

Professional Communication: How to deliver written and spoken messages By Jane English et al., Cape Town: Juta, 2006; pp vii + 335

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Written and spoken messages play a crucial role in interpersonal communication, yet in most cases people take them for granted. It is not an overstatement to say that good communication is the lifeblood of organisations, whether they are small organisations or big ones. Organisations tick because they practise good communication in conducting their businesses. The book *Professional Communication: How to deliver written and spoken communication* offers practical ways that enhance communication strategies and skills both for the individual and organisations.

Written by experienced and renowned academics in the field of communication, this well-crafted book forms a solid foundation of the principles of professional communication. The key co-authors of this book include Michael Fielding (the author of another excellent book on communication entitled *Effective Communication in Organisations*), Jane English, Head of the Professional Communication Studies in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of Cape Town, Evelyn Howard, a communication consultant and Nan van der Merwe, ex-Director of the Professional Communication Unit at the University of Cape Town who now does interpersonal communication consultancy work for NGOs and business. In addition, there are four contributing authors whose vast experience and knowledge in information communication technology are used in the book to spice it.

This book is a good long-term investment for undergraduate students and personnel in organisations both public and private. It is a useful reference for a student at tertiary level and beyond. It is the kind of book ordinary staff members, corporate managers, chief executive officers, engineers, doctors, scientists and business people find useful when it comes to professional communication.

Professional Communication: How to deliver written and spoken communication is characterised by a remarkably wide range of topics ranging from basic undergraduate research skills to sophisticated academic writing such as papers, articles and the writing of a thesis, and, eventually rounds off with corporate writing such as business proposals and written and oral communication at the workplace. Each chapter starts with a brief introduction to the topic, outlines the

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objectives and/or lists subtopics. From the start it draws the reader's attention by illustrating the student's frustrations with the academic demands of a tertiary institution. Thus, the young reader immediately identifies with this situation. Then it takes a more reflectional approach by using questions as headlines. Chapter 3 to 8 cover a long list of a mixture of writing and, treats each one in a meticulous fashion. Another credit for the book is that it encourages the reader to explore discussion topics and carefully guides the reader through the writing process with some brief details. Its practical and real life examples, diagrams, flowcharts, tips, tables, NBs and notes make it a stimulating companion through the academic and corporate communication world.

Chapter 1 deals with the often seemingly complex systems of a university library and the many different kinds of resources found in both print and electronic forms. This part outlines the stages in the research process starting with the formulation of the topic and exploring, ploughing through various types of resources before is finally be submitted. Samples of resources, explanations and online research tips are handy to both the upcoming and experienced researcher.

Chapter 2 handles referencing, citation, and how to avoid plagiarism, which is a fundamentally significant section for any researcher. Chapter 3 covers general principles of effective writing. It is an introduction to the requirements of effective writing of a variety of texts such as essays, articles, letters, reports, legal opinions, and thesis or business plans. The reader is encouraged and directed through the writing process. The authors provide examples of clear and plain English and briefly tap into logical reasoning. It offers evaluative criteria for graphics used in a text and concludes with editing tips. Academic writing is dealt with at length in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. These chapters focus mainly on writing skills, style and format of academic and professional writings. Each of these chapters presents practical examples along with explanations and tips for the reader. Chapter 4 familiarises the reader with application letters, CVs and general corporate communication skills such as types of communication and the visual impact of typeface. In Chapter 5 the reader finds all kinds of internal and external corporate letter writing lively illustrated with real life examples and tips. Business proposals and business plans are treated in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 supplies information on several types of reports. Graphics are included in the examples of this chapter.

The authors take a turn to academic writing again in Chapter 8 where academic proposals and theses are dealt with. The bullet point style used in this chapter puts an emphasis on the main points covered and this is helpful to users, especially students who grapple with the complexity of academic thesis writing. This structured approach is very clear and leaves few questions unanswered. The natural follow up are the topics of presentation skills, in Chapter 9, and, graphics and power point, in Chapter 10 which are similarly presented as the previous chapters in the book. The last chapter shares information on academic research and research techniques. The reader of this book will appreciate the practicability and wide range of topics dealt with. In the fast changing world where good communication plays a pivotal role in everything we do, *Professional Communication: How to deliver written and spoken messages* is a very good reference book.

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