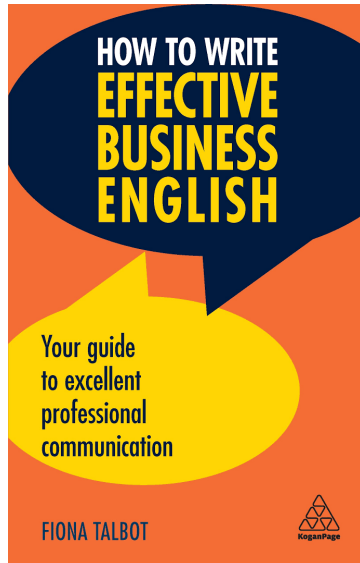


**Book Review: How to Write Effective Business English:
Your guide to excellent professional communication**

Asst. Prof. Dr. Nattapan Tantikul



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Have you ever heard of these famous quotations? This first one is from Lee Lacocca, a renowned American automobile executive/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who used to work at the Ford Motor Company in the 1960s and the Chrysler Corporation in the 1980s. He said that “You can have brilliant ideas, but if you can’t get them across, your ideas won’t get you anywhere” (AZ Quotes, 2023). The other one is from Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States of America from 1801 to 1809. He pointed out an interesting notion that “The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do” (AZ Quotes, 2023). These two quotations certainly make us realize the importance of spoken and written communication, especially in the world of business that is required high levels of formality in communication. When we work, it is unavoidable that we must WRITE, and must write effectively. We write for many reasons; for example, to inform and to help people to understand better, to seek information, to persuade and to promote services, to sell and to support customers, or even to express ourselves appropriately in different specific business circumstances. Unfortunately, as we have already known, it is not easy to put words on a blank page and to write formally and effectively in business style. However, the good news is we have a lot of guide books to provide us good recommendations to improve our professional written communication skills.

How to Write Effective Business English: Your guide to excellent professional communication written by Fiona Talbot, is one of those well-known guide books for business writing. This book had the first, second and third publication in 2009, 2016 and 2019, respectively and has been warmly welcomed by many readers worldwide. The third edition of this book is composed of eleven chapters covering from the reasons why we write, the differences between academic and business writing, how to write effectively in the 21st century to a few grammar tips for writing.

Specifically, in Chapter 1: Why are you writing?, the author points out the fact that it is very important to understand and discover from the beginning that a) who our readers really are, b) what our main purpose of writing, and c) what the level of formality we write that can perfectly meet the expectations of our readers or audiences. In the end, I think we can guess that differences in audiences and objectives of writing will lead to differences in forms, levels of formality including mood and tone in writing, and it is certain that we are the one who must determine precisely to generate an effective business writing. In Chapter 2: Business writing for today, the author makes us realize that academic writing totally differs from business writing because when the aims of writing are different, the way to write must be different too. For example, in academic writing, we have been taught to avoid using “I” and “We” within any sentence or to keep away from beginning any sentence with “And” or “But”. However, there are no formal restrictions in business writing. In fact, it depends on various situations. In general, we can use generic style or in electronic writing, most of the time, we can use writing style that is halfway between conversation and traditional writing. It is also important to emphasize that choosing the right style of writing for different situations and audiences is very crucial, and to succeed in business writing, we should follow the four steps which are: 1) Be correct, 2) Be clear, 3) Make the right impact, and 4) Focus on readers as your customers.

Next, in Chapter 3: Quality matters, it is obvious that instinctively, readers judge our professionalism from the quality of our business writing. Thus, we must look for all possible mistakes before dispatching our information and must keep in mind that proofreading is one of the most critical steps of effective writing. In Chapter 4: Writing across generations – for colleagues as well as clients, the author shifts her focus to the topic of multigeneration and the problems of generation gap. In sum, the author indicates that we should study how our colleagues or clients write and try to imitate their writing styles by concerning about their individual cultures as well as generations.

For Chapter 5: Telling your story through social media, Chapter 6: Standard or variant English?, Chapter 7: Writing globally? Or in multinational teams?, and Chapter 8: E-mail and instant messaging, as time goes by, it is unquestionable that new technologies, globalization, and the evolution of English language have affected the way we communicate in today’s business. For example, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram make us concentrate more on conciseness, clarity, accuracy, and consistency of business writing. In terms of globalization, when English has been used by both native and non-native speakers around the world, it is unavoidable that there is language mix that causes several styles of English nowadays. Therefore, it is important to perceive that there are varieties of English language such as British English, American English, Australian English, Indian English, and we had better decide to use them in different situations wisely. Besides, as English language has changed over time in terms of pronunciations, inventions of new vocabularies or drifts in the meaning of words, we should open our minds and be ready to adopt some innovations or modifications of English for our writing.

Furthermore, as stated in Chapter 3 that quality of our business writing really matters, evidently, grammatical errors are unacceptable in business writing. Thus, in Chapter 9: Punctuation and grammar tips and Chapter 10: Practical conventions and common confusions, the author reviews some key points about punctuation, parts of speech, other interesting grammar rules, different conventions in different countries including commonly confused

words that might help improve our business writing skills. Lastly, the author reminds us in Chapter 11: Paper is here to stay, that despite the advancement of new technologies, paper usage will not be completely going away. Many businesses still use business letters for formal communication. Therefore, understanding traditional letter formats to write business letters is still necessary.

In summary, this book provides us some awareness of current situations of business writing in the 21st century. While the 21st century is considered as the technology era, unquestionably, it has drastically transformed the way we work and the way we write professionally and effectively in the business world. At a glance, technology can improve our writing skills and help us write better; nonetheless, we cannot rely on technology and expect it to detect every incorrect word with spellcheck feature and we should have more concerns on business writing when we decide to use different kinds of social media platforms. Moreover, we must accept the fact that it is our responsibilities to make important decisions relating to business writing; for example, we must know who our readers are, what the main purposes of our writing are, what the appropriate forms, styles, levels of formality, mood and tone for our writing should be and so on. It is also important to perceive the differences among countries, cultures, corporations, and generations that lead to different styles of business writing, and the evolution of English language that causes the acceptance of semi-formal language in today's business writing. In my opinion, this book is good for brushing up on our writing skills. Although it is a small book, it covers all necessary contents that are enough for intermediate or advanced business writers. Nevertheless, for those who are not familiar with business or any kind of writing, further readings with practice guides are suggested.

References

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