

Case Study – Li & Fung

# Improving Writing Skills for International Communication

## ABOUT CLARKMORGAN

Founded in 2001, ClarkMorgan Ltd is one of Greater China's most awarded training and development firms. The firm has been 'Training Firm of the Year' in both 2007 and 2008 by CCH Wolters Kluwer and 'Most Outstanding New Trainer' by the Hong Kong Management Association in 2008.

In 2005 the company began publishing China's longest running, bilingual human resources magazine, NetworkHR. In 2012 ClarkMorgan helped found the Chinese Association of Training & Development Specialists (CATDS).

Today ClarkMorgan Ltd has three offices across China, as well as an office in Melbourne, Australia. The firm assists both foreign and Chinese multinational firms improve the soft skills of their employees to improve productivity, engagement, sales and negotiation outcomes.

The company maintains a faculty of 12 full time trainers, each with unique skill sets. Trainers speak English and Mandarin and have worked throughout Australia, China, Europe, South East Asia, and the USA.

For more information, please visit [www.clarkmorgan.com](http://www.clarkmorgan.com).

## BACKGROUND

Li & Fung is one of the largest sourcing firms in the world, with service offerings extending into consumer goods design, R&D development, and logistics. The company was founded in 1906 in Guangzhou, and today has a network of over 300 offices and distribution centres across more than 40 countries.

Li & Fung merchandisers liaise between Chinese factories and foreign buyers, which include Target, Myers, Walmart and Kohl's, among many others. The profitability of the company lies directly in the communication skills of these merchandisers, who must encourage agreement between two opposing parties simultaneously, while retaining an attractive commission for Li & Fung.

ClarkMorgan was approached to provide business writing training for 60 senior merchandisers based in Shanghai.

## ISSUE

The 60 senior merchandisers had varying levels of English proficiency. While some had worked overseas, the majority of the merchandiser had only worked in China. All had approximately 5 years of business experience.

Added to this limited experience was the need of merchandisers to be able to jump between cultures. Communication between the factory and Li & Fung was typically done on the phone in Mandarin, while communication with foreign buyers was done exclusively in English and in written format, due to time zone limitations. The senior merchandisers were having difficulty switching communication styles and assimilating with foreign buyers, and so a training course, that would create clear boundaries, sample emails, as well as a better cultural understanding of foreign business practices was planned.

## SOLUTION

The training program developed was specifically customised to the needs of the senior merchandisers. Specific templates were developed, the trainees' sample emails were captured and incorporated into the training materials and life email consultation was conducted during the training.

The training materials also included methods of building relationships with remote international clients. Finally, a series of cross cultural messages were added to the program to allow the trainees to gain a stronger understanding of American, Australia, British, French and German cultural differences.

## RESULTS

The Business Writing program was first rolled out in April of 2007 and delivered by ClarkMorgan co-founder, Morry Morgan. The student evaluations of this training were 4.5 out of 5.

At the time of writing this business writing course has been replicated 24 times across Shanghai, Hangzhou, Ningbo, and Qingdao, highlighting its popularity from both Li & Fung's human resources department and the Li & Fung employees.

## MODULES TAUGHT

### Day 1: Foundation Skills

- The 10 Email Commandments
- Starting with the Goal in Mind
- Avoiding Redundant Language
- Formal vs. Informal Language
- Direct vs. Indirect Language
- Using Specific Language to Improve Understanding
- Structuring Your Business Writing with PDA

### Day 2: Writing with Influence

- Proactively Presenting Solutions - Problem, Cause, Effect, Solution, Consequence
- Positive Language
- Reflective Language
- Handling Written Complaints
- Refusing a Request
- Writing Better Business Reports – BIRS Structure

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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