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BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE ETIQUETTE IN INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

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In the era of globalization and digitalization international companies rely on different aspects of improving business sphere. One of them is the business correspondence which can facilitate communication across borders. Proper etiquette in business correspondence is crucial for maintaining professionalism, ensuring clarity, and fostering productive relationships.

Effective communication prevents misunderstandings, fosters trust, and enhances collaboration among diverse teams and stakeholders. Moreover, following established etiquette strengthens corporate reputation and boosts overall business efficiency.

The aim of the thesis is to overview the most important principles of business correspondence etiquette in international companies, including language conventions, tone, structure, and cultural considerations.

The issue of business correspondence etiquette has been the subject of research by many scholars, including: Bean C., Fox S., García-Lomas O., Gesteland R., Guffey M., Loewy D., Mole J., Knodel L. and others.

Etiquette comes from the French word *étiquette* (1737) «etiquette», literally, «ticket». By the middle of the 18th century English speakers had taken on etiquette as their own, applying it to the rules that indicate the proper and polite way to behave, whether in the presence of royalty or not [9]. Nowadays, very similar meaning we can find in Cambridge dictionary, it is «the set of rules or customs that control accepted behavior in particular social groups or social situations [4]. A popular British writer S. Fox defines business etiquette with the help of different components as: behavior, manners, closing, art of friendships and relationships, writing correspondence, phone conversation, eating meals with elegance and so on [5, c. 5]. So, we can conclude that the term «**business correspondence etiquette**» is broader than just writing, this includes understanding tone, formality, cultural nuances and appropriateness in different business contexts.

Business etiquette is closely linked to the cultural context in which a business operates. There are two main types of cultures [11] *high-context cultures* (e.g., Colombia, India, Japan, China) rely heavily on nonverbal communication, such as body language, tone of voice, and overall context. Messages are often indirect, and relationships play a crucial role in business interactions; *low-context cultures* (e.g., Germany, Poland, the USA, Australia) prioritize clear, direct, and explicit communication. Business dealings are typically more structured, and the focus is on efficiency and clarity. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial for adapting correspondence styles and fostering successful business relationships among different companies.

Key aspects of business correspondence etiquette [1, c. 67-70; 2, c. 175-183; 3] **in international companies** are:

1) **professional language and clarity** – business emails and letters should be clear, concise, and grammatically correct, avoiding slang and overly informal language. Using plain language and eliminating ambiguity ensures clarity, especially in multilingual business settings;

2) **appropriate tone and formality** – should maintain a respectful, polite tone, suited to the recipient's level of formality. In international settings, balancing formality with warmth is key. Greetings like «Dear Mr./Ms. Johns/Smith» and closings such as «Yours faithfully», phrases like «Thank you for your time and consideration», «We appreciate your inquiry» ensure professionalism, while courteous expressions strengthen rapport; usage of simple tenses and passive voice.

3) **structure of the business correspondence** – popular parts of the business letter include:

– *letter head or sender's address* – the company's name and address, telephone/fax number, telex code, e-mail are **placed at the top right-hand corner** (UK, Japan), **left-hand corner (USA, Germany, France)**; the address is written in **reverse order** (postal code, prefecture, city, street, building name, sender's name in Japan; the street name first, followed by the postal code and city in France and Germany); business letters typically feature a printed letterhead;

– *the date* – date/month/year – BE; month/date/year– AE (the month should be written in full, with numbers in numeral form (e.g., February 14, 2010, not Feb. 14 or February 14th and placed two to six lines below the letterhead, typically on the right side of the page, though flush-left and centered formats are also acceptable);

– *the inside address or recipient's address* – the name and official title, the number of the office, street, code of the city, the country are **aligned to the left** (USA, UK, France, Germany); to the left (**postal code comes first**, followed by the **prefecture, city, street, building name, and company name, title, name** – in Japan).

The reference and the subject line or tema – A reference line refers to information requested by the recipient, and may include specific project, invoice, or identification numbers like «Re: Invoice 43». A subject line states the topic or subject of the letter is usually placed between the salutation and the body of the letter with a blank line in between (in UK); or can also be placed between the recipient's address and the salutation with a blank line in between (in US, Spain).

– *The salutation or greeting* («Dear Sir/Sirs» – UK, «Dear Gentleman/Gentlemen», «To Whom It May Concern» – for unknown recipient in USA); Dear Mrs – for married woman, Dear Ms – without indication of marital status, Dear Miss – for unmarried woman –UK, Ladies – USA style.

– *Body of the letter includes: Opening:* give your reason for writing; *main points:* the main idea; *closing:* thank the reader (USA, UK, Australia, Sweden); in Japan the body part often includes a brief expression of gratitude or apology as part of cultural etiquette.

– *The complimentary close* (British style -Yours faithfully, Yours sincerely; American style – Sincerely yours, Yours truly).

– *The signature* (the name of the person who is signing the letter, placed on the left side)

– *Enclosure* (Enc. or End.– to indicate that the document is enclosed with the letter).

4) **Cultural differences.** International business correspondence etiquette demands a keen awareness of cultural differences in communication styles, expectations, and etiquette. While some cultures value direct, concise exchanges, others appreciate a more indirect and nuanced approach. Recognizing these differences – whether it's the use of honorifics, the response time expectations, or the preferred communication format even between different companies – can help you tailor the messages. To avoid misunderstandings and to build respectful professional relationships you need to follow local certain cultural norms.

Here are some practical tips for maintaining successful business correspondence etiquette:

– **clear subject line:** a well-defined subject line immediately communicates the email's purpose, ensuring that your recipient understands its intent at a glance.

– **concise:** Lengthy letters can lead to miscommunication or loss of key details.

– **capitalization and exclamation marks:** avoid overusing capital letters and exclamation points, as these can be interpreted as aggressive or unprofessional.

– **proofreading:** checking for grammar and spelling errors maintains credibility.

– **respond promptly:** timely responses demonstrate reliability and respect for the recipient's time.

Conclusions. Business correspondence etiquette is vital in international companies for effective communication and relationship building. By using clear language, maintaining the right tone, respecting cultural differences, and following proper message structure, professionals enhance credibility and strengthen global business partnerships. Prioritizing etiquette ensures ongoing success in a competitive market.

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BRITISH IDIOMS THROUGH THE PRISM OF CULTURE

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Idioms constitute a significant component of English vocabulary. Since idioms are closely associated with a specific language and culture, they typically have greater impact than non-idiomatic expressions. According to Alber [1], an idiom is a multiword statement that has become commonplace and is frequently but not always nonliteral. Idioms have a strong connection to the innermost feelings and beliefs of native speakers and reflect their surroundings, life, history, and culture.