

Preface to the seventh edition

By Shirley Taylor

Take a look around your workplace. Do the leaders in your organisation write effectively and powerfully? Do good writers tend to get promoted? Do people tend to listen to good writers? Are good writers able to persuade or convince effectively? Absolutely they do!

More and more of our work today is undertaken through writing rather than in person or on the phone. As we are writing so much more these days, we depend on our writing skills to influence, persuade, encourage, collaborate, and to lead. However, how often do you notice people talking about the importance of good writing in your day-to-day work? They don't, do they? Most people don't really notice the quality of the writing they read – they simply react positively, negatively, or not at all. If you have ever wondered if there's a better way to write your messages so they get better results, there is!

Here are three of the new rules for written communication:

1 If you can say it, you can write it

We connect with the world today largely through email, websites, blogs, texting and social media. With all these channels we have only bare facts, without tone of voice, facial expressions, body language or pauses. As we regularly use these means instead of talking, it makes sense to use writing that's as close as possible to spoken language. When you do this, you gain yourself a great advantage – you put your personality and individuality into your message. This will help you to stand out more and make a greater connection with your reader.

2 Write for today, not yesterday

Yesterday's writing is passive and wordy, and it sounds really dull. It puts a distance between you and the reader. The way it is written also slows down understanding.

Yesterday:

Please be advised that a meeting of the Annual Convention Committee will be held on 24 February (Thursday) at 9.30 am. Approximately 2 hours will be required for the meeting and you are required to attend to report on progress made since the last meeting. Kindly advise me of your availability at your soonest.

Today's writing sounds more conversational. It's crisp, clear, transparent, and the personal context makes it more positive and interesting.

Today:

I'd like to hold another meeting of the Annual Convention Committee on Tuesday 24 February from 9.30 to 11.30 am. I hope you can attend to report on the great ideas you brought up at the last meeting. Please confirm if you can join us.

3 Aim to build relationships

In writing, as readers can't see or hear you, people will judge you based on what you write and how you write it. In today's fast-paced, communication-crazy world, it's essential to come across as a human being. If you insist on using old-fashioned or redundant jargon (*Please be reminded, Kindly be advised, Please find attached, herewith, above-mentioned, reference and perusal*, etc) you will obscure the real meaning and will not be adding any personality of your own. Make your writing positive, stimulating and interesting, add some feeling and a personal touch. This will help people get to know the real person behind the message.

Poorly written messages reflect badly on you and your organisation. Poor writing will not clarify your organisation's products, services, values, policies and beliefs; it may even portray them negatively. As a result, your reputation may be ruined and business efficiency lost. You will also lose out on opportunities to connect and to build relationships with clients, colleagues and collaborators.

Good writing is receiving increasing recognition as an essential business skill, and it will give you a huge advantage in today's business world. Good writing can help you work more efficiently, build credibility, improve relationships, influence other people, win more clients and achieve your goals.

If you want to give yourself an edge in this very competitive world, you must get to grips with effective writing now. And you have certainly found the right resource with *Model Business Letters, Emails and Other Business Documents*, seventh edition.

These three main rules for written communication are reinforced constantly throughout this book. Study its pages well and you will learn how to enhance your professional reputation and build great relationships.

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