

Emails

Email is one of the most commonly-used forms of communication in the international business world. It is used extensively within companies to circulate information, requests, results, instructions, recommendations, minutes of meetings, etc. Email is an effective, rapid and relatively cheap means of communicating with customers and suppliers, both nationally and internationally. Because of the brevity, rapidity and relative informality of emails, it is important to check that all information has been given and that the tone is appropriate.

Layout

The emails opposite show where the following different components appear (though a-g may be in a different order depending on the system being used).

- a name of the person sending the email
- b name of the person / people the email is addressed to
- c person / people who will also receive the mail though it is not addressed directly to them
- d person / people who will receive a copy without other people knowing
- e date (and time)
- f information about the content of the email
- g files, documents, etc. sent separately rather than included in the actual message or body of the email
- h opening
- i body of the email
- j closing
- k name and job title

Language styles

Emails are usually shorter than other forms of communication and the language is simple and concise.

The tone for emails to superiors or people outside the company should be formal. But

'in-house' emails between colleagues can be semi-formal.

When replying to mails, it is important not to reply simply 'yes' or 'no' to questions without referring back to the question and not to use pronouns out of context. However, if returning the sender's email with your reply, by using 'Reply', the sender will have their original to refer to.

Useful phrases and notations

Opening and closing

For semi-formal emails, *Hello* and *Hi* are common openings and *Best wishes* or *All the best* are often used to close.

When writing to several people, you can address the group, e.g. *Dear Project Managers*

Formal emails, like letters, start with *Dear Sir / Madam* or *Dear Mr / Ms X* and close with *Yours sincerely* or *Yours faithfully* as appropriate (see **Letters**, page 16).

Exchanging information

Could you mail me the sales figures for last month by 4pm?

Here is the brochure on the new product you asked for (see attachment).

I'm sending you the board's recommendations with this mail.

Please note that today's appraisal meetings have been cancelled. They will be rescheduled for the same times next Monday.

Just to let you know, I sent the attached minutes of Tuesday's Production meeting to all the participants.

Replying to emails

Thank you for your mail.

I got your mail, thanks.

Sorry I didn't get back to you yesterday but ...

Re your request for last month's sales figures ...

I couldn't open the attachment you sent - please resend it as soon as you can ...

Thanks for the information about the appraisal meetings. I'll make a note of it.

Sample emails

Formal

style guide - Message

Reply Reply All Forward [Icons] Follow Up

From: Michael Hart, Despatch Assistant
To: Rachid Akkouch
Cc: Ray Hopper, Despatch Manager, Pascal Winterbottom, Accounts Department
Bcc: Jo Berry, Sales Manager
Sent: 3 June 200_ 09:47
Subject: Re: Delivery delay
Attachment: Contract

Dear Mr Akkouch
Thank you for your mail. I have checked to find out why your order hasn't been delivered and it seems we haven't received payment yet. I am sending you a copy of our contract, which states that all payments must be made in advance.
Please accept our apologies for any misunderstanding. If you wish to cancel your order, please let me know ASAP.

Yours sincerely
Michael Hart
Despatch Assistant

Semi-formal

style guide - Message

Reply Reply All Forward [Icons] Follow Up

From: Pat White, Sales Manager
To: Kim Potter, Sue Young, Harry Taylor, Jacques Benoist
Cc: Val Murrey, Managing Director
Sent: 3 February 200_ 11:08
Subject: Email overload

Hi Everyone
Apparently, complaints have been made to Mr Murrey about the unnecessary quantity of emails currently circulating in the company. The finance and production departments in particular feel that much of their time is wasted reading mails that do not directly concern them. It has also been brought to Mr Murrey's attention that we in Sales are the chief offenders!
I recognise that I am partly to blame as I did ask you to keep the other departments informed of our activities. I would now ask you, however, only to cc in other members of staff on communications which are of direct concern to them.
I know I can rely on your co-operation in this matter.

Best wishes
Pat

The word *memorandum*, or *memo* for short, originally meant a reminder or confirmation. Now it has become a very common form of business communication used for a wide variety of messages exchanged between people working in the same organisation. A memo usually focuses on only one specific topic, as in the following examples:

Conveying information Reporting back the minutes of meetings or summaries of brainstorming sessions

Requesting information Asking employees to send in requests for the use of office parking spaces

Giving instructions Telling employees to display identity badges when entering the building

Recommending options Informing people in the company of decisions reached on the best way to solve a company dilemma and recommending that these options be implemented

Layout

When writing memos, you should follow the standard format. The memo opposite shows where the following components should appear on the page.

- a date
- b name of the person / people the memo is addressed to
- c name of the person / people sending the memo
- d information about the content of the memo
- e introduction to the subject matter
- f main points
- g conclusion, often recommending the action to be taken
- h closing, which can be the name or initials of the person sending the memo

Language styles

Although styles vary across cultures and organisations, there are basic rules for memo writing.

The opening is more direct and less formal than in a letter or email, with no greeting such as *Dear ...* and memos usually start with the introduction to the main points. The closing is generally just the initials of the sender.

Memos are less formal than business letters so the tone is neutral and the language simple.

Sentences are usually short and clear, but not brisk and bossy.

Memos often conclude with a request for action.

Useful phrases

Giving information

You will be happy to hear ...
I am / We are delighted to inform you ...
I am delighted to be able to announce ...
I would like to remind you that ...
I have recently been informed ...

Requesting information

I would like to have ...
Could you provide me with ...?
If you have any questions, please ...

Giving instructions

Please read ...
We / I kindly request ...
Make sure that ...
... is permitted only ...

