not a coat and tie or a suit). For women this usually means a blouse and slacks, blouse and skirt, or an average dress (but not a suit).

button-down shirt: A dress shirt, specifically one on which the tips of the collar are buttoned down.

casual Friday: In some organizations, a policy that allows employees to dress informally on Friday.

'cause: Common shortened pronunciation of *because*.

corporate America: A reference to the American business world or culture.

D.C.: District of Columbia. Short for *Washington, D.C.*, the capital of the United States.

dress: In this context, the kind of clothes that people wear, not specifically a woman's garment.

dress code: Guidelines for how someone should dress or what kind of clothes a person should wear in a given place or situation.

eased up: Became more relaxed or less strict.

'em: Common shortened pronunciation of *them*.

flip-flops: A sandal-type of footwear.

goatee: A short, often pointed beard covering only the chin.

IT (Information Technology): Equipment, devices, or infrastructure used for transmitting, storing, or processing electronic data.

mirror the environment: To dress or behave in a manner that is appropriate for a given situation.

mirror what the client does: To do what the client does, or behave and dress as the client does.

nonprofits: Companies that do not attempt to make money (profits) from what they do.

scrubs: Lightweight clothing often worn by medical personnel, usually in a hospital setting.

such and such: An indefinite term usually used to refer to a nonspecific thing or topic.

take it up one little notch (often take it up a notch): A slang expression that means “to improve a little,” “to make a little more of an effort,” or “to increase in intensity a little.”

Wall Street: The main financial district of New York City, often used to signify the American business and/or financial world as a whole.

wash 'em: Common pronunciation of *wash them*.

ya: You.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Describe the dress required for each job mentioned.
2. What is meant by casual Friday?
3. In what ways do these speakers think dress is important?
4. How do you dress for your job?
5. Is dress important for your job? Why?
6. What are the consequences of not dressing appropriately?
7. Identify three words or phrases in this chapter that are new to you, and write a sentence with each one.

PROBLEMS AT WORK



In this chapter, interviewees talk about different kinds of problems they encounter at work.

1. THE NURSE

NURSE: Patients or staff?

INTERVIEWER: Let's start with the patients and then we can go to the staff.

NURSE: With, uh, with patients, uh, predominantly, uh, sometimes, uh, they expect more than we give them

because, uh, they will come with multiple, uh, issues. If, for example, you come, we have, uh, to prioritize care—airway, breathing, circulation—and if you come and we realize that, for example, you fell and bumped your head and there was a little **nub**, we do an x-ray, a **CAT scan**, and it's negative and we can, uh, at this point tell you almost with certainty that you're gonna be OK, go take some **painkillers** like Motrin and you'll be fine and don't probably require more care, and so. There's also situations where, uh, some patients come and they do not have, uh, **primary care physicians** and the tendency of the **emergency room** is to take care of the emergency and send you back to somebody that is, uh, supposedly, uh, who supposedly knows you better, like your primary care physicians. And in most instances, if they do not have it, they would want more care, uh, administered to them to take care of this problem, so—in other words—uh, they come into the emergency room and expect a one hundred percent, uh, **wholistic care**, and emergency rooms, uh, usually do not provide that, unfortunately.

INTERVIEWER: Do you ever have other problems with patient dissatisfaction beyond that, in terms of, you know, behavior or any issues like that in the emergency room?

NURSE: Uh, dissatisfaction usually stems from the wait period, because you wake up at three in the morning, for example, and you have a serious bellyache and you come to the emergency room and the waiting room is packed and full, sometimes the wait period could be three, four, to six hours, it's not **unheard of**. And so, if this is a true emergency, where it's a life and death situation, it doesn't matter what we do after a long wait period, you already have a wall between the patient and the care administrator. So, uh, once they have to wait too long, they become impatient and, uh, as a result, uh, they will feel, for example, that we did not give them our best care. And also

sometimes, uh, it's hard to please everybody all the time, so maybe we'd **fall short** on certain instances, uh, and so there's dissatisfaction, it happens.

INTERVIEWER: So what sort of problems, if any, do you encounter with the staff or coworkers?

