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Book review

The Little Black Book of Business Writing

Mark Tredinnick and Geoff Whyte

University of New South Wales Press 2010

ISBN 978 174223 006 1 224 pp. \$29.95.

'Also note: it is possible to input an accepted suspension of action, however, the rejected option is the only option. Even though it will show as a rejected, it is in fact accepted ... For a deferral of legal action, the only option is rejected. [Note: this really means accepted see Terminology above.]'

The person who wrote this as part of an internal government instruction manual definitely needs to read and understand this book.

Never before in human history, has there been so much information available, to so many people. Yet the ability to pass on this information is, most of the time, rather appalling.

Good business writing means writing effectively so it can be easily understood. That could mean almost anyone. How many people have that ability now?

If you have to make a genuine complaint to your local council, please read this book. If you write reports or instruction manuals for your job, or letters or newsletters or emails, read this book. If you want to write letters that command results, you will definitely need to read this book. If you conduct research, you will want the world to know about your work. Research grants depend on what you say, and how you say it.

If you write minutes for a boring meeting, it doesn't mean the minutes have to be boring. You will definitely want to read *The Little Black Book of Business Writing* if you aspire to write better than your colleagues. Anyone who writes for a living will benefit from reading this book and applying its many examples.

Many grants are awarded based on the quality of applications the organisation or government department receives. If your grant application clearly tells the reader why you need the money, your application will move up in the queue. And

with thousands of dollars in grant money available, why not maximise your chance of getting a few dollars?

What is business writing? It's good writing, original writing, written for a particular purpose—any writing that is not creative. The function of good writing is to inform someone, to get someone to consider your request for action. If you can't make your point clearly, the person probably won't know what you are saying, and will respond accordingly. Your writing must be interesting to hold the reader's attention right to the end. This book will show you how it's done.

And the best way to put words on paper? Make it sound as if you are telling the person exactly what you want him or her to know, or do.

Do you want a quick response from the reader? Keep your correspondence brief but saying everything you need to tell. Do you want your local MP to help your organisation move forward? Well ... say what you want the reader to do next.

Make your writing stand out as readable. Not much writing meets this requirement. Perhaps this is one reason many writers are disappointed in the response they get. Clear writing depends on clear thinking.

In many offices, you will need more than one copy of this excellent book about business writing. There will be the one you will need for yourself, and a copy for all the 'editors' who insist on changing everything someone else has written. Unfortunately, this seldom improves the written message. At least buy a copy for your supervisor.

The authors are experienced writers. Mark Tredinnick is an award-winning poet and writing teacher, with several books to his name. Geoff Whyte is a writer, editor and manuscript assessor, and now runs his own editing business.

But until everyone in the office has a copy, there will continue to be literary gems like ... 'Although codes 'N' and 'S' remain, keying them is now optional and to reduce workload the codes will no longer be keyed.'

Graham Andrews
Flairnet Online Writing Courses