

## The structure of english business letter

This article is devoted to the problem «achieving» a good style commercial letters writing. Every part of business letter as well as the tone and words we use in Business Correspondence were thoroughly investigated.

**Key words:** English, style in the writing, business letter.

Every year thousands of Odessa University graduates in International Management start looking for work. A lot of them dream of becoming managers in an international company. Unfortunately, very few have a clear idea of what makes a professional manager. More than that very few of them can meet the requirements of the labour market. So, English language teachers have the opportunity to provide their students with a more competitive background. For this purpose an innovative Business English programme for senior students has been designed. And the present work is used as the first inaugural lecture of this BE course. This article is devoted to the problem of the commercial letters writing. There are two elements of style in writing: the tone we use and the words we use. Both are important for giving our document the necessary quality and getting the reaction we want. Although the tone of the letter partly depends on the words we use, it also depends on how we use them. If we set out to be friendly, for example, we shall express ourselves in a way which gives that 'feeling' to our letter. If we are not pleased about something, we shall choose forms of expression which make that clear, just as we do when we are speaking. The most important things to remember in getting our tone correctly is: to be sincere, to be clear and to be brief. [2: 17].

No matter what language we decide to use for our commercial correspondence, there are two things we should never do, under any circumstances.

1. We should never be rude or abrupt. The rule is: even if you are making a complaint, make it politely. Even a final demand for payment can be expressed in courteous terms. Some managers seem to think that memos to their junior colleagues do not matter, and that they can be as rude as they like. But rudeness is not only bad manners. It will not get the reaction we want.

2. We should never be emotional. It is important in business documents that we present facts and reasoned arguments, not emotional outbursts. Of course, we may feel angry about something, but let's wait until our anger has cooled before we write our letter. Otherwise our emotion is likely to get in the way of our writing, and the finished product will not be as effective in achieving the aim we want.

Be sincere. One of the most important things to remember in getting our tone property is to be sincere. Whether we are writing a sales letter, replying to an enquiry or making a complaint, we must believe in what we are saying, and that belief must come through into our writing.

Be clear.

Business document should be as clear, as precise and as direct as possible. The tone, the way we use our words and sentences, can usually help to achieve this.

1. If a particular point is unusual or especially important, it's much better to use short, one-sentence paragraphs, repeat the word or the idea once or twice in short sentences, or even use underlining or block capitals if necessary. But do not become bogged down in long explanations. That will have the opposite effect.

2. Can any of our words be understood more than one way? If you use the word 'sales', for example, is it clear whether you mean sales volume or sales value? And can our readers tell whether an expression like 'improvement in profitability' means increased profits or higher profit margins?

3. Can any of our sentences be understood more than in one way? For example, do not say 'I need to know what our costs will be by the end of the month' if you mean 'I need to know by the end of the month what our costs will be'. The two sentences mean two different things.

4. Do you give all the information required? For example, if you are giving a quotation, have you (a) precisely described the goods or services for which you are quoting;

(b) given the prices and the cost of any extras;

(c) given the delivery date, if appropriate?

Be brief.

Business people do not want to waste time reading through pages of superfluous verbiage. They want information, but they want to be able to absorb it as quickly as possible.

One way of achieving brevity, of course is to use as few words as you can. We should not, however, let brevity get in the way of clarity. If shortening our document makes it incomplete or difficult to follow, then leave it as it is. Nor should we choose brevity before politeness. If using fewer words means omitting some of the courtesies, it is not worth it.

There are three main causes of wordiness in business communications:

1. circumlocution; 2. vague qualifiers; 3. padding. [3: 25]

1. Circumlocution.

This means using a long expression when a short one will do. For example, do not say **'I have caused enquiries to be made with a view to establishing the reasons for our inability to supply your order.'** This can be said quite simply, in fewer than half the words: **'I have enquired into the reasons why we were not able to supply your order.'** Some people think that circumlocution adds weight to their correspondence. It does not.

All it does is make it sound pompous, and add to the length.

2. Vague qualifiers.

These are adjectives and adverbs that do not mean anything. These include 'really', 'good', 'nice' and various other words which are usually used because the writer cannot be bothered to think of anything more precise or simply because they are handy 'fillers'.

What, for example, is a 'really productive meeting'? How much more productive is it than just a 'productive meeting'? Is it as productive as a 'very productive meeting'? Is a 'good' candidate someone who interviews well, someone who is suitable for the job, someone with the right qualifications, or all three?

3. Padding.

This means expressions which serve no useful purpose, but which just fill the document. These include expressions like **'It should be noted that...'** and **'I must say that...'** But beware. Although most such expressions are unnecessary, some can serve a useful purpose. For example, **'You will appreciate that...'** sounds like padding, but it can be used to get the reader on your side. For example, if you want to explain why you are unable to give a customer a higher discount, you can say:

You will appreciate that our discounts are already generous. Our margins are therefore already tight, and any increase in discount would erode them yet further.

