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International Business Correspondence



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PREFACE

International business correspondences are not simply writing or information exchange. It is something that you want others to know about you. To know about your business and the way you deal with business transactions. It is by the way you create your letter that your reader can identify if you are friendly, rude, or you just simply want to do business. Your letter shows an attitude. This is one reason why it is important to consider your way of writing, write professionally and with courtesy. Success of business transactions is not only dependent on your ability to talk and communicate verbally, but also the way you communicate in letters. How important is leaning the proper way of writing business letters? It is one of the priorities. That's how important it is. You need to learn how to make an effective and successful business letter. This book will help you to make your written communications to improve and to be effective. This is by guiding you through the steps and guidelines of making an effective letter. Aside from that, you will learn to see that planning is important. Gathering information and doing some research will help you. As you go through this book, you'll be able to see the areas of business letters where it is critical to answer complaints, it will save you to make adjustments, it is important and friendly to reply to inquiries, it is good to be precise in your quotations, it is proper to acknowledge placed orders or acknowledge payment, it is worth to check all outgoing orders for shipment and delivery, it is important to have an insurance policy, it is tedious to deal internationally without bank transactions, and it is by connection that you can increase your sales. You need to connect to your customers and readers in order to build a good working relationship. If you are able to establish a good relationship, they will value you as their business partners. Skills in creating business letter are important in the success of your business. Business letter writing skills will also boost your confidence as a businessman and will help boost your business as well.

For globally competitive business firms, writing an effective international business letter is as important as keeping your customer satisfied. Because most part of international transactions are not communicated by talking on the phone all the time, considering overseas calls are expensive, but in written communications. The purpose of this book is to provide a good foundation in making international business correspondences by detailing the facts and providing practical practices involved in international business correspondences.

This book aims to help students to develop their skills and confidence in writing international business letters. This can also be served as a reference for students in the college and university levels.

This book has been designed, compiled and written to help provide help to people who are not only dealing with business in their locality but also internationally. This will not only provide theories but practical examples. The book concentrates on international business letters particularly in the area of Sales, Inquiry, Order, Complaint, Adjustment, Payment, Transportation and Shipment, Insurance, and Banking.

The main text is divided into eleven chapters:

1. International Business Letter Writing
2. International business letter structure
3. Sales letter
4. Inquiry letter
5. Order letter
6. Complaint letter
7. Adjustment letter
8. Payment letter
9. Transportation and Shipping Letter
10. Insurance Letter
11. Banking Letter

International business transaction is impossible to be done without business letters. It always involves business written communication. As the above topics are to be covered, it is very important to note that business success will continue to come as you allow development and growth in your business. One factor to consider is your written communication. International business correspondence is an essential part of business.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

International business respondents for all is designed for students of commerce, businessmen and businesswomen, and people from other walks of life. An executive, a department manager, a salesman, a secretary or a specialist in business technology will inevitably have to write English letters. Beyond this, there is a need for communication with many customers who will want to purchase products from abroad. This book presents readers with exemplary letters and phrases quintessential to business matters. The letters in this book cover many areas of international business communication. Although writing is a solitary task, the concerted effort of many individuals is needed to transform an author's words into a book. Many committed and talented people have contributed to the success of this book. It is impossible to thank all of them here, but I sincerely wish to convey my deep appreciation to those who have offered invaluable help. I am very grateful to all who reviewed different portions of the manuscript. Their invaluable suggestions went a long way in making this book a reality. I deeply appreciate all the writers whose works have served as a foundation for ideas and inspirations for this book. I also want to use this opportunity to thank all the business houses and others who were generous enough to provide information for this book. To my family and dear friends, I say a big thank you. Your love and support helped me discover myself and realize my dreams. Finally, my heartfelt appreciation goes to many persons for their kind assistance in reading the manuscript and providing beneficial recommendations while editing and completing this book. I would like to express my gratitude to many of my friends, associates, and all those whose inputs, suggestions, and encouragements contributed to the improvement of this book. This book is a dream come true, thanks to all of you.

