ET 01 - Email Tune-up 01

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Original Email

Subject: Broadcast Faulty message procedure

Hi all,

As discuss with Client delivery team, When we try to enable or disable faulty message in future. We also need to check all PBX lines status.

If you have no problem, I will demonstrate the work procedure in my PC tomorrow after lunch (around 15 mins.).

Regards,

Simon

Revised Email

Subject: Procedure for broadcasting error messages

Dear Colleagues,

As discuss with the client delivery team, in future when we try to enable or disable an error message, we also need to check the status of all PBX lines

If it's convenient for you, I will demonstrate the procedure on my PC tomorrow after lunch. The demonstration the will take around 15 minutes.

Regards,

Simon

Transcript

All right, let's take a look at this email from Simon. I'll begin by reading through it, and while I'm doing that I'd like **you** to see if you can spot some of the errors we're going to fix. Remember, we're looking for problems in **mechanics**, **style** and **tone**.

The subject is "Broadcast Faulty Message Procedure". And the email begins: "Hi all".

First paragraph: As discuss with Client delivery team, When we try to enable or disable faulty message in future. We also need to check all PBX lines status

Second paragraph: If you have no problem, I will demonstrate the work procedure in my PC tomorrow after lunch (around 15 mins.).

And then the closing salutation: "Regards, Simon".

Review
Let's start by discussing the background to this email. Who is the writer, who are the readers, and what is the email's purpose? We can see from the salutation "Hi all" that it's addressed to more than one person, and we know from Simon that this is an *internal company email*: Simon is writing to some other employees at the same company where he works. And the purpose of the email is to inform his colleagues about a new error message procedure, and to invite them to a demonstration. These are all things to keep in mind as we make changes to the text.

Mechanics
Now first, let's examine the mechanics of this email. By "mechanics", I mean formatting, punctuation and grammar.

We can see right away that this email is clearly organized into paragraphs, with each paragraph making a separate point. The first paragraph identifies a problem, which is the reason the email is being written. The second paragraph proposes a solution, and asks the readers to help Simon put this solution in place.

Now let's think about how we can improve the formatting, punctuation and grammar of this email, beginning with the first paragraph. Right away, we see a couple of mistakes in grammar. Simon begins by saying "As **discuss** with client delivery team". This verb needs to be a past participle: we add an –*ed* and it becomes "as **discussed**".

The phrase "client delivery team" needs a **the** before it… and as you can see, we also have two mistakes in capitalization. The words "Client" and "When" shouldn't be capitalized, since they aren't the first words in this sentence.

Finally, we need to change the punctuation of this last phrase. Right now it's punctuated as if it were a complete sentence, even though it actually completes the thought that's been expressed in the rest of the paragraph. So instead of a full stop and a capital **W** here, we need to substitute a comma and a small **w**. This turns the entire paragraph into a single complete sentence, which is what we want.

The second paragraph doesn't have any real problems with mechanics. The only change I'd like to make is to spell out this abbreviation, ***mins.***, which is short for "***minutes***". It's not a good idea to use abbreviations unless they're really necessary, since a business email needs to have a formal style.

And finally, I think we need to take out this unnecessary blank lines before the closing salutation, "Regards".

Style

All right, let's move on to look at the *style* of the email, and some ways it might be improved.

I think we should first look at the subject line, "Broadcast Faulty message procedure". The main problem here is the vocabulary. In English we have some standard phrases for describing computer technology. When a computer displays a message to report a problem, we refer to this as an "*error message*", not a "*faulty message*". So we need to change this word from "*Faulty*" to "*error*"… and it shouldn't be capitalized either. And we'll also have to make the same change in the first paragraph… from "faulty" to "error".

Even after we correct the vocabulary, I think the meaning of this subject line isn't very clear. If you read the body of the email, you can see that what Simon's talking about is the *procedure* that the company should use when it *broadcasts* error messages. But it's not easy to understand this just by reading the subject line. Let's create a prepositional phrase so it's completely clear and easy to read. We can say "***Procedure** for broadcasting* error *messages*"… and since we're not talking about just *one* message, we want this last word to be plural. And we'll need to make "messages" plural in the first paragraph as well.

All right, let's move on to the first paragraph. If you look at the very end of this paragraph, you see that we have exactly the same problem we had in the subject line. This final phrase, "*check all PBX lines status*", is very confusing because it's missing some of the very short English words we use to add structure to our writing, like *articles* and *prepositions*.

We should begin by moving the word "***status***" toward the front of the sentence, closer to the main verb, which is "***check***". Let's delete "status" at the end and move it up here, where we also need to add an article, ***the***. Now we have "check the status", and we'll need to add a preposition "***of***", so the last phrase becomes "we also need to check the status of all PBX lines". We've added a couple of words to the sentence, but we've also added clarity to what Simon wants to say.

Now what about style problems in the second paragraph? I see two things we need to change. Simon's used the wrong preposition when he says he'll demonstrate the work procedure *in* his PC. This should be *on* his PC.

I also think we need to make the last phrase of this paragraph a little clearer. When he says "*(around 15 minutes)*", in parentheses, what he means is that the demonstration will last about 15 minutes. But it's probably a good idea to change the phrasing so that's completely clear. I'm going to remove these parentheses and

create a complete sentence to express that thought: "*The demonstration **will take around 15 minutes.***"

Tone

I think that covers all the style changes we need to make. So finally, let's go back and reread the entire email for problems of ***tone***, starting with the salutation.

