

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – Writing a semi-formal update to your Manager

This article aims to share the outputs of recent workshops I have conducted on writing a semi-formal progress update. The style and language are designed to reflect a close and professional working relationship with your manager. Contact me, toby@tlp.lu with any questions or reflections.

Context: You are sending an email to your manager who has been away from the office for a week.

An example:

Hi Petra,

I hope the London trip is going well. As discussed, please find an update on progress over the last week. We have finalised the xxx, let me know if you want me to send it directly to xxx. I have also completed a draft version of xxx which I am going to send over to you by the end of the day. We expect to finalise the release of xxx by the end of next week and I will keep you updated. We still have a number of issues with the XP2 system. I have chased the IT team and I feel we are not getting an acceptable level of service right now. I might need to escalate this to you and will wait to see what happens early next week. Let me know if you have any questions on this and have a safe journey back.

Best

Toby

Some points about the above:

- 1) Petra is my manager, and my tone indicates we have a good relationship. In this context I would feel comfortable with 'Hi'.
- 2) I still give some friendly context at the start of this email as in this scenario we have been out of contact for a few days.
- 3) I start with the positives and then highlight a challenge but try and do this in an authentic way.

- 4) I use a 'feeling based' verb to express my convictions - 'I feel', ('I think', 'I believe' - are alternatives). This allows me to clearly express my views but still retain my professionalism.
 - 5) My style is open, so I naturally use 'I have finalised...' to encourage my manager to feedback if they want to.
 - 6) I use 'going to' to highlight a confident commitment. I use 'expect to' to highlight a qualified commitment.
 - 7) I use 'we' a lot because I want to highlight a sense of common purpose.
 - 8) I use some bread (*reference email sandwich*) at the end of the email - 'Let me know if you have any questions...' I feel this makes my style more open and responsive.
 - 9) I use 'Best' to highlight I want to stay professional but communicate warmth/familiarity at the same time. Note I would not use 'Best' to contacts I don't know very well - as they might simply think I had forgotten 'regards'.
 - 10) The above email could be relaxed even more in tone by removing words from the sentences I use. For example, I could shorten my closing expression to - 'Any questions, let me know'.
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