

# Teaching Writing to the Pragmatic Business Student

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*A semester plan for a college Business English course begins with research of a corporation and culminates with the creation of a corporate pamphlet or brochure. The product is similar to one the business student may be asked by a manager to create five years from now.*

As teachers, we need to organize the college or university Business English course in such a way as to expose the student pragmatically to the business environment. This approach captures the immediate interest and ensures the ultimate success of our students. To accomplish this, the following quarter/semester plan focuses on the student's in-depth research of a corporation. This research leads the individual through the production of a resume, a stock chart, a business letter, an oral presentation to the class, rehearsal of interviewing techniques, the memo and the proposal, the writing of abstracts and minutes, and eventually to the creation of a 10-page pamphlet or corporate in-house publication.

I first ask my Business majors to imagine themselves perhaps five or ten years from now in an office situation requiring them to produce clear, well-organized, error-free technical writing. They are employees in an office or a corporation of their choice traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The student will chart the market price of the company's stock for three months' time after learning how to read the newspaper stock charts and will begin to do extensive research on that corporation. Various resources are used for this research, including library business department sources such as F and S Predicasts, Moody's Manual, and the Business Periodicals Index. The student will learn the following information about the company: history; size and leadership; product and service lines; financial past, present, and future; in-house publications; organization; plans for the future; and, benefits for employees.

Each student learns how to do research in the business department of a university library and review research procedures involving note and bibliographical cards. Interviewing and public speaking skills are also developed by doing an oral presentation on the corporation.

All the assignments for the semester lead up to the final, large project for the end of the term—the creation of a pamphlet or brochure of at least 2000 words. After thinking carefully about what the particular audience needs to know, the student will integrate a pamphlet with sections including the history of the corporation and/or any of the following sections: financial history, products and services, company organization, company benefits, and future plans.

The assignments that lead to the final product are highlighted below:

- Student's resume
- The company's stock chart
- Business letter to the corporation asking for information: company history, in-house publications, benefits, etc.
- The telephone interview
- Proposal for the Pamphlet
- Article on the history of the corporation, with complete documentation
- Memo concerning the proposed Pamphlet
- Abstract of a business periodical article on the corporation
- Minutes of a departmental meeting on the Pamphlet
- An oral presentation on the corporation
- The Pamphlet

Throughout the term, the student is writing other short supplemental papers concerning progress of the research, all of which will be critiqued by the teacher and revised by the student.

I point out to my students that this kind of research, at least in a truncated form, is really necessary for every student about to interview with a company representative for any kind of job. Each applicant has only twenty interview minutes to impress that rep; his or her obvious extensive knowledge of the corporation would indeed be impressive.

I have taught forms of this curriculum as a required semester course for business majors, as a part of the college freshman English course, and even to Joint Enrollment high school seniors. In my experience, it provides pragmatic insight into the business world of writing for all of these groups. •