

THE BILLIONAIRES Instructor's Manual



*Realistic and
Innovative
Business English
Learning*

Business: the purchase and sale of goods and services in an attempt to make a profit.

Simulation: training by imitating the behavior of some situation or process by means of a reasonably accurate model.



 **DVBE**
DAVE VOLEK'S BUSINESS ENGLISH

w w w . d v b e . b z



About Dave Volek

Engineer. Businessman. ESL Instructor. Inventor. At the heart of the comprehensive suite of Dave Volek's Business English (DVBE) modules lies my diverse expertise in business, engineering, and finance; my interest in people and education; and my passion for creating innovative solutions that bridge the inherent gaps of traditional business English instruction. My proven, unconventional approach helps business and technical professionals build strong, practical English skills for the dynamic workplace.



The Billionaires: Instructor's Manual

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INTRODUCTION

Engage

The online reading exercise uses subtle humor and conspiracy theories to get the students' attention. The module sets up the ultimate conspiracy theory: figuring out which fictitious billionaire gets to control the world. They will see the billionaires battle to the top with one final and suspenseful winner-take-all contest. They will be quite engaged while doing some otherwise tedious tasks.

Study

The crux of this DVBE module is a complicated, yet short, set of instructions. This will challenge their reading skills as they apply the instructions to the elections.

Activate

The students will be the referees who monitor the board elections of the world's twelve biggest companies. This module is essentially an elaborate "put the right number in the right box" exercise.

Business

Other than working with the instructions and lots of numbers, there really isn't that much "technical" business inherent with the BILLIONAIRES. This module would be a great exercise for upper-intermediate level students in a regular ESL / EFL program.



EXERCISE #1: THE STORY

Direct your students to www.thebillionairesonline.com. Give them about a week to go through this website on their own time. It not only provides some excellent business English listening and vocabulary, it sets the stage for the classroom exercise of this module.

With the website, students will come to understand the global power play and their role in the final decision of who is controlling the world. By reading the stories, students will form positive and negative associations with some of the billionaires, which should increase their enthusiasm for seeing who will be the eventual victor.

While the two parts of this exercise complement each other, it is not necessary to complete the online exercise first to do the classroom exercise. So if only a third of your class has actually visited the website, there should be enough collective knowledge to proceed to the elections in the classroom.

Also hand out the Student's Manual at this time as reading homework. You need to stress two things, however:

- It is more important for them to spend a few hours with the website rather than doing the reading. So if the students have limited time, they should invest it in the website.
- Full comprehension of the Students' Manual is very unlikely—even for native speakers. Until the students actually do a couple of elections, they really won't understand the reading. So suggest spending just an hour with the manual to get a basic idea and do the vocabulary quiz. This investment of time will help them get into the classroom exercise a little quicker.



EXERCISE #2: THE ELECTIONS

Ask the students which of them visited the website in the previous week. Set up the students in groups such that each group has at least one student who spent some time in the website. Ask that student to explain the story to the rest of the group.

Between the website and the Students' Manual, it may appear there is enough available information for a very ambitious student to do all the election calculations in the time before the classroom exercise. Such a student would likely want to announce the successful billionaire to the rest of the class. I certainly wouldn't discourage this enthusiasm and having someone in the classroom who has actually tried to work through the election instructions beforehand will be an asset in the class. But until the student actually sees an election schedule, he cannot determine the successful billionaire. So if you have such an ambitious student, you can assure him that he has done something wrong, so his group must redo the great work he has done.

Hand out a schedule of elections to each group. Each schedule will produce a different billionaire gaining the top spot. So if you don't want the groups to be checking on each other for the "right answer," give each group a different schedule. If you feel your class needs the reassurance of everyone being on the same page, hand out the same schedule.

Also hand out an official shareholders' list (the same list goes for each group) and about four worksheets to each group. Make sure you have lots of worksheets available

Set the students to do the first election on their schedule. Remind them that initially this exercise will not be that easy. But as they gain experience, it will become quite routine.

Before you present this module in a classroom, I strongly, strongly, strongly recommend that you spend some time going through an entire schedule of elections to figure out how the elections work. Even you won't understand exactly what you need to do just by reading the instructions. You will have to do some elections yourself. Only with this experience can you be of any help as the students struggle with this process.

Your pre-class preparation will have a big impact on how well this module works in class. You can either look like a very competent business English instructor or a teacher who should just teach the easy material. It's your choice!

In the first election or two, allow some discussion in L1 to gain collective understanding within the group. Forcing the students into an "English only" state may not be a wise idea at this time.

