

# Business writing skills needed more now than ever

According to the McKinsey Global Institute's research, the average employee spends two and a half hours per day dealing with emails, which is equivalent to 81 working days every year or a quarter of the average working life. According to O2 Business in the UK, the average worker spends 288 hours a year, writing emails and sends more than 4,000 in the process.



Michael Walker

Businesses require employees to have strong business writing skills. These skills are the backbone of a company and can be the deciding factor as to whether or not customers choose one company over another.

Michael Walker, the owner of Language Boss, says that although most employees spend the majority of their time communicating via email, many do not possess good writing skills, which are essential in the modern workplace.

"Communication is the core of every business and in order for businesses and their employees to thrive in the 21st century, employees need to master email writing skills and use email as the sharp business tool it is. Not only will it help unlock employee value and productivity but also contribute towards the business' bottom line."

We have evolved into a keyboard generation, which sees us writing more now than ever before thanks to technology - from laptops to iPads and cellphones. "With this, bad writing habits have formed, such as writing in sentence fragments, punctuating incorrectly and using inappropriate abbreviations. These bad habits are transferred into email writing, which together with spelling errors, bad tone and poor choice of words, ultimately reflect badly on the employee and on the company and can be detrimental to the business."

## Costing reputations

He says that poorly written emails can convey the wrong message and tone to the customer and can imply that the employee is unprofessional and incompetent. "This says a lot about how a business is run and can be costly to the company's reputation."

"Often employees write emails which make sense to themselves, but not to the reader. This is often because they struggle to see their message from the reader's perspective. Employees need to be able to compose reader-centred emails, which are written with the reader in mind. Although employees tend to try to write in a complex and impressive way because they believe it shows sophistication in thinking, plain language is at the heart of good business writing."

Walker notes that email writing skills, like any skill, can be improved and that businesses have the power to help employees improve this skillset with training programmes and courses. "The company offers face-to-face and online courses that assist employees to become reader-centred in their writing, increase the impact of their writing and develop a professional writing style. This is one of the few training programmes in the country that focuses on developing email writing skills specifically."

## Top seven tips

He shares his top seven tips to write an effective email, which if matched with the correct training, will have a significant impact on employee communication intelligence, efficiency, productivity, professionalism and, ultimately, career success:

1. When writing, put the reader first, before the subject or situation. Work hard to understand who the reader is and what information they need to understand the subject or situation.
2. Ask yourself what the key message of your email is and don't start writing until you can recite the message in 15 seconds or less. This key message should be conveyed at the beginning of your email.
3. Ensure that the subject line is a condensed version of your key message.
4. Write in full sentences not sentence fragments.
5. Learn how to properly use the comma and the apostrophe.
6. Work hard to be courteous in an email.
7. Finally, remember what Samuel Johnson (an 18th Century writer, literary historian and lexicographer) said: "What is written without effort is in general read without pleasure."

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