



## **Two Days Course on “Professional Business Writing Skills”**

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In an increasingly competitive business, engineers believe the professional writing skills will give them the edge – an idea that opens new doors, a technique that solves a problem, or an insight that simply makes sense of it all. Clear and well-structured letters, e-mails, reports and other documents can achieve better results, with greater understanding, speed and accuracy. Professional business writing skills is a practical and comprehensive guide that not only tells the engineer how to do it, but also gives an indispensable framework for creating clear and effective business communications.

On the 9 May 2011 (Monday), a two days course on Professional Business Writing Skills was held by the IEM G&S YES. The course was presented by Dr. Alistair King. The talk was held in Tan Sri Prof. Chin Fung Kee Auditorium, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Wisma IEM, PJ. The total number of participants was around 52 people approximately. The program started at 9.00 am with an opening address by the organizing chairman. This course aims to provide participants with a set of skills and awarenesses which they can use with immediate effect. These skills and awarenesses are:

- Transferring spoken input into written material
- Understanding the progression from the beginning of the document to the end
- Knowing in which type of documents to use the Active or Passive Voice
- Using phraseology which is stylistically appropriate
- Knowing how to connect various points in order to present the best possible impact and therefore, the best possible outcome
- Knowing how to use the different past tenses in a way which promotes accuracy and immediate understanding
- Knowing how the various components of letters and reports fit together and flow into each other

On the first day, participants were exposed to:

### **1. Basic considerations of professional business writing skills**

- Prime functions of language: transactional and interactional functions of language. Getting the message across clearly and courteously
- Spoken and written language: respective forms and functions
- The topic: Declaration and Development – establishing and maintaining the topic (Keeping the reader on track)

### **2. Grammar in business document**

- The active voice vs the passive voice
- Focus on speaker or issue – minimising or maximising the personal element

- Focus on “Agent” or “Patient”
- Essential agent vs unnecessary, unimportant, unknown agent
- How reports differ from letters, contracts and other documents

### 3. Writing style

- Language which avoids verbosity, tautology, circumlocution, pomposity, jargon
- Language which is clear, concise, complete, correct, courteous and, above all, communicative

### 4. Dealing with letter of complaint

- Calibrating the negative for best results
- The 5 ‘A’s of dealing with complaints

And on the second day, participants were presented with:

1. How to compose a cohesive text (Applying persuasive writing techniques), devices to link points and direct the reader in the direction of sense and achieving prioritisation and subordination of points using:

- Anticipations – When to use as; since; because; therefore; thus; so; consequently
- Qualifications – When to use although; despite; however; nevertheless; while; where
- Relatives – When to use which; that; who; whom; whose; where

### 2. Collaborative report writing task

- Group work with presentation: Making reports cohesive

### 3. Grammar: Use of tenses

- Simple past, present perfect & past perfect
- Accurate use of tense to avoid ambiguity and promote precision
- Use tense for accuracy
- Use tense to show sequence
- Apply tense in various types of reports

### 4. Components and format of reports

- Components of reports
- Relationships between introduction, findings, conclusions and recommendations
- Formats to show these relationships
- Components format of the executive summary
- Format and focus of reports

The synopsis of the course to help participants learn how to write/edit/fine-tune documents which are concise, cohesive, grammatically accurate and stylistically appropriate. Grammatical forms and stylistic concepts had been introduced and practiced throughout the course. The talk was mainly targeted to people who had to supervise, contribute to or edit business documents. This course consisted of trainer’s presentation, individual and group writing tasks with presentations to plenary. Authentic material and case studies will form a large proportion of the course materials. The course ended at 5.00 pm on 10 May 2011.