

## **Keep it simple! Business English shouldn't be complicated**

Do you consider yourself a fluent English-speaker? Can you carry on a conversation in English confidently at work? Can you chat on the phone with your English-speaking colleagues and customers?

How about when you have to write to them? Do you suddenly find it a problem to write "business English"?

When you look at some examples of so-called "business English" you could be forgiven for thinking that you have a whole new language to learn. Here are just two short examples from a personnel department:

"Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me."

"After careful consideration of all the information we gathered about you and assessment of that information against the key competencies and experience required for the above role, I regret to inform you that your application has been unsuccessful on this occasion."

To be fair, we've seen far worse examples than these. But they will help us get across an important point – one that we hope will make writing at work much more easy for you. Look again at the two examples and ask yourself: "is this what I would say if I was talking to someone and passing on this information?"

The answer, I'm sure, is "no". More importantly, the people who wrote these messages *wouldn't say those words either*. They only felt they needed to use them because they were writing them at work.

### **Keep it simple**

There is no reason why written business English should be any more complicated than spoken business English. So don't fall into the trap that so many native English speakers fall into. Keep your written business English as simple as your spoken English. Before you write, ask yourself "what would I say to this person if I was talking to them?" Run through your conversation in your head. Once you're sure what you would say, write it down!

Keeping it simple has great benefits for your readers. They will get your message the first time they read it. People are busy. They appreciate clear, straightforward English without the jargon, old-fashioned language and "management speak" that pollutes so much business writing.

So keep it simple. If you do, you will probably be a better writer of English than your UK-born colleagues. Isn't that great?

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*The Word Centre is a consultancy that specialises in helping organisations write clearly and effectively. It runs 'plain English' courses throughout the UK and has a document-editing service. You can email Dave Fox at [df@wordcentre.co.uk](mailto:df@wordcentre.co.uk)*