

Past Paper 2021 – TCA December – Business Letter & Business List

Task One – Correspondence - (total of possible marks 22)

Situation

You work for Carryall Ltd, a company based in Marsa that operates a container service to and from various European destinations. Cargo is delivered to these destinations and safely warehoused until it can be delivered to clients.

You are the assistant to Mr Frank Attard the Operations Manager and your address is Block B 18, Industrial Estate, Marsa, MRS 4567.

You sometimes receive claims for compensation from clients for damaged cargo. Your company has a very good record and reputation. When Mr Attard is away he leaves an answering machine in his office which records messages from clients. When checking the voice messages on his machine this morning, he found an angry message from Giovanni Tiepolo, a fruit and vegetable merchant in Catania, about a problem he had with a delivery he received the day before.

Mr Attard asks you to deal with the complaint yourself. He tells you, *“Listen to this voice recording from Mr Tiepolo and then check things with our manager in Catania. I am sure we did nothing wrong however it is impossible to reach him by e-mail, so it is best that you write him a letter explaining what went wrong. If it is our fault tell him that our insurance will deal with it, however if it is not our fault there is really very little we can do. Anyway, I’ll leave you to it. When you are ready send the letter with one of our drivers travelling to Sicily this evening so that he receives it in the morning.”*

You listen to the voice message on the answering machine:

“Hey Frank! I am Giovanni Tiepolo from Catania. What did you do to my cargo of vegetables? It is all ruined – not even good for animals. I had €9,000 worth of vegetables in that container and now I can’t sell any. If you send me a bill for the transport I will not pay you and I want you to pay me for the lost vegetables as well. I am holding you responsible.

I feel stupid talking to your answering machine but I have no email at the moment so send me a letter as soon as possible to tell me how you are going to pay me. My address is Via Garibaldi 34, 76589 Catania.”

Before you write to him you decide to check things with the driver who made the delivery. He tells you that he had found out that Mr Tiepolo's suppliers had packed a cargo of fresh vegetables in a container which was not refrigerated. They did this to save on costs as it was a short journey and had not said anything to Mr Tiepolo. Carryall had nothing to do with the packing of the fruit and had known nothing about the vegetables being in the wrong container as the shipping documents do not show this.

In fact, the supplier declared the cargo as consisting of dry fruit and not fresh vegetables. Normally, it is the customers and the suppliers who would make the packing arrangements and not Carryall. Mr Tiepolo is right to be angry as on those days there was a terrible heat wave, but it is the supplier who is at fault and not Carryall.

You decide to **write the letter** to Mr Tiepolo to explain what went wrong as you do not wish to lose him as a client. As this is a difficult moment for Mr Tiepolo, Mr Attard advises you to apply the appropriate tact, tone and expression in the situation.

Task: Write the letter to Mr Tiepolo

Note:

For this task select the appropriate complete layout for a business letter which follows acceptable business usage. Invent any details you think are necessary to make your letter presentable and interesting. The message needs to show evidence of good planning and organisation of ideas.

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Task Two - List

Situation

Yesterday afternoon, your manager asked you to go to her office. When you went there you found that the human resources manager was also with her, and it was obvious they had been talking for a while. Your manager asked you to take a seat and explained to you why she sent for you.

"We have a bit of a problem and I would like you to do something about it. I am sure you are capable of handling this task. The HR Manager has drawn my attention to the attitude of some staff towards some of our employees and clients. As you know we have quite a number of workers who come from different parts of the world. We also have clients who likewise come from

different countries. As I was passing through the canteen, I heard some very small groups of workers talking about 'foreigners' in a very disrespectful way. The HR manager has likewise received complaints about this negative attitude. It has to stop now before somebody makes a dreadful mistake with our staff or clients.

This is what we want you to do. We came across an article on cultural sensitivity and we would like you to collect some ideas from it. Prepare a list of guidelines to be distributed to all our staff to explain the importance of cultural sensitivity for the success of our business. Use the important ideas only so don't repeat the many examples which are given in the article. We only need the ideas so do not include anything which is not relevant. By the way, remember to give the list an appropriate title".

Task: Read the article which follows and then prepare an appropriate list as requested.

The Importance of Cultural Sensitivity in Business Dealings

by Lainie Petersen; Reviewed by Michelle Seidel, B.Sc., LL.B., MBA; Updated January 24, 2019

In an increasingly globally connected world, cultural differences, and our responses to them, can sometimes create barriers to doing business. As a small business owner, it is up to **you** to lead your team in developing sensitivity to, and knowledge of, other cultures. Doing so can **improve your relationships** with customers, employees and vendors while also **improving business processes, sales and the quality of the products and services you offer**. **Importance of Cultural Awareness in Business**

Many experts define cultural sensitivity as the willingness to acknowledge cultural differences without making value judgments about these differences. Culturally aware business organizations operate with the understanding that **not every employee, vendor, or customer will share the same culture**. In addition, these organizations prioritize positive relationships with employees, vendors and customers by acknowledging and respecting cultural differences.

Internal Cultural Sensitivity: The Standard Plumbing Company has been in business for over 40 years, and most of its workers live within five miles of the company's office. In recent years, there has been an influx of refugees into the community, most of whom are Muslim. Standard plumbing has hired many workers from the refugee community, who now comprise about 20 percent of its workforce.

Like many businesses, Standard Plumbing offers paid days off to its employees. These days off have usually included Christmas: No regular service calls are scheduled for that day, although a few plumbers remain on call in case a customer has an emergency that needs immediate attention. The company's

after-hours answering service fields the calls and assigns them to the workers on duty.

