

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

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The study *A Crash Course in Business Writing* by Antonia Enache, published by Editura Universitară in 2023, stands out due to the comprehensive coverage it provides of a wide range of business topics, topics that are essential for adequately functioning in the business arena today. In the age of digital communications, against the background of an ever more intensive appeal to the props provided by Artificial Intelligence, this research puts forward the notions of basic business writing in a simple, yet insightful manner. Thus, we believe it is a very useful tool for business students, but also for employees working in the field, as well as for teachers and for professionals aiming to communicate effectively at any level.

The study begins by tackling the issue of business writing nowadays (Part 1: *A Few General Remarks on Business Writing Nowadays*). The author insightfully points out that communication in modern times has shifted across the board – hence, it is not only in business but in other fields as well, such as politics or the academic world, that we can notice a marked shift towards a less formal register. There are several reasons identified for this shift, out of which the most important appears to be the fact that communication in this day and age takes place almost exclusively online, where people tend to behave in a way that is less strict and more casual (the author refers to the disinhibition effect of the internet). As a consequence, documents that used to be very rigorous and formal, such as letters or reports, have now taken a step down towards the semiformal register. The chapter explains the registers generally acknowledged to apply in language and communication and identifies exactly, by providing concrete examples, how documents used in professional settings have changed in terms of language choices. Last but not least, Prof. Enache stresses the importance of rightfully identifying the audience / the recipients of a document and of adjusting the writing accordingly, as well as the important role that emotional factors play when one reads and interprets a document that qualifies as good writing. Good writing covers not only correctness or accuracy, which go without saying, but also factors such as adequacy, efficiency and the coherent organisation of ideas. The final part of this chapter provides some insights into crafting business letters, once again taking into account the fact that communication nowadays takes place mostly online and emails have gradually replaced letters in all fields of activity.

Part 2, *Enquiries*, puts forward the fundamental notions required to write the respective types of letters. The author points out that enquiries can occur both as B2B and as B2C, and gives practical examples that come both from older, classic business

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communication textbooks and from very recent ones. The various types of discounts are discussed, and samples are provided that cover several situations in which enquiries are necessary. The samples are analysed in-depth, with a focus on who the writer and the recipient are, what the context is and on other particular specifics of each case.

Part 3, *Replies and Quotations*, emerges as a natural sequel of Part 2, as these types of letters are almost always intertwined. This chapter covers the way in which companies respond to enquiries, in an attempt to advertise for their products and services and to boost sales. The importance of being truthful, open and transparent cannot be overestimated – in business, being deceptive towards the customers is possibly the worst thing a company can do. Again, we are given a wide array of samples, as well as practical examples that cover multiple situations. The samples are analysed in a thorough, insightful manner, and the importance of providing all the necessary information while not falling into the trap of information overload is highlighted. The chapter also mentions some of the most widely used methods of payment, possible discounts, and Incoterms. All the necessary sections of the letters are described and explained, and even negotiations are delved into – namely, the way in which the seller and the buyer, who have potentially colliding interests, blend firmness and compromise in an attempt to close a lucrative, mutually beneficial deal.

This section of the study would not be complete without Part 4, *Orders*, since this is the part that signals the fact that an agreement has been reached and the above-mentioned deal has been closed. The readers are given a thorough explanation of what an order must include: a full description of the products, the quantities, prices, preferred methods of payment and any other details that a specific situation may require. Here, too, we have samples analysed in detail, and the chapter also tackles the way in which an order is dealt with – either by acceptance or by rejection. If an order is accepted, the impact for a business might be important and long-lasting, since all sellers aim for repeat orders and loyal customers and the first order has the potential to open that door. Conversely, if the order is rejected, this may represent a significant drawback in the business relationship, possibly ending it, therefore, an explanation must be given that makes sense yet saves, if possible, the recipient's face. Tactful business communication may be a difficult task, especially in situations involving disagreement and even conflict – Part 4 of the research comprehensively discusses the various situations that may occur and explains how to deal with each in a professional and efficient manner.

Part 5, *Payment*, explores the delicate subject of retrieving money you are owed, something that is known to happen in the business arena and is also famously difficult to handle, due to its conflict-raising potential. The chapter looks into collection letters from a practical viewpoint: when a creditor is owed money and they are trying to recoup it, they start from the assumption that the debtor is acting in good faith and something extraneous may have precluded them from settling their account. This initial assumption further explains the gradual pressure that collection letters aim to put on debtors, by starting in a friendly way and progressing towards a firmer tone when ill-faith is suspected. The chapter, again, resorts to accurate examples interpreted and explained, revealing how a collection letter should be crafted depending on the facts a writer has at a certain point in time, but also how it should be replied to, in order to defuse a potentially problematic situation. All in all, knowing how to behave in a crisis may be the backbone of any long-lasting business partnership.

