

# Executives in the Classroom

## Breathe Life into Academic Theories



Spring Asher

### Polishing Diamonds

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, 98 percent of CEOs put communications skills at the top of the list as a necessary ingredient for business success. “The goal of our communications class,” says **Spring Asher**, adjunct professor of business communications, “is to prepare our MBA candidates to be leaders in the business world. Communications skills are a vital part of leadership.” Asher teaches her students how to present themselves with confidence in her ten-week on-camera course, required for all MBA students.

At the beginning, students learn to organize their information so that it’s listener-centered, says Asher, co-founder of Atlanta-based Chambers and Asher Speechworks. Then, the focus turns to presentation skills such as how they look, how they stand, how they use their body—gestures, eye contact, and the smile. They concentrate on voice energy. “Do you sound like you mean it?” explains Asher.

What at first can be overwhelming to students quickly becomes indispensable information. First year MBA student Cory H. Mehalechko notes, “The little things that we learn are so valuable and make such a difference when we speak.” Classmate Jean Pierre Serani agrees, saying that the class taught him “a great deal about corporate America’s communication standards.”

### Connecting the Dots

**Arn Rubinoff** hopes that students leave his three-hour course with a “wonderful ability” to spot issues.

“As I often tell them,” Rubinoff says, “what worries me in the business world is not the issue that I’m aware of, but the issue that went by me and then circles around and catches me in the backside.”

Rubinoff, an attorney, also is chairman of the board and a principal shareholder in Atlanta-based Natural Body. His weekly class focuses on technology transfer, growth cycles of high-tech companies, and the utilization of technology in those growth cycles.

He often hears from students after graduation who tell him how his course helped them spot issues in their company, causing them, for example, to raise a question about patent issues as they work on a team project.

“Their colleagues say, ‘How did you know about this issue? You aren’t a patent lawyer.’ They might not understand all the intricacies, but that’s not the goal of this class,” Rubinoff says. The goal is to help them spot issues so they can at least address them or involve the people at their company who do have the abilities to address them. “Then,” he says, “they look good, because they at least have the wherewithal to look at the issue.”

As visitors in the classroom, more than 100 executives and professionals from international corporations covered a wide array of topics this year. A sampling of names and companies include:

Visit <http://mgt.gatech.edu/speakers> for a complete listing of adjunct faculty and guest speakers.

- David Bishko, General Manager, Delta Airlines
- David Deutchman, VP International Marketing, Maidenform
- Charles Eden, Vice President, Burke Inc.
- James Gadsby, Senior Manager Information Services, The Home Depot
- Shannon Handegan, Partner Development Manager, Earthlink
- Lisa Hansard, Director of Business Intelligence Services, The Coca-Cola Company
- Andy Heller, President, Domestic Distribution, Turner Broadcasting
- Keith Jackson, Executive Director, HR, Advertising and Publishing Group, BellSouth
- Charlie Jerabek, President and CEO, Osram Sylvania Inc
- Richard Kalikow, President, Manchester Real Estate
- Garnett Keith, Chairman and CEO, Seabridge Investment Advisors
- Ken Klaer, VP International Subscriber Services, Scientific Atlanta
- Andy Kroll, Vice President, Corporate and Investment Banking, Suntrust Robinson Humphrey
- Alan Lacy, President and CEO, Sears
- Doug Lewis, CIO, Intercontinental Hotels
- Ann Livermore, President, HP Services
- Dexter Manning, Assurance Partner, GrantThornton
- Kathleen Marran, Director International Marketing, UPS