Sinee Sankrusme

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Dr. Sinee Sankrusme is currently associate professor of international business at department of international business, Faculty of Business Administration, Ramkhamhaeng University, Thailand. She held position as head department of international business. She has authored almost one hundred articles and several books entitled International Business Communication, International Business and Trade Documents, International Business and Effects on Changes, Organizational Behavior and Management, Agribusiness, Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Business, Management, And Human Resource Management, etc. Most of her research focuses on international business, marketing, human resource, business, organization, and management, etc. She is widely recognized for numerous publications in the international business and also joined the international business conferences.

CHAPTER 1

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

Business communication is very important. One of the most used business communication before and now is the business letter. The business letter continues to circulate locally and overseas for its purpose. A lot of areas in business are using the business letter, may it be for placing of order, acknowledgement, adjustments, payment, insurance purposes, or even banking transactions.

International business communication continues to grow, especially this time where the market is open globally. Business firms aim to be competitive. In order to do this they will not only try to conquer the market in their area, but also needs to be part of the global market. One of their means to convey their messages and purposes is the International Business Letters. It is then safe to say that business letter is inevitable in the business world.

INTRODUCTION TO INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

Small, medium or large business reaches success at some point. There are factors to consider in order for that success to come. One of which is the use of business letters. To start with a promotion, to announce an opening, to communicate your products available, negotiation, to close a sale, and so on, these are just some of the areas where a business letter is involved. The proper use of business letter will give an affirmative feedback for the company. These letters serve as a representative of your company.¹ This book will give you aid and guidelines in considering or writing a business letter. This will particularly be concentrating on International Business Letters.

International Business Letter Defined

A business letter is a recognized way of communication between people or company who deals with trading, may it be for goods or in service. The trade between the two entities is built and progresses as they communicate through the business letter. Business letter is considered as an official document. It is not like any other thank you letters or postcards. This letter is issued with authority.² A business letter is also an effective and influential

communications tool in order to have a systematic and structured flow of information between two transacting entities. This is a letter used for essential communications. A wrong impression placed on a letter may result to a negative feedback from a reader. That's why writing a business letter needs a skill. Any person dealing with business letters is seeking for guidelines in order to convey the correct message.³

A business letter is an essential document because it deals with trade concerns. It shows how professional the writer is in conveying what he wants to inform his reader and how the receiver react on the writer's concern.⁴ An International Business Letter is then defined as a business letter that deals with communications not only in one particular country, but internationally. To start a business letter, you have to note that the first thing the reader would like to know is, "what is the letter all about?"⁵ The following phrase could be used:

"We are currently looking for an alternative for the model AR-456 for computer cables. We hope that you can be able to accommodate this order."

"We are requesting for your signature on the attached documents."

"The form is attached herein for you to fill-out in order for your application to move on."

Now, that your reader know what the letter is all about, you may end it with a polite request for their prompt reply.⁶ These phrases could help:

"Thank you and we hope to receive your reply by the 30th of June, 2016."

"Your prompt reply is very much appreciated."

"Thank you for sending the form immediately."

Below is an example of an International Business Letter. It is an inquiry letter requesting one organization to be one of the sponsors in one big event:

We are from ADWorld Small Animal Inc. We are an organization that deals with foods and accessories for small animals. We have 40 members as of to-date and our main office is located in Sydney, Australia. Our complete and detailed profile can be found in our website at www.ADWorldOrg.com.

Every two years, we are conducting conferences in different places. This coming year is another year for us to look forward to since we will be conducting the ADWorld 2017 which will be on November 3-5. This time it will be held in the prestigious city of Tokyo, Japan.

We would like to invite to be one of our sponsors for this big event. We are expecting about 2,000 delegates and 100 exhibitors from around the world. This conference aims to provide a platform for new innovations and new inventions for small animal welfare. This is also an opportunity for Veterinarians to come and meet together to share and enjoy experiences that will hone their professions.

