

Review of *A Crash Course in Business Writing* Written by Antonia Enache

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The study *A Crash Course in Business Writing*, written by Prof. Antonia Enache, represents a valuable tool for all professionals looking to improve their business writing skills and broaden the range of abilities they can capitalize on on the labour market, in the business landscape today, characterized by fierce competition, increased interactivity and transactions unfolding at an accelerated pace.

In the business arena, clear and effective communication is a mandatory skill. Poorly written documents not only make the writer appear sloppy, shallow and unprofessional, they can also damage a company's reputation long-term and lead to potentially successful partnerships falling through. By contrast, a well-written document, that is, a piece of writing that is adequately crafted in terms of language accuracy and range of vocabulary, also incorporates elements pertaining to emotional intelligence, it prioritizes ideas, structures the information so that what is crucial is highlighted and what is irrelevant is removed, makes ideas follow logically from one another and, perhaps most importantly, addresses the recipient in such a way that they feel valued, they feel that their perspective is also important to the writer, their positive face is flattered, so that eventually, a win-win deal can be concluded. The aspects mentioned do not make for a comprehensive list; however, they are all necessary in what has been called *effective communication*, a key skill whereby information is exchanged with clarity, empathy and insight.

For a business professional, becoming acquainted with the key rules of effective communication translates into a significant number of advantages, out of which the following appear to be essential. Firstly, it

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saves time and boosts efficiency. Beginners often don't know where and how to start drafting their document; at this point, having a relevant textbook at their disposal would prove really helpful, also reducing the time subsequently spent on revisions. Secondly, they may find it difficult to juggle different writing styles, to switch from the formal to the semiformal register, or to grasp the differences between writing with a specific audience in mind (such as with a letter or a report) or with a larger, unknown audience in mind (such as when writing for social media). The current research helps shed light on these subtle nuances that even proficient users of English may have difficulties understanding and applying. Thirdly, effective writing is of the essence when communicating with clients, suppliers, managers and business partners, as it involves difficult tasks like informing, persuading, or even making the recipient completely change their views. The more the interests of the parties involved in communication (writer and recipient) collide, the more difficult it is to reach a common ground.

On a related note, effective communication greatly contributes to defusing tense situations and even to resolving conflicts, should they happen to arise. When one is dealing with delicate situations, such as when writing complaints or collection letters, or responding to unhappy customers and making amends, these situations must be tackled diplomatically and professionally, the writer has to be able to control their emotions and focus on the facts at stake and on possible solutions, and to remain positive in their approach. Only thus can good business relationships be maintained. We believe that strong writing skills can make a significant contribution to setting professionals apart in the workplace and can make those who master this ability stand out and gain access to better career opportunities.

Against this background, the research *A Crash Course in Business Writing* represents a remarkable study, a must-have for business professionals and students alike. To begin with, the book stands out due to its comprehensive coverage – it includes a wide range of business writing types that are different in many ways, from the register used (formal, semi-formal or even informal) to the audience targeted and the purpose of the document. We believe that one of the book's main strengths resides in the fact that it includes "traditional" documents like letters and reports, that have changed very little over the years, as well as more modern formats

pertaining to the digital world, such as blogs and social media posts – this association makes it a very original, highly versatile study.

In *Part 1, A Few General Remarks on Business Writing Nowadays*, the author tackles the elusive concept of “good” business writing, explaining what is understood by it nowadays, how good business writing incorporates both hard skills (accurate language use) and soft skills (empathetic communication), and also delves into the most commonly known language registers, explaining how, over the past few years, due mainly to the momentum gained by the internet, communication in all professional fields has shifted from the formal to the semi-formal register. Examples are given that illustrate the points made by the author.