NURSE: Delegation problems, predominantly. Uh, the echelon of, uh, health care practice, you have the physician who is at the top and, of course, the nurses and then other practitioners like respiratory care, uh, physical therapy, and then the nursing assistants, and so on. So sometimes there's not a clear communication of roles and distinctions so sometimes there's friction when you delegate some, uh, responsibilities.

INTERVIEWER: So how are those sorts of problems resolved?

NURSE: Usually, uh, if-if it is, uh, team, the **team approach**—which is a, to my mind, the better approach—uh, you try to, uh, solve this problem over a period of time. It's not a, uh, **one-stone kill** solution, uh, because you try to communicate with these people so that if it happened on Tuesday, you take time out and talk to them and try to regulate it so that on Wednesday and Thursday, it does not repeat itself. So you sort of, uh, follow it, uh, through sequentially so that it's resolved more than just a one-stone kill solution.

INTERVIEWER: Do you find that that approach is successful?

NURSE: Most often than not. And then, on other occasions, uh, it is sometimes people's **work ethic** or work attitude that, uh, is very unchangeable and, uh, inflexible. In situations like that, you have to take it to a-another level, which is probably reporting it to the charge nurse or a superior, uh, person in the echelon.

2. THE RETIRED POLICEMAN

Hmm, well, police departments are—I'm sure when you watch the news, you hear about police departments and you hear about **crooked** police officers and crooked judges and crooked lawyers and I can tell you that's all true. It's-it happens. I didn't see so much of it in the state police, although with, uh, like local police departments. And not that the state police didn't have a few people that did that kind of stuff. And you—you would be approached by maybe another police officer or a lawyer or whatever to do something about a case, and I think every police officer gets to a point where he can go—there's a **fork in the road**—you can do it right or you can **bend to the will** of these people and-and when you do that, then they, you know, they've got something on you, so. And when I got to that point, I said, "Not **gonna** happen." And I got into a lot of trouble, and by *trouble*, I mean, uh, where other police officers wouldn't talk to me because I wasn't one of the-the gang, you know, I-I wouldn't cooperate and I **told 'em**. I said, "That's—I'm sorry—that's the way it goes. I don't care who the person is. They're-they're not above the law." And in a way, it worked out for the better, because I didn't get as many promotions when I worked the road and I wanted to fly, and if **I'da** been too high in rank, I wouldn't have been able to fly, so I figure it worked out for the better. So that was the only, I just avoided those people, you know—lawyers—I just avoided them if they called me up, I said, "I really have nothing to discuss." But for the most part, I'd say 99 percent of the people I dealt with in the state police were **on the up and up**. Just a very small percentage that were political.

3. THE TRAVEL AGENT

Uh, problems, uh, happen—it's more technical, it's something like somebody booked a ticket and, uh, airline, after b—, taking the money canceled their flights and they, if they get a route which is not the right route the client likes, so it's basically I am the man who has to be blamed for everything. So, canceled flight, they didn't get their food in on the plane, so **it's my fault**. If the plane didn't take off on time, it's my fault. If there was a snow and their car couldn't reach the airport so it's my fault. Uh, it's-it's pretty interesting that how, uh, being an agent, you take the responsibility of the client's problems and the airlines' problems. Probably that's what a travel agent is all about. But, it's-it's interesting. I mean, when something happens and you get a call from a client from India in the middle of the night saying, "The airline is not allowing me to fly," you can't do, you can't fly to India to bring him but you **deal with it**. Yeah, I mean, if-if one is not a people person, you can easily have a high-high blood pressure, most of the time, you die with a heart attack, but I think it's-it's interesting to me.

It's very hard to, uh, uh, **fire** people—uh, hiring is always a very-very pleasant feeling, that you—as if you are giving employment to people and people come with a lot of requests and they-they-they feel happy if you say, "C'mon." But I-I, initially I had a lot of problem in, uh, because I am, I always trusted people, whatever information they gave on, but then eventually you find out that the person is not the kind of person you want and you're not giving them a best job in the world, so, uh, they're also not with you forever so there's a very high **turnover** so I have, I had a hard time firing few people. I never told anybody that "I fire you," but eventually they also realize that they don't have a future here so they go move away. I never had to fire someone, I never had to say, "Get out,

you don't have a job here." But I guess they—they also read from my face and I'm-I-I'm-I-I tell them that "You're not performing well, improve yourself."

