

BOOK REVIEW

Taylor, S. (2012). *Model Business Letters, E-Mails & other Business Documents*. 7th Ed. Prentice Hall: China. ISBN: 13: 978- 0- 273- 75193- 9, 512 pages, Price: USD35.74

REVIEWED BY

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Shirley Taylor is a Communication Training Specialist and the CEO of STTS Pte Ltd., a company well-known for its wide range of public, corporate and professional training workshops. As a trained teacher from the UK, she first took up a teaching post in Singapore in 1983 and had spent many years in the Asia Pacific region as a Training Consultant and Lecturer on secretarial and business studies courses. A trainer, speaker, author and editor, she has written and published 12 books on effective communication skills for university students, adults and working professionals. Her books are sold worldwide and have been translated into 6 major languages. She was also the 2011/ 2012 President of Asia Professional Speakers Singapore and is a member of the Global Speakers Federation. Apart from the book being reviewed for this article, she is also well-known for other titles which include: *Communications for Business: A Practical Approach* (Financial Times Management; 2005; 4thEd.), *Success 365: 365 Great Ideas For Personal Development And Achieving Greater Success* (Marshall Cavendish International (Asia); 2012) and *Essential Communication Skills: The Ultimate Guide to Successful Business Communication (Management and Communication)* (Longman; 2012). She currently lives in Singapore. She writes, shares, trains and motivates with the sole purpose of helping people to improve their communication skills that could help develop better relationship strategies in their workplace.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

The topics covered in this book are collected in 4 main Units. They are as follows:

Unit 1: Written Communication- an Overview

This section provides a prelude to the conventions of business writing. It includes the general information on the presentation of business documents such as the fully blocked style and open punctuation format. Also available in this section are the *dos* and *don'ts* of letter writing and email etiquette.

Unit 2: Routine Business Documents

This section covers the different types of business letters. Formats, examples, language tone and vocabulary associated with these letters are provided at the end of each section.

Unit 3: Creative and Persuasive Documents

This section focuses on the writing skills required for the more challenging types of documents that weigh on creativity and tactful communication strategy. The documents involved are correspondence to complaints, report writing, notices, advertisements, circulars, sales letters, press releases and etc.

Unit 4: Classified Business Documents

This section covers special documents used in different types of businesses such as minutes, personnel, secretarial, administrative, trade and banking correspondences.

EVALUATION

Overall, this is a comprehensive book that covers almost all the necessary information there is to business writing. With over 500 sample documents and 100 useful templates, it is an effective reference book that can be used in the classroom as well as the workplace. The most striking feature of this book is the practicality of the reference guides templates provided at the end of each unit. These simple, clear and well-structured templates are easy to read, understand and adapted into the work- document. Examples of all documents are further enhanced with annotation to clarify the main points. The examples use real-life content formations, both in terms of topics and timeliness. Apart from that, document specific terminologies and useful expressions lists are given in the beginning and ending of each chapter to familiarize readers with business vocabulary of a particular type of document. The A-Z of

bloopers, blunders, common errors and clichés are helpful to readers to clarify uncertainties in business language. Frequently confused words, commonly misspelled words and A-Z of alternative words help readers to avoid common mistakes. Letter writing tips, spelling, punctuation and tone- settings provided in the forms of the opening, content and closing phrases of the different documents prove especially helpful for non- native learners. Apart from that students and users are also given guidance on generating ideas to building content, enhance structure and establish the correct persuasive voice for business documents. The book is also written in the 2nd and 3rd person pronouns while referring to the readers and the use of illustrations create an interactive approach that makes the reader connected and comfortable. Since most corporations and businesses now depend on computer- mediated- communication, especially the Internet, this edition, in particular, is updated with two new sections on email, social media and online writing. Web-links are provided to guide readers to obtain useful additional resources. This book, on the other hand, pretty much covers a wide aspect of business writing forms; from business letters, documents used in banking, trade, travel, insurance, shipping, transport and etc. which may render it non-industry specific. It holds true to its nature as a reference book, but may not be suitable for classroom usage compared for working adults. Though the formats are applicable universally, the writer has not taken into account localized forms of writing in 1st language which is a strong interfering factor for 2nd language writers in countries where English is not the official language.

CONCLUSION

In the advent of globalization, most organizations are dependent on writing as the main source of communicating with their internal or external constituents. This explains the significant importance of writing skills especially at managerial levels where important organizational decisions are communicated through written documents. This book provides references through its easy to follow techniques, guidelines and samples. Also it helps writers to establish clear, concise and courteous voice which is vital to building good corporate image and business relationships. All in all, this book would be a great investment as an office tool for writing.