Welcome to SpeakEasy®, otherwise known as German 320/415/515, but really also a world in itself! In its current form the course is only seven years old. Before that, it was a conventional intermediate "Business German" language course. Now it is a business simulation that **aims to become a real student-run company**.

The chief learning goal has always been to prepare participants for a modern working environment in which German is used both professionally and socially. A PSU Faculty Enhancement Grant, awarded in 2001, allowed a new goal to be added: *to establish a business* in which German (and later, other languages) are both the target for learning and also the medium of business communication.

The focus of the business is development and distribution of products for "real-world" language users, such as specialized vocabulary and phrase lists ("German for Skiers", "German for the Emergency Room." Whether or not the "business" becomes an actual business is less important than the experiences the participants gain while simulating and trying to establish it. But it will be a sign of extraordinary success if the business actually comes into being and can be passed on to a new crop of participants. *The target year for that is 2010.* The first marketable product was finished in 2007 and brought in around $200 of additional working capital.

The course has two linguistic goals: 1) moving closer to, or further along in, the "Advanced" level of the ACTFL Proficiency scale in speaking and writing, where the occupational realm becomes important; 2) developing a specialized knowledge, above your general maintenance level, in the vocabulary and speech register of the white-collar business world.

Over the first few days of the course you will learn much more about what those terms and concepts mean, and how your learning will be assessed. It is enough to say here that most of your learning will occur as you *do* things using German, rather than by studying grammar rules, memorizing vocabulary lists, or writing out academic exercises. Nevertheless, you are also at a stage in developing your German where you should prepare to learn about the language systematically – but *in the language, and as our realistic work-related activities.*

We will begin the quarter by doing what would be natural when one starts a new job: making acquaintances, describing job-related competencies, and engaging in "small talk." Very soon we will take up our new business roles and continue from where our predecessors brought the company. Topics include: the structure of our organization; the basic features of our product and how we will market it; the responsibilities of our "employees." We will refine the product, develop the related skills, and then produce and distribute it. Along the way we will deal with such matters as quality control, employee performance, and planning the future of the company.

The nature and sequence of activities and assignments, and also the standards of performance, will be determined by the needs of the business. You will carry out a range of business activities in German: word-processing, basic accounting, marketing, equipment management, personnel matters, and so on. For example, you will create a résumé, write a review of a competing product, and do individual and group presentations. But you are also actual students, and so some assignments will be less realistic and will serve a "support" function for your learning, such as development of a specialized personal vocabulary. In between those two realms will be the central method of documenting your performance: a portfolio which includes your course work and can serve as the foundation for documentation of your competence if you really do apply for employment or study abroad in a German-speaking environment.

Many of the details of the course will have to be negotiated during the first few weeks, as we see who the participants are and what their current levels of competence are. But in the meantime, the first steps have been laid out for you, and there is no time to waste.

So, let's get started! / Fangen wir doch an!