But now, in, uh, **Subway**, I have, uh, decided that I-I take a lot of time in hiring, so that I eventually don't have to make them feel they are not good for the job so I have to raise their salary, I have to give them incentives, I have to give lot of training. It's-it's a very difficult, uh, people, uh, employing and-and keeping them on, it's very difficult.

4. THE CPA

CPA: My customers that I deal with are fellow employees, personnel, and helping them with issues. I don't directly have contact with our clients that our customer service people have contact with, unless there's a really big problem, uh, which normally has to do with collections but, um. . . . But generally I consider my customers are the fellow employees as, 'cause I'm also in charge of some personnel and helping, and make sure that they're happy because if your employees are happy, they will then make your customers happy so that's truly my customers.

I mean, I'm recently started helping an employee who I noticed was having some personal issues and she and I, you know, talked one day, and I was thinking, you know, "She needs to talk to somebody professionally." And so I reminded her of an employee benefit that we had where you can get free counseling. So I, you know, gave her the phone number and all I could do was just encourage her to call, couldn't make her call, couldn't require her to call. But I, um, just tried to, you know, convince her to call, and she did and she called and so now she and I check up on each other like once a week or sometimes

once a day. At first it was like once a day and she would tell me that she called and how everything was going and that made me proud, you know, as-as a manager, as a friend, you know, as another fellow coworker and just as a human being, to know that, you know, this person was screaming for help and no one heard 'em. And the fact that I was **in tune** enough to pick up on that and, you know, get her the help that she needed and she's still, you know, going and we-we check up every few days, once a week and so. . . .

IT PROFESSIONAL: She can do her job again.

CPA: Yeah, now she can function with her, you know, with her job and, um, she's doing—and she's still getting—every week, she's making more and more, you know, progress and **working out**.

5. THE HOTEL MANAGER

Absolutely, there is technique for this, if you have any problem with any client in a hotel for any reason, you have to know how to talk to them. So, first step, you have to listen. You have to learn to listen and this is very, very important step. So you have to listen what the problem is, very carefully. After you hear all the problem, you can ask some question to clear-**clarify** the problems with the client. After you got all information from the client, you thank them and you have to **follow up**, you not stop for a minute. Follow up what happened in this problem and you have to get it done, and after you get it done, you go back to the client and make sure he's satisfied, make sure he's very happy before he leaves the hotel. So it's very, very special technique and I took seminars in this technique and I'm working in it, because, as background, it's very hard to listen, you know, it's very hard. It's very

easy to talk. But listening is-is-is-is the technique you have to learn and, uh, sometimes I forget myself and so you interrupt the client but I go back again to my technique. You have to just keep listening because listening is number one technique to solve this problems.

6. THE MECHANIC

INTERVIEWER: Who are your clientele on a given day?

MECHANIC: Customers?

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

MECHANIC: Uh, it's-it's a variety of races: um, black, white, Chinese, Spanish, um. Some people are just hard to deal with, some people are nice to deal with. Some people give you tips, some people just, are just **snotty** about it.

INTERVIEWER: So how do you deal with people who, how do you deal with a problem customer, how do you handle that?

MECHANIC: Um, you try to keep a calm voice, try to calm them down and make sure whatever they want, they get. And just make sure they're happy so they keep coming back and giving you business.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have many problem customers or have you had many problem customers since you've been working here?

MECHANIC: Uh, I've had **a handful** of them. I'm not really the one that takes care of the customers, I'm out in the garage 'cause I'm a shop foreman and I take care of all of the, um, the general service people that are below me. And if a customer comes out and asks questions, I step in

and take over and make sure the customer feels satisfied that we're taking care of their-their car right.

INTERVIEWER: Can you think of one example, one recent occurrence?

MECHANIC: Um, a recent occurrence that just happened like yesterday was, I was washing the floors and I was **kinda** dirty so when I got into a person's car to take it out of the-the garage, I got a little grease on the door and I didn't wipe it up—I didn't see it—and the customer complained about it, and I just went ahead and took care of it and cleaned it up for **'em**.

7. THE EMT

Um, initially I just make sure I don't make a problem of myself and first, not to **escalate a situation**, try to find a means to, um, come to some type of understanding with the people that you're dealing with and-and **maintain positivity**, no matter how negative someone else may get, no matter how, you know, bad a person may conduct themselves, don't allow that to taint you and you become negative. You stay positive, you keep your focus and stay calm. Don't be confrontational, stay calm, and, um, just try to, try to understand, you know or help somebody to understand what's going on **wit chu**.