Recently, however, the owner of Standard Plumbing realized that many of his employees do not celebrate Christmas. In addition, he believes that many of his new neighbours also don't celebrate the holiday, *and may be open to scheduling service calls and appointments on that day.*

The owner of Standard Plumbing speaks privately to several employees to learn how they would feel about the business remaining open on Christmas Day, allowing employees who prefer to take the day off to do so, but giving a **"floater"** holiday to those who work through the holiday. The employees are very open to flexibility in assigning paid holidays. Those who celebrate Christmas want to continue having the day off, while many others are just as happy to work on that day. The company receptionist indicates that she has no plans for Christmas and can easily handle calls during the company's normal working hours.

Standard Plumbing ***changed its paid day off policy*** to provide an additional personal day instead of simply closing on Christmas. The company sent out a mailing to all of its customers noting that service calls can be scheduled throughout the holidays, including Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Many people take advantage of having plumbing work done when they already have a day off, and those who experienced plumbing emergencies were thrilled by the quick response to their calls. Business revenue for the end of December was 30 percent higher than it has been in previous years. In addition, the owner has noticed that employee morale has improved with many workers expressing gratitude for being able to take a paid day off on a holiday of their choosing.

Cultural Sensitivity in Business-to-Business Interactions

Carol Campbell is a new fashion designer who has developed a line of accessories sold through local boutiques. Recently, a popular fashion journalist ***noticed her collection and featured several pieces in an editorial spread.*** Suddenly, Campbell's products are in demand all over the country, forcing her to step up production of her purses, headbands and scarves. After speaking with several trusted advisors, she decides to outsource production to a factory in China. Although she is able to develop a list of reputable operations, she is told that it is ***best to fly to China directly to meet with factory owners and to inspect the facilities.***

Carol gets her visa and books a ticket to China. In the weeks between deciding to make the trip and actually getting on the plane, Carol spends time learning more about Chinese culture and even begins a course in Mandarin.

When she arrives for her meetings with factory owners, Carol is nervous but more

confident than she might have been otherwise. She greets her hosts in Mandarin and they appreciate her taking time to learn some Mandarin. In addition, she is familiar with certain aspects of Chinese culture and business etiquette, which creates a favourable impression. At the end of her trip, Carol is confident that she is selecting the right factory to manufacture her goods and help her take her business to the next level.

Cultural Sensitivity in Working With Customers

Ellen operates a casual restaurant close to a small, private college. Six years ago, an alumnus passed away, leaving his entire, and very large, estate to the school. In his will, the donor requested that the school establish an international studies program that would actively recruit students and faculty from other countries. Now in its third year of operation, the program has an excellent administrative team and is attracting top academic talent from around the world. Yet Ellen's café has experienced a dip in business.

Some visitors to the café have mentioned that Ellen's menu, largely consisting of American-style diner food such as bacon and eggs, cheeseburgers, creamy soup and meatloaf can be difficult to navigate for some of the international students. The difficulties include lactose intolerance, which is common in many countries, and religious prohibitions against eating meat or certain types of meat. Realizing that she needs to make changes, Ellen reaches out to one of the patrons who mentioned the need to update her menu and asks for feedback. The patron suggests that Ellen contact the head of the international program and bring together a focus group of students who can give feedback on dietary preferences. After talking with students in learning about their concerns, Ellen talks to her cooks. After trying out some new recipes and tweaking their offerings, Ellen's restaurant debuts a new menu that features vegan dishes, customizable burgers (**including veggie burgers**), build-your-own omelettes and an extensive salad bar. The new menu is a great hit and Ellen's restaurant is busier than it has ever been. Ellen recently contacted a real estate agent to look into moving to a larger building so that she can accommodate more customers.

Consequences of Cultural Ignorance and Insensitivity

Cultural insensitivity and ignorance can take a toll on your business. The damage may be internal, by alienating and distressing employees, or damaging negotiations and relationships with other businesses. In addition, consumers are increasingly demanding that businesses demonstrate a commitment to cultural respect. Failure to do so could result in loss of reputation and sales.

Disgruntled employees: Employees like to feel appreciated and respected by their employers. When employees don't feel this way, they can become anxious, angry

and depressed. They may also feel uncomfortable bringing up their concerns with management because they feel it will not be taken seriously or may even face retaliation.

Missed business opportunities: Cultural gaffes can derail negotiations and result in missed opportunities. Most business people are professional and understand that not everyone fully understands the nuances of their culture. However, a failure to make an effort to educate yourself, and your team, about the cultural norms of a vendor or retailer could result in giving offense and make negotiations more difficult.

Brand damage: Cultural insensitivity can deeply offend customers and the general public. Exposure to cultural insensitivity can be painful for people from that culture and could result in damage to your company's image and reputation.

How to Develop Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

Developing cultural awareness and sensitivity begins ***within a business's own culture***. Once leadership makes it clear that respect for other cultures is an important part of how the company operates, it can become easier for the company as a whole to reflect these values. One important part of cultural sensitivity is ***not making assumptions about other people and their cultures***. It can be helpful for companies to contract with thirdparty consultants who specialize in training organizations in cultural sensitivity. Human resources professionals can also be helpful in this area. Asking HR staff to stay educated on cultural issues and to be receptive of feedback from employees ***is another way of putting your company's values into practice***.

About the Author

Lainie Petersen is a full-time freelance writer living in Chicago. She has written on part-time, full-time and freelance employment for a variety of online and offline publications. She holds a master's degree in library and information science from Dominican University. Source: <https://smallbusiness.chron.com/importance-cultural-sensitivity-business-dealings-20503.html> accessed Saturday 30 November 2019 at 19:10