

WRITING SKILLS: a tactful business email

6 In small groups, discuss the question below.

Why is it necessary to take extra care with the language you use when sending emails at work?

7 Read the feedback on a presentation by Karl Meyer, a new sales manager. Rank the complaints according to how serious they are.

Here are some typical comments from the feedback forms:

- 1 'He arrived late and was very nervous. I don't think he'd prepared his talk properly.'
- 2 'I was sitting at the back of the room. None of the back row could hear what he said.'
- 3 'What a boring voice! I switched off after a couple of minutes. And I wasn't the only one.'
- 4 'He didn't seem to have any plan for his talk. It was like an improvised monologue, no structure at all.'
- 5 'He forgot to mention the most important thing, the unique selling points of the new product.'
- 6 'He read most of his presentation. There wasn't much eye contact. He had no rapport with his audience.'
- 7 'His powerpoint didn't work properly. He got his slides mixed up and looked really embarrassed. He kept apologising, which annoyed me.'
- 8 'I asked some straightforward questions, but he couldn't answer them. How can I sell the product if I can't answer my customers' queries?'
- 9 'He ran out of time, so he raced through the last ten minutes of his talk.'
- 10 'It was one of the worst presentations I've ever attended!'

8a Paraphrasing Match paraphrases (a–f) of some of the complaints in Exercise 7 to the original complaints (1–6).

- a) A member of the audience mentioned that your voice was rather low.
- b) It was suggested that you arrived late and seemed a little nervous.
- c) Varying the tone and pitch of your voice would improve the delivery of your presentation.
- d) Unfortunately, you failed to mention the unique selling points of the product.
- e) Several participants felt that your talk lacked a clear structure.
- f) It's probably not a good idea to read a presentation because you need to keep eye contact with your audience.

8b What words or phrases in each paraphrase help to express the participants' opinions in a tactful way? Try to explain how the words/phrases do this.

8c Paraphrase complaints 7–10 from Exercise 7 so the opinions are expressed in a tactful way.

9 As Karl Meyer's boss, write a tactful email to him, giving feedback on his presentation and advising him on how to improve his performance.

Dear Karl,

I've received some feedback from members of the audience who attended your recent presentation to our local distributors. Unfortunately, there were some negative comments about your presentation ...

10 Compare your answer with the model answer on page 168.