This appeals to your customer as a reasonable and intelligent person who will understand these problems.

The right tone for your purposes.

We need to adopt different tones of voice for different kinds of communication, just as we do in speech. So, for example, a letter apologizing for an error needs to be apologetic and conciliatory, a sales letter demanding payment forceful. The key to achieving the right tone is to think of the reaction you want, and to adopt the most appropriate tone.

Not only will your tone change according to the nature of your document, it will also be different for different readers. So, for example, you may ask yourself **'Who is in charge?'** If you are asking a favour, your tone will not be the same as it will if you are making a demand. For example, you might write a memo to your Managing Director as follows:

**I wonder whether you would agree to the company paying something towards the staff's Christmas party this year.**

You might, on the other hand, write as follows to a supplier who has made an error.

**This is the third time I have had to write to you about this matter. I am afraid that if I do not receive a satisfactory reply within the next week, I shall be forced to take the necessary legal action.**

Rudeness often goes hand in hand with emotion, and you should never be emotional in business writing. Argue your case forcefully by all means, show your displeasure if you need to, but do not let emotion dictate the tone of your document. You are very unlikely to get the reaction you want.

The idea of emphasizing the positive side of what you have to say applies whatever kind of communication you are writing. For example, if you have reorganized and you are writing to tell your clients, do not just say: I have writing to tell you about some changes we have made.

If you say: **We have made some changes in our organization which will, I am sure, improve our service to you.**

Then you introduce a positive element which makes a favourable impression on the recipient.

Ending your letter [3: 44].

Our closing paragraph is as important as our opening. This is the last thing our correspondent will read, and the last impression he or she will be left with. In other words by means of the Complimentary Close we express our attitude to the person with whom we correspond. So we have:

— to summarize our position;

— to indicate any action that needs to be taken, and by whom.

Summarizing our position does not mean we should provide a summary of everything we have said; that would be boring. We should simply summarize our views, or how we want your reader to feel. The exact wording we use will obviously depend on the type of letter, but here are a few examples of different summary ending:

**I hope this will help you to understand our position.**

**These are problems I would like to review when we meet.**

**I think you will agree that this is a very special offer.**

The business letter consists of the following parts: [1: 5]

1. Letter head or heading. 2. Reference. 3. Inside name and address. 4. The date. 5. Attention line. 6. Salutation. 7. Subject line. 8. The body of the letter. 9. Complimentary clause. 10. Signature. 11. Enclosure(s). 12. Carbon copy notation. 13. Postscript(s). 14. Identification line.

1. Letter head or heading.

The letter head or heading gives the name of the company, the postal and telegraphic addresses, the telephone number(s), the number of the telex and the telefax number too. Sometimes some other information officials (e. g. directors), the particular officials to whom the company may wish to all communications addressed, spaces for letter indexes. It is becoming increasingly common for firms to print an emblem or trademark on their stationary. If the printed heading is absent, the company's address is typed on the right-hand side of the letter.

2. Reference.

It contains information about the previous correspondence, or any other information that may be useful for me firm.

3. Inside name and address.

This is the address of me person or firm receiving the letter. It is usually typed on the left-hand side of the letter against the margin, all lines started at the same margin. When writing to another country it is necessary always to give the name of the country, even if the town is the country's capital. When we write to a man, we write **Mr. P. Watkins**. When we write to a woman, we write **Mrs. J. Hards**, if the woman is married, and **Miss Smith**, if the woman is unmarried. If we don't know if the woman, we are writing to, is married or not the word **Ms** [miz] should be used. When there is a doubt about the sex of the person receiving the letter, use the word **Mr**. When the correspondent holds a special title such as **Doctor, Professor, Sir**, he is addressed by his title and «**Mr.**» must not be used. When the firm addressed is situated in small town the country (region) name is necessary. It should be noted also, that the number of the street in the address always is written before the name of the street, then are given the name of me town and of the country or me state in the USA, In Gr. Britain no name of me country is required. In Britain the recommended form of postal address has the Post Town in capital letters, followed by the county in small letters, followed by the post code. The use of the code as part of the address speeds the delivery enabling letters to be sorted mechanically. If the letter is addressed to a person whose exact address is unknown, it may be sent to an organization, which can pass the letter on or send it to the person. In these cases the words «**Care of**» should be written before the name of the organization.

4. The date.

In English business letters the date (day, month, year) is typed on the right-hand side below the letter heading. It is customary to type the date in full not just in figures, e.g.

22<sup>nd</sup> Apr(il), 2003. The name of the month may be abbreviated. Only **May** and **July** are written in full. In American business letters the date is written in the following way: Apr.22, 2003. The name of the month should be stated in figures as it may easily be confused, because in the USA it is the practice to write the date as follows: month, date and year. Some firms still insist on a comma before the year, but others consider this unnecessary.