If the students are having some troubles following the instructions, give them Example 1 or Example 2 from the Resource Manual. This is another approach to gain an understanding of the instructions.



The group may call you over to help resolve their differences of interpretation of the instructions. This, in itself, is good practice in English as students have to express their views. Rather than give them the right answer, challenge them a bit to see if they can figure out the right way on their own.

In each schedule, Shalbotnik retains control of the first company. He loses the second election. After that Shalbotnik may keep a company or two, but he loses most of them by the end of schedule.

By the time the third election is conducted, the students should start seeing the nature of the elections is actually quite routine. It is just a matter of following certain steps to figure out what happens with the votes of the lowest nominee. Because they now have this understanding, you can now enforce an “English only” rule in your classroom. There’s another 10 or so elections to practice their English conversation in a business environment as they apply the instructions to the situation created by the election.

By about the sixth election, the process should be fairly routine, and you should raise the conversation challenge. Assign a leader in each group to explain to the rest of the group how to tally the results for the election. If the leader is explaining the elections while doing the election, let the others comment on any misapplication of the instructions. The leader can also provide a step-by-step explanation of the election after the calculations are complete if this method better suits the nature of your class. Change the leaders with each election.

Note that such conversation will actually be of a technical nature. For many of your students, this may be the first time they have been challenged in this way in a classroom.

In the first few elections, the more numerically minded students will recognize that not all figures in the share numbers are necessary. It will be easier to round the share holdings to the nearest thousand or ten thousand shares—and the final results should not change. Just allow this usage of numbers to happen when it happens. It makes both calculations and communications much easier—and is quite common in real business English.

When the election for World Corp. comes around, Shalbotnik will not have enough strength to retain the chair. Another billionaire will take over. Here are the ultimate winners for World Corp.:

Schedule 1—Earl

Schedule 2—Smith

Schedule 3—Ling

Schedule 4—Mercedes

Schedule 5—Novak

Schedule 6—Aziz



You should be aware that small mistakes—whether from arithmetic errors or misapplication of the instructions—can produce a different billionaire taking control of World Corp. If students make such mistakes, it's probably best to let these mistakes lie where they are. Our ultimate goal is the business English practice, not business accuracy.

If one group finishes earlier than the rest, have them go through their schedule of elections again. The nature of The Billionaires is that for this second round of elections, about 50% of the boards elected in the first round will be replaced—which then leads to a different billionaire gaining control of World Corp. in the second round. The suspense never stops in The Billionaires! So there's no need for any group to sit idle just because they are faster than the others.

The Reality of the Elections

The corporate elections in The Billionaires are not very realistic: Most corporate elections are not contested, and the former management usually nominates its own slate which then wins by acclamation. When the election is contested, the enemies of the current management usually nominate an opposition slate to replace the current board. Shareholders then vote, usually by proxy, for either the management or opposition slates. There are no run-off elections like there are in The Billionaires.

I could have designed this module to be more realistic, but it would have been less exciting as a business English exercise. So if your students point this out, just tell them why.

Ending the Class

At the end of this exercise, congratulate the students on using their English to master a somewhat difficult task.



ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

Reading the Instructions

Encourage the students to read the instructions again. They would gain a great sense of accomplishment to see how their understanding went from almost nothing to full comprehension within a couple of hours. They will wonder why they first saw the instructions as something impossible. This boosting of confidence in reading skills, I feel, is the most important aspect of this DVBE module.

Vocabulary Quiz

To give the class time more conversation practice, leave the students to do the vocabulary quiz on their own time.

Answer Key: 1-d, 2-c, 3-a, 4-h, 5-b, 6-f, 7-k, 8-g, 9-e, 10-i, 11-o, 12-j, 13-m, 14-n, 15-r, 16-l, 17-q, 18-w, 19-p, 20-t, 21-v, 22-s, 23-y, 24-u, 25-c, 26-x, 27-z, 28-b, 29-f, 30-a, 31-d, 32-e

Writing Exercise

Have the students give a journalistic account of one election or perhaps the entire account of one billionaire's rise to the chair of World Corp.

Do It Again

Use a different schedule of elections to get a different result.

Or perhaps have the group give about 20% of their least favorite billionaire's holdings to their favorite billionaire. Make appropriate changes to the shareholders' lists.

Accounting Exercise

Assume World Corp. has declared \$1,000,000,000 in dividends. Have groups calculate how much of this goes to each of the billionaires. This is not as easy as it sounds and should generate some good BE discussion to resolve the problem.

This exercise will be easier if the students' convert the absolute holdings into a percentage of total shares; i.e. 4,205,763 shares is changed to 11.94%.