In *Parts 2 - 6*, the author looks into the most commonly used types of business letters today. *Part 2* focuses on enquiries, providing general guidelines, illustrations and samples taken from credible international sources, while in *parts 3 and 4*, Ms Enache tackles replies, quotations and orders, respectively. We are given details about discounts, delivery, and negotiation tips, alongside examples and the analysis thereof. *Part 4, Orders*, also provides extensive information on how orders are generally handled by marketers, either by accepting or by rejecting them. *Part 5, Letters Chasing Payment*, explains one of the most delicate documents one ever has to write in business, the collection letter, and we are skilfully walked through the various types of letters chasing payment, from the milder to the most incisive one, so we can understand the crescendo that goes with a writer’s increasing suspicions that they may have been deceived. The final chapter tackling letters, *Part 6*, deals with complaints and adjustments. Similar to the collection letter, a letter of complaint is difficult to craft, as the writer is legitimately upset and has to try hard to put forward an objective, fact-based account of what has happened rather than let their emotions take over. Equally, writing an adjustment requires tact and self-control, since the writer thereof is often put on the defensive and has to make the difficult choice of whether to accept or reject the complaint, taking into account a wide range of factors, ranging from the issue at stake to how long the business relationship has been and how important it is to them.

In *Part 7*, Prof. Enache remains within the realm of traditional business communication, as she analyses reports and proposals, how they are written and what main challenges they pose for the writer. For these specific types of documents, the main difficulties arise from structuring

information in a very clear way, in sections and sub-sections, using headings and sub-headings, and from eliminating all unnecessary information and all unnecessary words. Prioritization, therefore, emerges as a crucial characteristic of reports and proposals.

In sections 8-10, the author shifts towards a category of documents that are markedly different from those analysed up until this point. Thus, in *Part 8*, she looks into writing for blogs, websites and social media. This chapter is, we believe, crucially important nowadays, as the author highlights how online communication is different from traditional communication, primarily in terms of register (less formal) and audience (complex and heterogeneous). However, other aspects are analysed, such as the fact that internet writing caters for shorter attention spans and for a highly interactive, community-building environment. The examples given are real-life and can, to this day, be found online; they help to illustrate the theoretical points made by the author.

In *Part 9*, Ms. Enache tackles press releases and their importance nowadays, as they are written to boost a company's image by either informing the public about a positive event (such as opening a new subsidiary) or a negative one (such as a product recall). The author skilfully identifies the characteristics of this document, lying at the border between business and media communication; again, the chapter is equipped with real-life examples. Last but not least, in *Part 10*, the author analyses the hybrid genre of the advertorial, showcasing both its similarities to traditional advertising (such as transparency as to its goal) and the differences therefrom (such as its resemblance to a journalistic genre, the editorial). Incorporating elements pertaining to fact, to opinion and to persuasion, the advertorial stands out as an atypical type of document that an accomplished business professional should know how to write.

As can be seen from the description above, the research provides comprehensive, practical insights into business writing, thus qualifying as a helpful tool for both beginners and experienced writers. Its bringing together elements pertaining to traditional communication and elements pertaining to communication in the digital age represents, in our opinion, one of the book's unrivalled strengths. The style is engaging and accessible, information is presented in a readable manner, the books avoids being overly academic or too dry, thus targeting professionals (irrespective of their level), students and anyone wishing to improve their business writing skills.

If we were to identify potential areas for improvement, we could say that the book might benefit from more industry-specific examples (such as, for instance, legal vs. retail); however, that would deviate from the original purpose of the research, which is to target business professionals across the board. Another area where we believe improvements could be made, pertains to the lack of self-assessment sections and of interactive or digital resources, as the study does not include any exercises or downloadable materials, thus missing out on a promising opportunity in the digital age. Last but not least, in order to read and understand the study, one needs a certain level of English proficiency; it is not suitable for beginner users of English, nor does it provide simplified explanations or grammar tips, which restricts its accessibility to an international audience; however, we believe that, when writing this book, the author specifically targeted proficient users of English.

To conclude, we believe that *A Crash Course in Business Writing* by Prof. Antonia Enache stands out as a valuable resource for business professionals, students, and anyone wishing to improve their business communication skills and to adjust their writing so as to adequately respond to the audience, the context, and the overall purpose of writing. It puts forward an approach that is as comprehensive as it is thorough and insightful, covering both traditional and modern, digital-age business documents. Thus, the author makes sure that readers fully grasp and apply effective communication strategies in various contexts. While the research could potentially benefit from more industry-specific examples and from adding exercises and interactive resources, its unrivalled strengths undoubtedly outweigh the minor drawbacks. The book bridges the gap between traditional and modern writing, thus emerging as an essential guide, a must-have in today's fast-paced, fiercely competitive business arena. It equips readers with the fundamental tools needed to communicate effectively, clearly, empathetically and impactfully with the ever fickle, ever more versatile and unpredictable audiences worldwide.