This event is expected to have 5 renowned speakers from USA, UK and New Zealand and distinguished speakers from Asia.

Thank you very much and we hope to receive your reply before June 30, 2016. Should you need further information regarding our organization, please don't hesitate to contact us at (+61) 2 123 456 14 or in our email, info@adworld.com.

The above examples could help you see how an international business letter is made. Further and detailed lesson on how to make an effective international business letter can be found in the following chapters.

Importance and Purpose of a Business Letter

There are purposes and importance of business letter. The primary purpose is to communicate to your reader about important facts. You must take note that to communicate it in an accurate and precise manner. These facts may affect your reader's schedule or activity. For example, there is a delay in delivery. You must provide the accurate reason for the delay and when will the delivery be received.⁷ Your letter may contain the following phrase:

Please accept our apologies for the delay in the delivery of your order. There has been a miscommunication between our dispatch department and the shipping agency. We are currently doing our best to fix this problem.

Please expect your delivery to come in your area in a week. You should be receiving it on the 20th of this month.

Again, we apologize for the inconvenience that may cause you because of this delay. We assure you that this kind of problem will not happen again in the future.

Thank you for your understanding.

The second purpose of a business letter is to prompt the reader regarding an action to be done. The reader is given an instruction that needs to be replied with an action.⁸ Here is an example:

With reference to our previous meeting last 19th of June, 2016, we have agreed to place a discount of 10% from the total amount of our orders.

We are now sending you the order form which needs to be filled-out. Please send this form back to us before the 25th of June so we can arrange the shipment by the 2nd of July, 2016.

The third purpose is to make a decent impression on the reader.⁹ A business letter serves as an ambassador of the company who sent it. “A good letter is a master key that opens the locked doors.” So if your letter gives a good impression on the readers, they would most likely be communicating back to you. But if your letter does not even give interest to the reader then, you lose your chance to build a relationship or a trade.¹⁰ Your letter must form a positive image in the reader’s mind.¹¹ Here are other purpose and importance of business letter.¹²

1. It helps to build the business.
2. It helps to sell products or services.
3. It builds relationship and friendship.
4. It catches new customers.
5. It opens new markets.
6. It wins back lost customers.
7. It solves problems and issues between two conflicting organizations.

8. It can bring more finances or profits.
9. It can be used to collect unpaid debts.
10. It builds confidence between two transacting people or organization.

Important Points to Consider in Writing a Business Letter

In writing a business letter, there are also some things to consider in order for this letter to serve its purpose. Here are some pointers:

(1) Consider the relationship

Know your relationship with the receiver of the letter. Are you his customer? Or employer? Or supplier? Or just an acquaintance? By this you would know how to start the letter and what the contents should be.¹³ Create a goodwill with your reader. A goodwill is a friendly feeling or feeling of confidence. Many people will not respond or may not talk to you because their impressions and attitude are formed out of reading your letter. As earlier mentioned, your letter acts as an ambassador. It represents your company.¹⁴

(2) Consider the timing

Is this the right time for you to send the letter? For example, your customer is declared to be bankrupt and they still have an outstanding balance. Is it the right time to send a letter demanding for the payment? Or would you rather send a letter that will comfort your customer and reminding them of the outstanding balance in a polite manner? Consider the timing for sales and promotion. This will help you get a positive feedback.¹⁵ Use a tone that is suited to the occasion.¹⁶

(3) Consider your reason for writing

Your letter must be clear enough to be understood. You should also use an active voice to ask for a particular response. Your request should be reasonable and legal. Know the purpose of your letter and use this as a guideline in writing your letter.¹⁷ Inform the reader what he needs to know and don't let him guess between the lines.¹⁸

(4) Consider your reaction if you were the receiver

If you were to receive the letter, will you be pleased? Or will you be irritated? Will you understand right away what you request or written in the letter? Is it politely done?¹⁹ Put yourself in the shoes of your reader and see if your letter is clear enough to be understood and politely done to be accepted. Don't use jargons your reader is not familiar with.²⁰ Consider the format.