Starting a business email with "**Hi all**" seems to make the tone a little too informal, even though this is an internal company memo. So let's change the greeting to "**Dear Colleagues**", and remember that we want to capitalize each word in the salutation.

I don't think the first paragraph has any issues of tone. But in the second paragraph, I think we should change this introductory phrase, "*If you have no problem*". Remember, we want to avoid using negative words like "problem" if we can help it.

Instead, let's try to stress the positive aspects of this sentence: Simon wants to help his colleagues solve a problem and he wants to make things as easy as possible for his colleagues. So we can say something like "***If it's convenient for you***," to emphasize the writer's willingness to cooperate.

And with those changes, I think we've made Simon's email a lot clearer, stronger and more effective. So let's hit "Send" and get this message out to his colleagues!

Learning Point

Now that we've sent the message out, let's go back and look at some other expressions that Simon might have used to begin his email. The salutation he chose was "**Hi all**", which is meant to sound friendly and informal. We decided that was a little *too* informal, so we changed it to "**Dear colleagues**".

But there are a lot of other choices he could have made.

If he'd wanted to be slightly less formal than "**Dear colleagues**", he could have written "**Dear team**". Talking about your work colleagues as a "*team*" emphasizes that you're working together towards the same goals, and hopefully enjoying what you do.

Or, if Simon had wanted to be *even more* formal and emphasize the fact that he's making an important announcement, he could have written something like "**To all team members**".

Writing Task 01 (Click here to view/download the video)

Before we finish off today, here's the writing task for this episode:

First, here's the background information:

1. Background
▪ **You are:** a team leader.
▪ **You are writing to:** all the members of your international team.
▪ **Objective**: write an email to your team members informing them of a project meeting to review the results of a safety test.

2. Details to include:
▪ **Purpose:** To share the results of the latest safety test.
▪ **Meeting time:** 11.00 am, Wednesday 21 March
▪ **Location:** Main meeting room on the second floor
▪ **Length:** 1-hour
▪ **What to bring:** results from the latest safety test.

NB: You can invent details such as the name of the company or product if you want, but it is not necessary to complete the task

We'll post an example answer to this writing task in a couple of days, so be sure to check the website at www.businessenglishpod.com to see how you did.

Example Answer

RE: Safety test review meeting

Dear Team,

The entire team will be holding a meeting on the morning of March 21 (Wednesday) to review the results of our most recent safety test.

The meeting will run from 11.00 to 12.00 and will be help on the second floor in the main meeting room. Each of you should prepare by bringing the documentation from the latest test.

I look forward to seeing all of you on Wednesday morning.

Best regards,

Simon

Writing Task 01 – Answer Transcript

Okay, here's a possible answer that we've put together for this writing task. Let's start with the subject line: "Safety Test Review Meeting".

Okay, and for our salutation we can say something like "Dear Team", because this is going to the entire team.

"The entire project team will be holding a meeting on the morning of the 21st of March" – and then in parentheses, "Wednesday" – "to review the results of our most recent safety test."

Okay, and the second paragraph: "The meeting will be held from 11.00 to 12.00 and will be held on the second floor" – comma – "in the main meeting room. Each of you should prepare by bringing the documentation from the latest test." [New paragraph] I look forward to seeing all of you on Wednesday morning. And finally closing salutation: "Best regards, Simon".

[So,] let's take a look at how this [email] has been organized. We start with the subject line, "Safety Test Review Meeting," that makes it clear what the subject of the email is. This is an explanation of why the email is being written: there's been a test, and there's going to be a meeting [to examine] the results of the test.

The first paragraph of [this] email does basically the same thing as the subject line, but in a little more detail. It [explains the situation that led to the email:] the entire project team will be holding a meeting – and then [it gives details about] when: on the morning of the 21st of March, which is a Wednesday – and a reason why: to review the results of our most recent safety test.

[Now:] the second paragraph gives some more specific information about when the meeting is going to be happening, where it's going to be happening, and how the readers can prepare themselves. [It begins by saying that] the meeting will run from 11 to 12 o'clock and will be held on the second floor in the main meeting room.

But what do the [recipients of this email] have to do? What actions do they have to take to prepare for the meeting? [The next sentence begins] "Each of you" – this is a very good way to begin, because it stresses that each individual receiving the email is responsible for doing something – "Each of you should prepare by bringing the documentation from the latest test."

Finally, the closing paragraph: "I look forward to seeing all of you on Wednesday morning." This paragraph does two things. It closes on a positive note: Simon says that he's going to be happy to see all of his colleagues at the meeting. And it also emphasizes that Wednesday morning is the date where they'll [be expected to attend the meeting and take action].

Video Links (Direct Download)

ET 01 – Lesson Video

ET 01 – Answer Video

Learning Point – Opening Salutations

Here are a few other opening salutations we commonly use.

Opening Salutations – To an Individual

Informal: "Dear" plus <u>first</u> name:
Dear Chris

Even more informal (for someone you know well):
Hi Chris

More formal: "Dear" plus <u>last</u> name:
Dear Ms. Kramer

Formal with a title:
Dear Dr. Balcombe

Neutral: to a group with something in common:
Dear Project Managers

Neutral: to an unknown person or persons:
To whom it may concern

Opening Salutations – To an Group

Neutral:
Dear colleagues

More informal:
Dear team

More formal:
To all team members