8. THE IT PROFESSIONAL

IT PROFESSIONAL: I have basically a pro—, there's a project management, which is in-house, and there's, uh, um, and my IT **lead**, who is a senior—more a senior—developer than I am.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

IT PROFESSIONAL: Uh, I deal directly with him, he usually will shield me from requests coming from project management, which, in turn, have come from the client.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

IT PROFESSIONAL: That has been an ongoing battle through all of **corporate America** for probably bill—, eons, eons, and eons, since it's ever . . .

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean?

IT PROFESSIONAL: Uh, y—, we, there's a chain of command in the business world and as chores are passed down to workers, uh, inevitably things get **mixed up**, OK? And if something gets mixed up, then either blame could be placed or, uh, problem, uh, different problems arise and things happen, so, uh, the, in our particular instance, the scenario is, well, what was the requirement? And if-if my answer as the worker, the IT professional says, "Well, we never were, we were never given requirements, they just said, 'Make it **sorta** look like this.'" But we needed a document that said, "Hey, I wanted this information programmed in a certain **font**," for instance. And they didn't give us that font and we don't know that font, then it's gonna show up the way we want it to show up, not the way the client may want it to **show up**.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

IT PROFESSIONAL: The issue—the problems that arise from that—is that project management, who deals with the clients, uh, doesn't, may not get us the information, and if they don't get us the information then, this back and forth and there's bickering and you know, people are placing blame and we were trying to figure out—I think this has probably been going on for thousands of years—

people want to figure out how to work this so that that doesn't happen.

And, you know, you go, you go about your business in the most pleasant manner that you can and you do your job and you prepare for these things so that you can **cover yourself**. And everybody knows that you're gonna eventually have to do that. At some point in time, you're definitely gonna have to do that.

9. THE ENTREPRENEUR

ENTREPRENEUR: Always—and I think it's the more people that you deal with, you know. If you can keep 99 percent of the people happy, that means one in a hundred you're gonna have a hard time with, so, if you only deal with a hundred people in the course of a week, well then you only have **one rotten apple**. Now, if you deal with a thousand people in the course of a week. My brother at the tattoo shop has been there for ten years. Now, ten years ago, we did ten thousand people, so in the course of a year, maybe there was ten disgruntled customers.



Now we have ten disgruntled customers every month. Well, we're dealing with, you know, a hundred thousand people.

INTERVIEWER: What, it's-it's changed, simply because of the increase [sed numbers]?

ENTREPRENEUR: [Sure.]

INTERVIEWER: Or is it because people are more aware [of their rights and . . .]

ENTREPRENEUR: [Increase in numbers—] the percentage is still the same. You know, if you can maintain a 99 percent happiness average, I think you're doing pretty good. I used to **beat myself to death** and try to keep everybody happy and then this wise man, Bob Simpson, once told me this story about the man and the son and the donkey going to market. Do you know the story?

INTERVIEWER: Uh, go ahead.

ENTREPRENEUR: There's a-a farmer's taking his donkey to sell him at market and he takes his son along so the three of them are walking down the street. They pass the first little village and some people—they overhear some people—saying, "Look at that grown man pulling that donkey and making his son walk. Why doesn't he have the son ride the donkey?" So he puts his son up on the donkey. Well, they come to the next group of people and they overhear 'em saying, "Look at that disrespectful boy: he's riding that donkey when his father should be up there." So they switch positions, they get to the next town, and they hear some people saying, you know, "Look at that man burdening that poor donkey when he's perfectly capable of walking."

INTERVIEWER: You've had to hire and fire people?

ENTREPRENEUR: I don't think I've ever really said to someone, "You're fired," but it got to the point where they

weren't performing at their job so then I put the pressure on them to **shape up or ship out**, as the phrase goes and, uh, I guess you could say in essence I fired 'em but not directly; indirectly through putting pressure on them to get the job done and if they weren't performing, then they were unhappy to the point where they eventually quit.

DEFINITIONS

beat myself to death: To berate or blame oneself excessively.

bend to the will: To do what another person wants, usually achieved by pressure or coercion.