Salutation

In a business letter, your salutation should use the proper form like for a person with position, you can use “Dear Congressman Brown.” For your customers or supplier you can use their last name, “Dear Mr. White.” If you do not know the gender of the receiver, you can use “Sir” in general, “Dear Sir,” or you can also use the name of the department like “Dear Customer Service.” But don’t use “To Whom It May Concern.”²¹

Body

The letter should be clear and easy to understand. But put your emphasis and purpose of your letter in the first paragraph. Then the succeeding paragraph will be the supporting details of your purpose.²²

Closing

Close your letter with polite closing and with expectancy that you will receive a response from your reader.²³

Block

Use the appropriate layout, the right title and the addressee.²⁴ Your signature block is also important. Sign it with black or blue pen, depending on what is the formal color in the country you are sending.²⁵

Enclosures

If there are enclosures to be included, you have to specify them at the end of the letter (space below the signature area). It starts with enclosure, then specify the nature of the attached file and specify how many are to be attached.²⁶

Carbon Copy

If there are other additional person involve in receiving the same letter, then you also need to specify them. Start with CC, then followed by the name or department receiving a copy.

HOW TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE BUSINESS LETTER

Writing a letter indicates a mirror of who we are and how we perform business transactions. The letter we make helps us to catch customers, maintain customers, communicate with our subordinates or colleague, coordinate with our associates and so on. This is not the same letter that is lengthy or giving sugarcoated words, but it is a professional letter written to will let your reader provide a response. You don’t need to write to impress

your reader but you write to give your point, what you need and what is needed to be done. This letter will deal with the situation that requires response. This may even create a series of letter just to finish one transaction and this letter communication may continue to maintain good business relationship. This is a business letter.²⁷

Planning a Letter

One important factor in the success of any business is planning. Preparation and foreseeing all the possible areas of risks, income, and losses are all included in planning. Letter correspondences are also part of it. A business letter without any consideration and plan will surely come to failure. Planning is also a key factor in creating a business letter.²⁸

• *Research the Facts*

It is always an advantage to do a little research before making your letter. Have a chance to check on previous correspondences and find out everything you need to know your reader. This will help you to get away from creating a poor letter.²⁹ Going through a little research in the previous correspondences, you can list down some things that will help you know your reader. You may be able to know about your reader if they:

- are committed to a business relationship.
- know how to separate professional and personal relationship.
- offer ideas to help improve business relationship and customer services.
- are interested to reduce cost rather than waste money.

After seeing these things, try to imagine and have a visual concept of your reader. After that, have an attention to the topic you want to relay. Another important point is to make your letter simple and understandable, direct but courteous, short but complete.³⁰

• *Consider the Subject and the Reader*

After the research, you now have an idea of your reader. With this, you can also have an idea of what topic you are going to talk about in the letter. The facts you've gathered from your research will allow you to organize the best letter output. Making an outline is a good method to see the logical order or the idea in general.³¹ Here is an example:

Paragraph 1: (i) Say thank you for the meeting held.

(ii) Be grateful for new ideas shared that can be used for business.

Paragraph 2: (i) Present the details of the meeting and present the actions to be made.

(ii) Verify for correction or any additional topics missed out.

Paragraph 3: (i) Appreciate for their support and hope for reply.

(ii) Suggest another meeting if needed.

