

English Corner



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Having discussed the features of business English, and some tips and advice about using letters and emails, the next few issues will focus on common communicative functions required in workplace.

Sending goodwill messages

What and why?

Purpose 1: Thank-you

- Situation 1: Thanking your staff for their hard work
- Situation 2: Thanking your customers who have been paying on time
- Situation 3: Thanking a guest speaker for a quality speech

Purpose 2: Congratulations

- Situation 1: Congratulations to a friend who has just got married (or who has given birth to a baby, been promoted/ graduated)
- Situation 2: Congratulations to a customer who has moved to new premises on expansion of their business
- Situation 3: Congratulations to an employee who has received an award

Purpose 3: Sympathy

- Situation 1: Sympathy to a friend or colleague who is ill (or if a close family member of theirs has died)
- Situation 2: Sympathy to a business partner who has suffered in the financial crisis

Purpose 4: Invitation

- Situation 1: Inviting your customers to a Christmas sample sale
- Situation 2: Inviting your boss to speak on leadership styles
- Situation 3: Inviting a scholar to be a keynote speaker at an international conference

How?

Goodwill messages consist of three parts. The introduction sets the scene and specifies the purpose of writing (e.g. inviting, appreciating or congratulating). There should be personal comments in the body text (e.g. elaborating what to congratulate/appreciate and how that is important/significant; the information about an event/function for invitation messages), followed by a conclusion (e.g. could be a repetition of thanks for thank-you messages or offering help for sympathy messages). Read the following examples:

Thank-you message

Dear Mr. Han

Happy New Year! We want to start the new year by sending a big thank you for your support this last year. Your business has been very important to us.

Enclosed please find our new brochure advertising our various websites at <http://www.scooter.com> for additional information.

In the coming year we will do our best to serve you in every way. May the new year be a happy and successful one for you.

Yours sincerely,
XXX

Congratulations message

Dear Mrs. Sequin

Congratulations on being awarded the Consumer Health Affairs # 1 rating for 2008. This rating is quite an accomplishment and you deserve it.

With this rating you join the ranks of the finest health agencies in the world. The fine health magnet products that you have developed for members of the American Association of Retired Persons are commendable.

Congratulations and best wishes for your continued success. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Yours sincerely,
XXX

Source: Krizan, A., Merrier, P. & Jones, C., 2002. *Business Communication*. 4th edition. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Thomas Learning.



Invitation

Dear Mrs. Kwong

I take great pleasure in inviting you to an exclusive exhibition of the works of the Mexican sculptor, Joachim Paz.

The exhibition will take place between 2:00pm-5:00pm on 14 March 2009 at the Grand Hotel. After the exhibition, there will be a reception in the Oak Room at which the sculptor will be present.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Yours sincerely
XXX

Sympathy message

Dear June,

I was saddened recently to hear of your great loss, and would like to extend my deepest sympathy to you at this time of sorrow.

Terry was both loved and admired by all of his colleagues, and his disarming sense of humour will be sadly missed in the office.

I would just like you to know that if you need anything in the coming weeks, I will be more than happy to help out in any way I can.

Yours sincerely,
XXX

Sources: Bilbow, G. (2004). *Business Writing for Hong Kong*. 3rd edition. Hong Kong: Longman.

Conclusion

In goodwill correspondence:

1. do not focus only on profit; show that you care about other things.
2. do not include a sales pitch, except in invitations.
3. be concise and do not make your message too long.
4. in writing sympathy messages, offer practical help but nothing too specific.

Quiz:

In what type of goodwill messages can you find the following expressions?

1. I was saddened/distressed to hear of...

2. I would like to invite you to...

3. Please accept our congratulations on...

4. Thank you very much for your hospitality during our stay at your place.

Key:

1. You can find this expression in the introduction of a sympathy message. Other expressions which can be used to show condolences include *I would like to extend deepest sympathy/condolences to...; I was sorry to hear that...; I was very concerned to hear about..., and I was shocked to hear the sad news about...*
2. This can be found in the introduction of an invitation message. There are different ways to invite, depending on the formality of the situation. For example:
Formal:
 1. You are cordially invited to...
 2. I take great pleasure in inviting you ...Less formal:
 1. I would like to invite you to...
 2. You are invited to...Informal:
 1. Please come...
3. This is used when we want to say congratulations. Other expressions which can be used are *Congratulations on; Let me congratulate you on.....; Please accept our congratulations on....; and I was really delighted/happy/glad/thrilled to hear that....*
4. *Thank you* is commonly used in thank-you messages. You can also start the message in other ways (e.g. *I enjoyed the talk/the demonstration ...; I was delighted to ...*).

References:

- Bilbow, G. (2004). *Business Writing for Hong Kong*. 3rd edition. Hong Kong: Longman.
- Krizan, A., Merrier, P. & Jones, C., (2002). *Business Communication*. 4th edition. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Thomas Learning.