CAT scan (or CT scan; Computerized Axial Tomography): A diagnostic x-ray procedure that combines, with the aid of a computer, many x-ray images taken from different angles to generate cross-sectional or three-dimensional views of specific parts of the human body.

'cause: Common shortened pronunciation of *because*.

clarify: In standard English, *clarify*.

corporate America: A reference to the American business world or culture.

cover yourself: To protect yourself, to be able to justify your actions.

crooked: In this context, dishonest or unethical, even criminal.

deal with it: To take care of the problem or situation at hand.

'em: Common shortened pronunciation of *them*.

emergency room: The department of a hospital that provides urgent care to seriously ill or injured persons, now more frequently referred to as the emergency department in many places.

EMT (Emergency Medical Technician): An allied health professional who is responsible for responding to medical emergencies and providing initial first-aid care and transportation of the sick or injured persons to a medical facility.

escalate a situation: To make a situation more intense or worse.

fall short: To fail to meet expectations or to have a result or outcome that did not meet the desired goal or requirements.

fire: To terminate a person from employment.

follow up: To check on a situation after an initial action was taken to determine if the desired result was achieved.

font: A style of typeface.

fork in the road: A point at which a choice or decision has to be made between two alternatives.

gonna: Going to.

a handful: A common expression meaning a small number, or “a few.”

I'da: Common contraction and pronunciation of *I would have*.

in tune: In this context, to be aware of something or someone's needs.

IT (Information Technology): Equipment, devices, or infrastructure used for transmitting, storing, or processing electronic data.

it's my fault: I'm responsible for what happened or went wrong.

kinda: Kind of.

lead: The person directing the project

maintain positivity: To keep a positive outlook or attitude.

mixed up: Confused, in a state of disarray, out of order.

nub: This speaker's description of a bump or swelling.

on the up and up: Legitimate or trustworthy.

one rotten apple: A person who is the only unhappy or dissatisfied person among a group of people, or a troublemaker.

one-stone kill: Solving a problem with one single effort, technique, or approach. (Not a common American expression.)

painkillers: Medication designed to reduce pain.

primary care physicians: Doctors who are responsible for overseeing the general health care needs of people.

shape up or ship out: To do what is correct or expected or leave.

show up: In this context, to appear.

snotty: Slang for *indignant, nasty, unpleasant*.

sorta: Sort of.

Subway: A fast-food chain that specializes in submarine sandwiches.

team approach: A group of individuals working to achieve the same goal or objective.

told 'em: Common pronunciation of *told them*.

turnover: Change in the employees who work at a business due to employees being hired and fired, or leaving by their own choice.

unheard of: Unusual or uncommon.

wholistic care: All-inclusive health care (not standard and not to be confused with *holistic*).

wit chu: A colloquial pronunciation of *with you*.

work ethic: A person's disposition, attitude, or approach to his or her work.

working out: In this context, succeeding, or having the desired result or outcome.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. List some of the problems encountered by the speakers.
2. Describe how speakers handle problems.
3. With whom have speakers had problems?
4. Describe your problems at work. Were they with coworkers? With customers?
5. Describe the problems that a friend, coworker, or classmate has had at work.
6. How do you solve problems at work?
7. Identify three words or phrases in this chapter that are new to you, and write a sentence with each one.

TECHNOLOGY AT WORK



In this chapter, interviewees describe the various kinds of technology they use to do their jobs.

1. THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR (LINGUISTICS)

Lots of video, lots of digital video, um, I'd say that's probably the-the biggest one. And b—, since this is Gallaudet, a deaf university, we use a lot of technology that is **deaf-friendly** or that makes, uh, the visual component of the classroom more accessible for students, say, who want to come back and review the course—the class—that we just had, uh, say, today. They, those are filmed—those

are videotaped automatically—and then uploaded to our course website and the students can go and watch those, review things that I had said. They can look at what’s on the board. The **PowerPoint** slides that I had are also integrated so we have a lot of that, I guess, assistive or enhancing technology here at Gallaudet.