Part 6, *Complaints and adjustments*, constitutes the last chapter dedicated to letters. It provides insights into some of the most commonly written types of letters,

that can also be B2B or B2C. In the author's view, complaints are also very difficult to write (similarly to collection letters), due to the challenging task of staying calm and containing your emotions when you are obviously upset and feel you have been wronged. Under these circumstances, still, it is of the utmost importance to remain professional and to write solely based on facts, rather than on overwhelming emotions. Prof. Enache points out that the more deceptive a company has been towards its customers, the more legitimacy a complaint carries, and examples are given that support this view. Additionally, the chapter looks into adjustments, which are responses to complaints, and we can see that, broadly speaking, when faced with a complaint, a company has two choices: they can either accept the complaint (if they believe they have made a mistake) and make amends towards the customer, or they can reject the complaint (if they believe they have done nothing wrong), in which case they should, however, attempt to provide an explanation as to why things went awry. Explained examples are provided for both situations, and the way in which people have to write so as to tactfully convey fact-based decisions and professionalism against a potentially hostile background comes across as the crucial characteristic of well-written complaints and adjustments.

In part 7, *Reports and Proposals*, readers become acquainted with the respective types of documents. The author explains them in detail, referring to the similarities between them, as well as to the differences that are commonly believed to exist (such as the fact that reports are about the past whereas proposals are about the future, reports aim to inform whereas proposals aim to persuade, etc.), while also pointing out that, in reality, the line between them might be thinner than in textbooks. Guidelines are given for both, the difference between fact and opinion is yet again emphasized, and the examples provided include both general reports and proposals and business ones. The final part of the chapter illustrates how, in this domain, too, we are confronted with a marked shift towards the semi-formal register instead of the stricter, formal one.

With the final three parts of the research, we can witness a detour from what is considered traditional business communication (which takes place between a writer and a clear recipient), in that Prof. Enache tackles communication that still pertains to business (as it aligns with the final goal of selling), but is more general and more modern in nature, takes place primarily over the internet and targets a wider, less specific audience, thus functions pursuant to a different set of rules than correspondence between two companies. Part 8, *Writing for Websites, Blogs and Social Media*, covers the very topical subject of how to stand out before audiences online, since it is well-known that online marketing is the most commonly spread form of marketing nowadays. The chapter begins by emphasizing the main differences between traditional and online communication, differences that stem from a wide array of factors ranging from who the audience is to how people behave in online interactions; hence, one of the most important challenges of writing in an online setting pertains to striking the right balance between the casual, interactive style of the internet and the inherent need to remain professional. The language and content of online communication are discussed, and the points made are reinforced by resorting to real-life examples. The samples provided include recent extracts from websites, business blogs and social media posts, all aiming to show how companies pursue customers online and what strategies they resort to in order to make the latter trust them and come back. In today's business world, when communication appears to be paradoxically more difficult and lines

increasingly blurrier, Prof Enache's take on online business communication stands out as a must-read.

Part 9, *Press Releases*, analyses the ways in which companies attempt to convey an important message to their potential customers and to society at large. Press releases initially appeared in the written press, but in today's fast-changing world they, too, have shifted towards the internet, since most newspapers exist online as well. The author shows that, while there may be cases when companies issue press releases simply for publicity, there is generally something very specific they may wish to transmit, either good news (such as the opening of a new factory or the launch of a new product), but more importantly, press releases are of the essence when there is bad news to convey (such as a faulty product, the closing of a factory or impactful lay-offs). The press release, therefore, acts as a powerful connection between the company and its potential customers, represents an efficient way of improving the former's image or of saving face, and its importance in today's business arena should not be underestimated. Last but not least, the final part, *Advertorials*, approaches a hybrid genre that is being increasingly used, as it combines skilful writing and the pursuit of customers in new, enticing ways. The author emphasizes the self-explanatory combination between editorial and advertising, showing how this kind of document stands out in that, while it overtly represents paid content, it is written in a style very different from traditional advertising. Advertorials may be the only types of business documents where appeals to emotion are not only acceptable, but almost necessary, being part of the process of bonding with the reader. The chapter provides real-life examples (parts 8, 9 and 10 all do), showcasing the beautiful alignment of information and emotion, blending in an atypical attempt to attract customers, where even the call-to-action may be implied rather than explicit. This unusual type of content spawns a feeling of intimacy between writer and reader, wherein the latter is seduced by the hope of a product's quality, by emotions skilfully aroused, and by the beauty of language, equally.

All in all, the study *A Crash Course in Business Writing* by Dr. Antonia Enache is remarkable, useful and entertaining in today's world. Its concept is new, original and insightful: not only does it tackle the most commonly written types of traditional business documents, such as various types of letters, reports and proposals, but it also covers new forms of writing (such as writing for the internet) and even hybrid genres like advertorials. By looking into a wide array of documents that are different in terms of language, style and content, the author puts forward a versatile, highly insightful analysis. The readers are offered practical examples, clear distinctions, tips and guidelines for business communication in general and for each document in particular. The content is up-to-date, with the potential to contribute to the professional growth of both students in economics and company employees who are looking to enhance their writing skills. We learn that communication for business is different from traditional communication in more ways than one, as in the former, less is usually more, too much information may backfire, while the message has to remain clear, factual and to the point at all times. Even opinions are based on facts and almost never on emotions (with the notable exception of advertorials). For all the reasons above and many more, the study *A Crash Course in Business Writing* is a must-read for all students in economics and for all employees looking to improve their most marketable skills.