

## Transcription Doc

### Guidelines to Business Writing

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## Video 1

### **Speaker: David F. Poritzky**

Now we're going to spend some time on business writing. In a business context you might be required to communicate in the written format, in various forms, depending on the type of communication or the way you're communicating. You might be required to write reports or emails or business letters, memos, performance proposals etc.

The level of formality in each document depends on the type of document you are writing and the audience that you're writing for. Your legal documents, your office documents, your memoranda, interrelated emails, these all fall on the formal end of the spectrum. These modes of communication have a particular format that needs to be followed. Legal documents by definition are the most formal of all these communication items and need to be paid special attention to.

As communications become less formal, the rules of the road can be relaxed just a little bit. Messaging and Facebook, Twitter, these are elements of informal communication and do not necessarily follow a particular format. Their usage in business communication is often restricted and is often not used as a standalone way to convey business information. That said, sometimes it is and we want to be careful of that.

For example, if you want to schedule a meeting with your team, you might send an email or a proper calendar invitation. You might also send a WhatsApp or text message, so that the people who miss seeing the email will be alerted to the meeting. You might just simply inject the meeting into someone else's calendar.

Since business communication often falls on the more formal end of that spectrum, let's explore some different rules and ways of writing formal context. Anyone who reads a document written by you will judge you in a sense on the quality of that document, therefore it is extremely important that you convey your point across in the way that you want to be seen and understood. A perfectly

written business document should have these four qualities. One, it should be direct. Get right to the point, don't beat around the bush.

Two it should be logical. Instead of using emotional words such as I feel, where I believe or it should be, use data points and facts to convey your recommendations and suggested next steps. Three, be concise, let's not go into unnecessary detail while we're trying to get our main points across. And four, it should be clear.

Remember, written communication has to stand on its own regardless of who's reading the document or who the original intended audience was, so make sure that the document is easy to understand with limited, if any, scope for misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Having these four qualities in your business document will help to ensure that your message is conveyed accurately, concisely and effectively to the intended audience. Now let's take a look at how to construct those underlying arguments and help your document become as effective as possible.

Often we're intimidated when we have a communications task in front of us, we have to write a report or a slide deck or a series of drawn out conclusions and sometimes we just don't know where to start. Often in business communication, quite frankly just like in grade school assignments or any other written situation, it helps to break down the process into stages into components.

The first step often involves gathering all the necessary information needed for your document, all the data, statistics, the information as you can, brainstorming if you need researching, interacting with different stakeholders, collect these opinions and organise them in the best way possible. This becomes the original or rough source of your document. After this information gathering comes the emphasis on the organizing piece, make a rough draft and start structuring your content in a way that might build the argument from a more logical perspective. Decide on how you're going to begin and how you're going to end, in this case you're injecting a storytelling component into your business writing.

At the same time, keep a clear eye on what paragraphs you're going to include and what key ideas are going to be denoted by each paragraph. We want to be economical with our writing and at this stage we're starting to be mindful of volume and length. Now comes the writing part, we're now taking these ideas in this rough draft and we're developing the designated paragraph, so we are sure that there's a proper flow, not only within the paragraphs but between the paragraphs. One idea should logically lead to the next.

A truly successful written document is such where the reader jumps to the conclusion of microsecond or nanosecond before you reach that in front of him or her, not only does that help the reader follow along with the logical argument but it gives the reader a sense of accomplishment that they've somehow figured out what you're going to say right before you say. The final stage is editing. First of all, proofread. As I say in my classes all the time, written communication should aim for perfection, anything short of perfection is a potential distraction from the message. A single typo

or spelling mistake or incorrect element of incorrect grammar, faulty punctuation, even what we used to refer to as smudge marks in the days of paper and ink, make sure that doesn't happen because those are the easy distractions to avoid. Beyond that, edit your document for style, for clarity, perhaps go through one proofread and then put it down, leave it for a few hours if you have the luxury of time and then proofread it again.

You'll be able to view it with the equivalent of fresh eyes. Of course if you're constrained for time, perhaps you come up with a workaround, you leave it for a shorter period of time or you invite a friend or a colleague to review the information, especially if it's not proprietary or classified. In all of these cases, you want to do as much as you can to tighten the document, to make the document concise, effective, have as few distractions as possible and therefore have the greatest impact possible. Good luck.

## Video 2

### **Speaker: David F. Poritzky**

Now we're going to talk about email which has indeed emerged as a prominent form of formal business communication, but also serves many informal purposes as well. I can honestly lay claim to being an early adopter of email. When I was in high school in the late 1980s, we had an exchange program with a similar high school in Moscow, whereby we would write messages by hand, our teacher would collect those messages and then have to type them into a desktop computer - keyboard or desktop computer.