2. THE CHEMIST

The computer, uh, a BlackBerry, cell phone—the BlackBerry which is kind of like, in a way, a bane to humankind because it’s-it’s very useful, but then people always think that you are always looking at your **e-mail**, you know, so “I can send something at ten o’clock and maybe she’ll look at it,” at night, you know, and sometimes, unfortunately, I am, you know, they can send me . . . I’m terrible, “What am I doing?!” So, but it, in a way it’s also helpful because on the subway in the morning, um, I can take a quick look and see what’s-what’s coming up because, you know, there are people who start at seven in the morning. I’m not one of them, I’m, you know, an eight-thirty in the morning person, so, and my boss is a seven in the morning person, so, you know, I also get a number of e-mails from him while he’s **fresh and bushy-tailed**.

3. THE ACCOUNTANT

INTERVIEWER: Do you like being able to be connected all the time, anywhere?

ACCOUNTANT: No. It’s very convenient, I just got a phone that does e-mail. It’s very convenient to be able to check that. You know, for example, today I was on the bus going to work and I could check my e-mail before work. That was

convenient. Uh, I do not want to be **connected** all the time, uh, but it is awfully convenient and I-I'm gonna have to watch that. Uh, but they're paying for it. You know, the company pays for me to have e-mail on my phone, so I can't just turn it off. Uh, but it mostly gets turned off on weekends, it does not go upstairs, it stays downstairs, uh, yeah. But it's-it's very convenient and it's-it's—I don't tend to respond to things, uh, you know, because you have to do **the thing with the thumbs** and I'm not great at that—uh, but it's **awfully nice** to be able to just read the e-mail and know what's coming when I get to work.

Uh, I will never do that while I'm driving, which some people do, uh, but yeah-yeah. Uh, this—the phone that I just got—is also, uh, theo—, hope—, supposed to work worldwide, uh, so in theory, when we go to Venice, it'll work over there, uh, and I'm actually kind of concerned about that. That's good and bad. I want to be able to get that call that says, "The house is **burning down**." I do not want all the normal calls that I would normally get while I'm in Venice. So, some-some filter would be nice.

4. THE ENTREPRENEUR AND THE SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST

ENTREPRENEUR: Aircraft, computers, people, telephone, mechanical things, automatic activation devices on parachutes, the latest parachute technology, uh. That's all I can think of off the top of my head.

SURGICAL TECHNOLOGIST: We use a lot of computers. Um, all of the charting and things, like, are starting to go, instead of on paper, they're on computer now. Uh, video monitors, we have flat-screen TVs now, uh, for our laparoscopic procedures. Um, yeah, telephones. I'm sure it'll-it'll just keep increasing from there. You know, there's

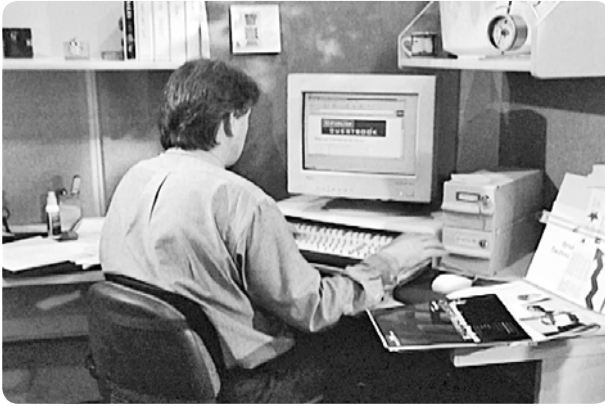
robots that are starting to do surgery and—we don't have that yet but—I'm—I'm sure that's where we're headed.

5. THE EMT

EMT: Various things, like I mentioned, uh, earlier: **EKG** machine, which we use to check the, um, electrical activity of a person's heart to see that everything is flowing correctly, um, we use monitors, which we connect to a person so that we can constantly observe their heart flow, heart activity, uh, everything from the basic stretchers that we push and **break our backs** on every day, uh. It's just a wide—, oxygen tanks, which, you know, it's good to be familiar—usually at the hospital, they're al—, they're already together but, hey, you never know when a situation may occur and it's not together, so you need to know. Uh, basic thermometers, scales, it's a wide range of equipment that—that we use, it's a wide range of things.

INTERVIEWER: And I imagine that in some way you have to use computers?