#### 5. Attention line.

If a letter is addressed to a company and the writer wishes to direct it to a particular person or department, which deals with this matter, the words «**For attention**» or just «**Attention of**» or «**Att**» in abbreviation (giving the stuff position of a person) should be typed just above the salutation.

#### 6. The salutation.

The salutation there is according to circumstances and should be in harmony with the Inside Address. The salutation is typed double spacing below the Inside Address at the left-hand side of the page. This is the greeting with which every letter begins. Use a comma after it. If you know the name of the person you are writing to use it in the salutation: **Dear Mr. Jackson, Dear Miss Blake, and Dear Mrs. Smith.**

If you don't know the name, begin with: Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Sirs (to more than one person and to all limited companies) and Gentlemen (in American English with a colon instead of a comma).

#### 7. The subject line.

The subject line indicates the subject-matter of the letter (its topic), thus enabling the reader to see immediately what the letter is about and it is placed just after below the salutation in the middle of the page. «**Abt.**» (for short) or «**About**» may be used. This part of a letter however is not always required as the first line of the body of the letter. There can be indicated (explained) enough of what subject is. If the subject line is used it may be underlined or sometimes typed in capital letters.

#### 8. The body of the letter.

The body text has to be short and to the point. It usually consists of three parts:

1. Introduction. (Here you state your reason for writing.)
2. Main part. (Here you develop the principle idea of the letter.)
3. Conclusion. (Here you sum up.)

It is acceptable to underline or write in thick print the sums of money. It is also prohibited to make the shortenings such as: **I'm, don't, we've** and etc.

#### 9. Complimentary clause.

Complimentary clause is a polite way of ending a letter. The expression used must suit the occasion and match the salutation. Complimentary clause depends on how well you know the reader: formal, semi-formal, polite-fee distant.

The standard (formal) form is «**Yours faithfully**», semi-formal (used between people who know each other and to add a friendly touch to a business letters) is «**Yours sincerely**». So express a little warmer feeling that «**Yours sincerely**» and «**Yours very sincerely**» is used an American form «**Yours truly**». **Faithfully yours, Sincerely yours, Truly yours** are not recommended to be used (though they can be found in American business letters). Complimentary clause is typed on the left-hand side below the body of the letter after double spacing.

#### 10. The signature.

Business letters should be signed by hand and in ink clearly and legibly. The same style must always be adopted. You cannot sign **J. Smith** in one case and **John Smith** in another. The writer's name and official's position are typed below the signature. The name of the company or the organization for which the writer signs the letter is typed under the complimentary clause above the signature.

If a writer signs a letter on behalf of a company or on behalf of another person the words «**per. pro. = p. pro = p. p.**» (short for «**pure procuracionem**») is used before the name. The person signing the letter is empowered by a proper legal document to sign letters or other documents.

#### 11. The enclosure(s).

There is an enclosure to the letter, it should be clearly indicated by typing the word «**Enclosure**» or its abbreviation «**Enc.**» in the bottom left-hand corner of the page below the signature. It may be preceded or followed by a figure indication the number of the enclosure if there is more than one and the name of the documents in them and the number of pages.

12. Identification line.

It consists of the initials of the person who signs the letter (and often dictates it) and those of the typist.

13. Carbon copy notation.

If there copies of the letters to be sent to other addresses it is indicated under the enclosure. Sometimes you will not want the named recipient to know that other people have received copies. In this case **b.c.c.** (blind carbon copies) is written on the copies themselves though not of course on the top copy.

14. Postscripts.

Postscript(s) should be used as an emergency not as a conclusion only when the information to be conveyed comes to hand after the letter proper has been completed. Otherwise, it is a sign of bad construction of the letter. Postscript(s) is abbreviated to **P.S.** An additional postscript is labeled **P.P.S.**

Conclusion. A modern economy needs people who know how to manage business in a competitive environment and how to communicate effectively. Study of letters and documents used in legal and business transactions is not the only skill one might need to initiate and develop business contacts. Business English course should give the students the basic business knowledge and should offer a realistic approach to many of the topic and situations that students will encounter in their future careers. And we only suggest to begin the studying of Business English course with the reading and writing of simple commercial letter and mastering the peculiarities of the English business correspondence. The materials can be used as part of a language course for students, future specialists in International Management and Business Administration.

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*О. А. Румянцева*

### СТРУКТУРА АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО ДІЛОВОГО ЛИСТА

Статтю присвячено проблемі досягнення правильного стилю в написанні ділових комерційних листів. У ній ретельно досліджена кожна частина бізнес-листа, а також стиль та лексика, що використовується в діловій кореспонденції.

**Ключові слова:** англійська мова, стиль письма, ділові листи.

*О. А. Румянцева*

### СТРУКТУРА АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО ДЕЛОВОГО ПИСЬМА

Статья посвящена проблеме достижения правильного стиля при написании деловых коммерческих писем. Автор детально рассматривает каждую часть бизнес-письма, стиль и лексику, используемую в деловой переписке.

**Ключевые слова:** английский язык, стиль письма, деловая переписка.