One good point to consider is also the interest of the reader. It is good to open your letter with a topic that will attract the interest of the reader.³² The letter you sent must give a good impression to the reader. In order to do this, you can imagine yourself to be the reader. How will you feel or what will be your impression upon reading your letter.³³ Give emphasis on the “You” attitude rather than the “I or We.”³⁴ The “You” attitude must be worked out in order to bring the best approach to your reader. One principle to remember here is write letters to a person from a person. Write letter to a person, don’t just merely write letter to answer a letter.³⁵ Another area to consider about your reader is, “what is your relationship to the reader?” An employer? A supplier? A customer? A subordinate? These questions will help in the way you make your letter.³⁶ One good letter maybe is difficult to write because not all people are the same. One apology letter may be accepted by a person because he understood the situation. One may reject the letter because what he cares the most is the business, and no mistake is acceptable. That’s why planning and research are very important so that you can send a letter that will really cater to the person who will be reading the letter.³⁷

- ***Set Your Objective and Make Sure to Accomplish It***

A good letter has an objective. Your research will help you find out about your reader and the company. Your outline will give you an idea of the letter as a whole. Your objective will keep you on track and will guide you all throughout while creating the letter. Stay focused on your goal and make sure to accomplish it.³⁸ Your objective should lead you to answer, “What is the letter all about?” The reader wants a clear answer to the question. This will be enhanced by the details you will include in the letter.³⁹ One general objective for all business letters is to avoid confusion, cliché, technobabble, phraseology, and inadequate conclusion that will fail to move the reader to action.⁴⁰

Components of an Effective Business Letter

Aside from planning, an effective and successful business letter should aim to consider that its content corresponds to the proper components of an effective business letter.

- **Language**

One cause of misunderstanding is the “language barrier.” You have to understand that it is not enough that you have given your message, it is also important that your reader understands the message.⁴¹ It is significant to consider that the language you use is also the same language as your reader. This means that what words you use in your letter should be understandable to the reader. Do not use jargons that are not familiar with them. Nor write a letter that your reader does not even have any idea what are you talking about. Your line of communication should be at the same level in such a way that you both understand what you are dealing with. It is not necessary to exaggerate with the use of words, nor decorate our letter in a way that you are moving away from the actual message. Your reader may feel overwhelmed by the use of words.⁴² There is no such thing as “business language.” Use simple and plain words. Here are some examples:

Avoid these phrases	Use this
Will you be kind enough to	Please
Come to a decision	Decide
Express a preference for	Prefer

Avoid cliché in order to have more focus on the message of your letter. Consider using more natural way to say things instead of using frequently used expressions.⁴³

- **Tone**

Another factor to consider in your letter is the tone, “*pleasant tone.*” The tone is the sound of the writer’s voice, this will propose something different from the literal meaning. The writer’s words may imply contrast to the literal meaning of the word. A pleasant tone can be accomplished if you are natural, friendly and courteous. Your letter must be personal. Show your reader that you are not only giving statistics, but you are writing as a person.⁴⁴ The tone of your letter should show that the writer has is a human being. The letter has a human touch. If your reader feels that you are sincerely concerned not only about the business, but personal relationships, it is most likely that you will receive a response.⁴⁵ One point already mentioned above is the relationship of the writer to the reader. This will also have an effect on the tone of your letter. A boss or employer who is sending a letter to his subordinate will sound different from the supplier sending a letter to his customer.⁴⁶ Different letters are written for different purposes. Because of this reason that tonal component is important. With proper use of tone, you can make negative news as positive.

But ignoring your tone, even positive news will come out to be negative.⁴⁷ Here is an example:

The competition in this position is very tough, with many outstanding candidates. Your credentials are very impressive, but we regret to inform you that they did not match with the current position we need. We hope that you will be able to find a position that will match with your skills and experience.

- ***Focus***

The focus of your letter should be on the reader. This is having the “You” attitude. The “You” means you are putting yourself from the standpoint of the reader. With this, you see clearly what are your reader’s skills, interests, what he loves to do and hates to do. This gives a human touch on your letter.⁴⁸ The “You” attitude must be worked out in order to bring the best approach to your reader. One principle to remember here is write letters to a person from a person. Write letter to a person, don’t just merely write letter to answer a letter.⁴⁹ There are instances where the writer thought he is focusing on the reader and assumes that his interests and likes are the same with the reader. But the truth is not. Here are some guideline questions that you need in order to know that you are following the “You” attitude:⁵⁰

- What motivation will you include for the reader to react positively with your letter?
- What will give interest to the reader?
- What can be the reader’s perspective with regards to the topic you detailed in your letter?