Recommending options

It is recommended that ...
It is in the best interests of ...
Having considered all the alternatives, I / we suggest ...

MEMO

a	DATE	8th June
b	TO	All staff
c	FROM	Alison Stanford, CIO
d	SUBJECT	Use of information resources

e I have recently been informed by the HR Department of various irregularities in the use of information resources by members of staff in some departments. I have therefore prepared the following memorandum in order to outline company policy regarding the proper use of information resources by all personnel. Please read these guidelines carefully and make sure that you apply them at all times when using information resources.

f 'Information resources' refers to all computers, peripherals and software and electronic mail services that are used as operational components for conducting the company's business.

Permissible use

Although information resources are designed to be used for *official* purposes, it is in the interests of all members of staff to have access to these resources for limited *personal* use. However, all *inappropriate* use will lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Official use

This includes the use of equipment for all activities relating to company business and covers all work-related activities that have been authorised by head office.

Non-official use

Personal use of IT equipment is permitted only on condition that it does not interfere either with a staff member's productivity or affect the productivity of any other member of staff. Short email messages may be sent to colleagues, and internet services may be consulted for limited periods of time in order to obtain news and information.

Inappropriate use

All staff are reminded that they are not permitted to:

- download software to their computers
- use company IT equipment to conduct business for personal gain
- disable virus protection software
- post company information to persons outside the organisation
- make copies of any software installed on computers

g I would also like to remind all staff that their use of information resources may be monitored. It is therefore recommended that you do not use the company's information resources to communicate information that you wish to keep private.

If you have any questions relating to these policy guidelines, you can consult the newly updated FAQ section on our intranet or contact Heidi Wassermann in Human Resources.

h Alison Stanford

Short reports

Short reports are used to summarise information that has to be communicated to people inside or outside an organisation. They are designed to provide an overview which can be read and assimilated quickly. Many different subjects can be presented in a short report and some of the most common types of short reports are project / progress reports, business proposals and summaries of research or results. Although the length of a short report will vary depending on the amount of information and commentary that it contains, most short reports will be between one and six pages long. They should be clearly structured so that the reader can find the relevant information quickly. Short reports may also include graphic material and are often used as the basis for an oral presentation.

Layout

Title page – indicates the subject that is being dealt with, in large font, with the name and position of the author of the report clearly indicated at the bottom of the page, together with the date of its publication.

Summary – gives a concise presentation of the report, the reasons for writing it, the most important information it contains and a general idea of its main findings. For a short report this can be simply one or two sentences.

Introduction – presents the overview, showing why the report was written and how it has been constructed.

Development section – includes the main body of information which may be divided into several subsections.

Conclusion – presents the results of the report. This might take the form of a recommendation for future action or draw the reader's attention to problems that need to be addressed.

Language styles

Short reports are documents that use a formal writing style. They should not contain contracted verb forms like *it'll* or *don't* but use the full forms of verbs.

The language of the report should be as clear as possible. It is not necessary to use long and complicated sentences or obscure vocabulary. Using simple language in short sentences will make it easier for the reader to assimilate your message.

Try to avoid using the personal pronoun *I* too much. Although it is true that 'you' wrote the report, it will only put your readers off if you refer too often to your own role. Use neutral phrasing instead.

Useful phrases

Connect sentences by

- showing contrast:
However, this does not necessarily mean that ...
On the other hand, it is true that ...
While these results may appear to ...
Although it is not completely clear from our research ...
- showing cause and effect:
This has been mainly due to ...
Consequently, additional data was obtained which showed that ...
As a result of this, it has not been possible to ...
- following on to the next point that you wish to make:
Moreover, in this particular case ...
In addition to this, the survey included ...
Furthermore, we would advise that this would provide an opportunity to ...

Sample report

Acquisition evaluation of PromoVista S.A.

Summary

Michael Paterson Associates has requested an evaluation of the French company PromoVista S.A. with a view to analysing its value as a potential takeover target in order to enhance the international marketing reach of the company's current European operations. The following short report situates the target company in its competitive environment and gives a brief analysis of PromoVista's current position within its industry sector, its strategic positioning and its recent performance, and provides a forecast for the company's future in the short term.

Introduction

Adwise Incorporated looked at the following:

- History
- Competitive environment
- Operational specifics

History

PromoVista was created in the 1930s as a regional point of sale and outdoor advertising provider and has undergone a series of transformations during its eighty-year history. From a small regional operator it has developed into an operation of national and international scope, with subsidiaries in Belgium, Luxembourg and Switzerland. The company currently employs ...

Competitive environment

PromoVista was a monopoly provider of outdoor advertising space until 1985 when BXG Advertising created Proximos, a new outdoor advertising operation in France, to support its strategy of developing national weekly and monthly publications. Proximos is now PromoVista's principal competitor. During the last five years, PromoVista's revenue has continued to increase despite greater competitive pressure, in particular from urban transit space providers and also urban furniture advertisers. However, during this period ...

Operational specifics

PromoVista, unlike its main competitor in its home market, does not rely on outsourcing poster installation and display maintenance work but has its own national teams of specialists who are directly responsible for changing posters and maintaining display sites. In terms of its implantation, the company currently has 120,000 advertising sites positioned essentially in pedestrian shopping zones and town centres. Its research department ...

Conclusion

Analysis of the recent performance of PromoVista shows that the company has performed well over the last five-year period, with profit margins at 20%. We would advise that PromoVista would provide a very interesting growth opportunity. Its position in the market would enable Michael Paterson Associates to enlarge its market share, allowing it to offer enhanced and targeted marketing to advertisers in the markets mentioned above.

Jeremy Hickson
Senior Consultant
Adwise Incorporated

29th August 200_