Buttons would be pressed, phone lines with buzz and then somehow those messages would end up in Moscow on a similar desktop computer where a teacher would then have to read them, print them out, cut them into different pieces, distribute them. Students would read them, respond in pen, and the process would continue. 30 years later, I can honestly say those poor teachers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

But fast forward, all this time and email now occupies a dominant place in society and specifically in workplace communications. Certainly it is no longer the newest or sleekest way to communicate. We have many short form messages and applications that have usurped email in that regard. At the same time it does serve a series of very specific functions in today's business communications marketplace. In summary, email has replaced the written memorandum as the dominant form of official business communication. In other words, when we're communicating on the record and we and we want to create what we used to call a paper trail we generally send emails back and forth to one another.

It documents the conversations we have and the communications that we're having, one with another. At the same time, this respected tool of communications occupies a place in your inbox

next to informal notes, long conversation strings, retailer mailings, and yes, off collar sales promotions.

And, sure, Gmail and related tools have developed many tools to organize and filter your email inboxes so that you only see what you're supposed to see but as you know better than I, these tools are not perfect and we still have to grapple with what has become the stuffed Postal box of the 21st century. So, given that these emails may or may not be read and may or may not be taken seriously or may even end up in junk mail heaven, do we still need to take care when writing? In a word, yes.

Because email is indeed that dominant form of business communication and we do want to make sure that any record of our communication is intact, in the way we want it to be, and yes there are articles and even books telling you how to write the perfect email and how to craft the perfect form of communication and many of them are very good. Let's spend a few minutes outlining some basic principles. Some email basics. One: know your addressees.

Know who is receiving this email not only who is addressed on your email but who might be receiving it indirectly, to whom might this be passed along informally. Know also that you get these addresses right, watch for the typos. In these days of auto type and auto correct, how many emails have you gotten that are really intended for someone with the same last name or perhaps with a last name starting with the same first two letters as your last name? So be sure that the address is on your email or the addresses that you intend to send them to. Subject line.

A compelling subject line is often the difference between an email ending up in a spam box or in your primary folder. Whether it's a computer algorithm or just somebody's fast moving eyeballs filtering the messages, you want to make sure the subject line is clear and to the point, not too friendly because it may be confused with a piece of junk mail. Make sure there is perfect punctuation and spelling, as you know many spam emails for some reason tend to be misspelling words or using improper punctuation.

Make sure you don't have the caps lock on or you commit any other inadvertent keyboard set, but make the subject line be as direct and straightforward and also do it as good a job as you can as indicating what might come in the email itself.

Be direct in your email communications, get right to the point. It's just like a 30 second pitch or any other short form communications exercise. That first paragraph. Every email is arguably the one paragraph that gets read, so make sure you get right to the point especially if there's an ask involved. Be succinct as we said before you want to get the main point across quickly and effectively and to that matter, even a second paragraph may start to tax your readers' attention span, 3rd or 4th 5th paragraph does that even more.

Be succinct and get right to the point, you'll have plenty of time to expand later on. Don't be funny, plus you're funny and that is a big risk to take in a written communications medium, even bigger when you're dealing with email and especially a plaintext medium where an email may be read on a device, on a desktop or laptop computer, even on a watch, so you really have very little control in terms of how your email is viewed and sometimes that makes it even harder to inject concepts like sarcasm or humor.

So when in doubt, be direct and don't be funny, unless you are absolutely sure that what you're saying has the right degree of humor and then again be careful. And finally, keeping even tone. As mentioned before, your email could be read on a variety of different devices, in a variety of different formats, with a variety of different amounts of visibility onto the screen. In other words, someone reading it on a watch may only see four or five words, somebody seeing it on a laptop computer may see the entire email body and certainly everything in between. So your tone should be even throughout.

So that the tone evident in those three words is the same tone that's evident in the email as a whole. One small item that will point out, albeit with a little bit of humor is the importance of getting the salutation or greeting right. Beyond the subject lines, it is your next chance for your spam filter or algorithm or your own eyes and ears and brains to filter out the noise or the unimportant email messages. So for example, a dear David subject line can be often misspelled with the wrong surname or perhaps an incorrect database association.

I know right away that I'm on someone's junk email list or on someone's mail merge list if all of a sudden I see my first same last name together or I see my last name first name reversed and keep in mind that many cultures have different ways of presenting one's first name or given name or last name or surname and we want to be mindful of that especially in a universal mail merge concept. We often have missing names that could be the subject of a database error happening 10 steps before that email was ever conceived. We may have different definitions of gender or formality for example seeing an overly formal or even an informal Hi Dave!!!, may detract from the seriousness of a message, if it was indeed meant to be serious. In all over the last 25 or 30 years, email has certainly occupied a place in our business communication spectrum, and whether it's a proxy for official communications or even legal communications or just as a way to get your informal greeting across more effectively or more in depth, email can still be an invaluable resource to you and your colleagues for many years to come.

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