EMT: Absolutely. **Computers is**-is a very important part of the hospital because of tracking, a means to-to keep track of patients, uh, means of putting in information and retrieving information. It's extremely vital so that's something else that is good, if a person might be able to—jus— type a little bit, **y'know**, ten words a minute, y'know, you don't have to be a secretary or extraordinary on the keys, but if you-you can read, type a little bit, you're good, 'cause in most cases, most of what I see on the most basic level, if a person can read at least on a tenth-grade level, they can get a grasp of this information.



6. THE TRAVEL AGENT

I mean, technology is-is big time because when I have **Subway** now, I-I move, I take, carry my—it's not a cell phone, it's like a, um, phone over Internet, uh, I think **VOIP**, something—and, uh, I carry that phone wherever I go. If I'm home, the phone rings at home; if I'm in my Subway, it rings there; if I'm here, it works here. So technology, of c—, it's a big—I mean, uh, if I was in any other country, even in India, I don't think, they don't have a technology like we have here in U.S. And uh, I have nothing else—my-my-my inventory is computer. I mean, all the tickets, central reservation system, I can do only reservations. If I don't have a computer, it's practically impossible. So high-speed Internet and connections, it's networking, technology. I mean, my travel agency work on technology. If I have no technology, I mean, I-I can't go to airline offices and **fetch** the tickets.

7. THE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER

Technology as far as work goes, uh, let's see. Well, you—as an interpreter—you become experienced, you become comfortable with different types of technology depending on what setting or environment you're going in. Personally, I love technology and so I'm very excited about working with computers, uh, I've recently made the switch from being a **PC** user my entire life to about a year and a half ago going to a Mac environment, an Apple environment, and so, I do a lot of video editing occasionally, when I have free time, which involves taking movies that I've made, uh, personal movies from home—taking them and converting them to **DVDs**, um, pretty much becoming a producer, if you will, for fun. And so I'm familiar with a lot of video editing technology, uh, of course, **PDA**s, personal data assistants, I use a lot as an interpreter. For years as an interpreter I traveled, uh, using a book, having a-a calendar but as technology's progressed, it's become a lot easier to use a **Palm Pilot** or a PDA, um, for your e-mail, for your scheduling, and so forth. Uh, other technology I would use, uh, I would say it's just cell phone, cameras, that type of thing and just being familiar with the different technology that's out there so that if you're in an interpreting situation and you—terms are being used—you need to be familiar with current technology so that you can make the appropriate interpretation into, uh, sign language or English.

DEFINITIONS

awfully nice: A common colloquial expression that means “very nice.”

break our backs: To do difficult physical labor.

burning down: Being consumed by fire.

computers is: In standard grammatical English, this would be *computers are*.

connected: Here used in the sense of being accessible by various digital communication technologies.

deaf-friendly: Something that accommodates deaf people or is easy for deaf people to use.

DVD: digital versatile disk.

EKG (also ECG; Electrocardiogram): A diagnostic test used to evaluate the performance of the heart by monitoring its electrical activity and producing a graphic trace of that electrical activity on paper.

e-mail (electronic mail): Printed matter that is transmitted electronically.

EMT (Emergency Medical Technician): An allied health professional who is responsible for responding to medical emergencies and providing initial first-aid care and transportation of the sick or injured persons to a medical facility.

fetch: Means “to get.” Most Americans say “get.” This term is more commonly used in the southern United States. However, it is not limited to non-American English or southern American speech.

fresh and bushy-tailed (or bright-eyed and bushy-tailed): Alert and ready.

Palm Pilot: A specific brand of PDA.

PC: Personal computer.

PDA: personal digital assistant.

PowerPoint: Brand of digital slide presentation.

Subway: A fast-food chain that specializes in submarine sandwiches.

the thing with the thumbs: This is a reference to the way people usually use their thumbs when entering information or sending messages from a PDA or BlackBerry.

VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol): Technology that allows a person's voice to be transmitted over the Internet.

y'know: Colloquial pronunciation of *you know*.

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Which job described in this chapter requires the most technology?
2. List the kinds of technology used by these speakers.
3. How do these speakers feel about the use of technology for their jobs?
4. What kind of technology do you use for your job and how do you feel about it?
5. What kind of technology does a friend, coworker, or classmate use for his or her job?
6. What do you see as the future of technology at work?
7. Identify three words or phrases in this chapter that are new to you, and write a sentence with each one.

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