At first glance, you may not know the answers to these questions. But if you will do some research and planning, take time to sit down and check in these areas, you will be able to draw clear answers. You must let your reader feel that your letter is of personal value. Here is an example of a letter with a “You” attitude:⁵¹

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you very much for considering our agency for your insurance policy.

As your line of service is not covered in the current insurance policy program we have, we are keeping your application on-hold for future reference and further processing once our policy program is updated. We are currently working on this service to be approved. Once the approval is given after six months, we will surely include your application.

Should you request to pull out your application from us, we would appreciate if you will inform us immediately. We would like to inform you that your application is valuable to us. We hope that you will still consider to make partnership with us.

We appreciate your patience and your understanding on this matter.

- **Length**

“The shorter, the better.” This is one of the most common rule of thumb, as long as the components of your letter are included. Different letter has different purpose. The purpose of your letter will help you in deciding how long or how short your letter will be.⁵²

Here are some sentences to avoid:

Avoid these phrases	Use this
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please see that an inquisition is conducted to ascertain the source of the fault.• We would like to express our regret for being unable to fill-in your orders at this time considering your prompt request.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please find out the reason.• We are sorry to inform you that we cannot meet your present order immediately.

“Come right to the point,” this is another point to consider. Most businessmen are busy and they will not read a very long letter. As much as possible, limit your letter to one page. Put your main topics in the first paragraph. So your reader will know what the letter is all about. Planning will help you limit your letter.⁵³

- **Stationery**

In writing a business letter, it is also good to consider the materials you will be using in making your letter presentable and easy to recognize. You are selling your company by your letter address.⁵⁴ The paper to be used should always be the best quality. It is plain and not full of unrecognizable designs. The paper color vary, some may use shades of gray, brown, or blue. Some may use different color of paper for different departments. But the best to use is white paper.⁵⁵ Before, the paper size used the 8 ½” x 11,” but now as the computer

age has governed the business world, A4 size becomes popular. Most printers today are designed for A4 papers. But this does not eliminate the use of the 8 ½”x 11.” The letterhead varies from one business to another. But the most commonly used is designed with business logo, business address, email address, contact number, fax number, website address.⁵⁶ If the company has a trademark or distinctive symbol, it is advisable to place in on the letterhead. This trademark should also be placed in every paper transaction of the company like the bill and invoices. Normally, letterheads are printed at the top of the paper. Some companies placed some other information at the bottom of the paper aside from their letter head details on top.⁵⁷

All business letters should be type-written. Proper spacing is important. It should be single-spaced. The font size ranges from 11 to 12 depending on the font. Your font should be formal like Times New Roman or Arial. Do not use decorative fonts.⁵⁸ The envelope is also important. This is the first part that your reader will see. It again, creates an impression.⁵⁹ The address should be properly placed at the center horizontally and vertically. Also, the address printed on the envelope should be exactly the same as the address printed in your letter. There is no restricted color of the envelope but light colors are preferable. The envelope size that is normally used is the 9” x 4.” Others may use the smaller size, 3 ½” x 6.”⁶⁰ The format for business letter could be:⁶¹

Full Block

This is also called the “complete block.” In this format, all the contents including date, salutation, body and ending are all aligned to the left margin. It does not have any paragraph indentation but follows the left margin as well.

Block

This is sometimes called “modified block.” This is different from full block in the position of the dateline, complimentary close and the signature block.

Semi block

The difference on semi block with modified block is that the semi block format puts an indentation on every start of a paragraph.

Standard

This format is formal because it includes an optional subject line. This is ideal for situations in which you need to make a formal response or if it needs to specify the account number or case number.