

Chapter Four

Enquiries and Replies

Section 1

Introduction

In international trade, letters of enquiry (also inquiry) are an important routine document in the pre-deal business stage. Enquiries can be made either by the supplier or the buyer. However, the buyer makes most of the enquiries in practice.

Enquiries are sent and received by postal letters, emails, and faxes in business for information about goods or services. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of enquiries: general and specific. In a general enquiry, the buyer may only request some general information such as a catalogue, price list or quotation sheets, samples, illustrated prints, and so on. In a specific enquiry, the buyer can enquire about quality, quantity, specifications, terms of payment, date of shipment and delivery, and other specific requirements.

Enquiries mean potential business, so they must be acknowledged promptly and courteously. If an immediate sale is not available, an enquiry must be acknowledged to establish goodwill, informing the enquirer, e.g. when the goods can be supplied, or introducing some substitutes which perhaps will bring in more business in the future. If the enquiry is from an established customer, say how much you appreciate it; if it is from a prospective customer, i.e. a first enquiry, say you are glad to receive the enquiry and express the hope of a lasting and friendly business relationship.

An important principle with enquiries, as indeed with all business communication, is that of always replying and helping existing or potential customers. Even if you cannot supply their immediate needs, you may be able to offer alternative products of interest or help them locate what they are looking for. Not replying is not an option: it will close the door to any future business and lose goodwill. In replying to enquiries it is possible and even desirable to personalise your answers by encouraging the customer to contact you and actively encouraging them to make contact with you or another named person.

Section 2

Specimen Documents

Specimen 1: Enquiry from a retailer to a foreign manufacturer and reply

Dear Sirs

We were impressed by the selection of sweaters that were displayed on your stand at the 'Menswear Exhibition' that was held in Shanghai last month.

We are a large chain of retailers and are looking for a manufacturer who could supply us with a wide range of sweaters for the teenage market.

As we usually place very large orders, we could expect a quantity discount in addition to a 20% trade discount off net list prices, and our terms of payment are normally 30-day bill of exchange, documents against acceptance.

If these conditions interest you, and you can meet orders of over 500 garments at one time, please send us your current catalogue and price list. We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully

L Crane
Chief Buyer
For F. Lynch & Co.

Possible reply

Dear Mr Crane

We are pleased to receive your enquiry, and to hear that you liked our range of sweaters.

There would certainly be no trouble in supplying you from our wide selection of garments which we make for all age groups.

We can offer you the quantity discount you asked for which would be 5% off net prices for orders over US\$3,000, but the usual allowance for a trade discount in China is 15%, and we always deal on payment by sight draft, cash against documents. However, we would be prepared to review this once we have established a firm trading association with you.

Enclosed you will find our summer catalogue and price list quoting prices cif London.

We are sure you will find a ready sale for our products in Mexico as have other retailers throughout Europe and America, and we do hope we can reach an agreement on the terms quoted.

Thank you for your interest; we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely

Rodger Li (Mr)

Specimen 2: General enquiry and reply

United Textiles Limited

22 Lawton Street

Liverpool

England

8 May 2012

Chinatex Corporation

19 Jianguomen High Street

Beijing

China

Dear Sirs

We have received your name and address from Messrs. Anderson & Co. and are delighted to learn that you export hand-made gloves in a variety of colors and designs.

We are a large dealer in gloves in the UK and believe there is a large and steady demand here for gloves of high quality.

Would you please send us your catalogue and price list for gloves, with details of your prices and terms of payment? It would be greatly appreciated if you could also send samples of your products by airmail.

We look forward to your early reply.

Yours faithfully

For¹ United Textiles Ltd

(signature)

Possible reply

18 May 2012

Dear Sirs

We were very pleased to receive your enquiry of 8 May and have pleasure in enclosing our latest catalogue and price list for your reference. Also by separate post we are sending you some samples. We are confident that you will find our goods both excellent in quality and

¹ The use of “for” here means that the writer is communicating on behalf of the company. The term “per pro” or “p.p.” can also be used, a short form of “per procuracionem” (由……代理/代签).

reasonable in price.

We invite you to consider and compare the quality and price of our products, and look forward to receiving your first order. If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

Yours faithfully
For Chinatex Corporation

(signature)

Encs²

Specimen 3: Specific enquiry and reply

² Enc. is short for enclosure. It also takes the form of encl. When more files are enclosed in a letter, then Enc. or Encl. takes the plural form of Encs or Encls.

2 July 2012

VBH Australia Pty Ltd¹
4/42 - 44 Hartnett Drive
Seaford VIC 3198
Australia

Dear Sirs

Stainless Steel Hinges²

We are a state-owned trading company in Guangzhou, China. We are now in the market for³ a large quantity of stainless steel hinges.

We used to buy elsewhere and now are looking to buy from your company, because we understand that you are supplying goods of the same quality in large quantities at more attractive prices.

Our detailed requirements are:

Quantity required	5 000 sets
Packing	in cartons
Shipment	September/October 2012
Terms of payment	confirmed L/C payable by draft at sight

Please quote us the best price CIF Sydney as per Incoterms 2000.

Provided your price is reasonable and the quality is found to be satisfactory, we would be willing to place regular orders with you.

We look forward to your early reply.

Yours faithfully
For Guangzhou Metals & Minerals Imp & Exp Co Ltd
(signature)
Wang Jun (Mr)
Chief Buyer⁴

Possible reply

¹ Pty 系英语 Proprietary (私人拥有的) 的简称, 表明该企业为私人企业

² stainless steel hinges 不锈钢铰链

³ (be) in the market for 想买, 要买

⁴ chief buyer 采购主管

10 July 2012

Dear Mr Wang

Stainless Steel Hinges

Thank you very much for your enquiry of 2 July for our stainless steel hinges. We can supply them from stock. We are pleased to quote as follows:

1	Quantity	5 000 sets
2	Unit Price	USD 100/set CIF Sydney Incoterms 2000

Your terms of payment by sight L/C are acceptable to us. For the sake of prompt shipment, please make sure that the relevant L/C reaches us at least 30 days before the stipulated date of shipment.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me personally or my assistant Sally Lewis on [PHONE NUMBER].

We look forward to receiving your order in due course.

Yours sincerely

(signature)

Thomas Rose (Mr)

Overseas Sales Director

Section 3
Useful Expressions

1. We learned your name and address from ..., who have informed us that you are in the market for Chinese tea.
2. Your firm has been recommended/introduced to us by R.G. Nelson Co Ltd as one of the leading exporters of chinaware, and we are writing to you with a view to enquiring about
3. The Homebase Company informed us that you are one of the leading importers of tools and instruments and may be interested in trading with us in this line. For your information, we are sending you a list of items which could be suitable for your market requirements.
4. We write to introduce ourselves as one of the leading exporters of a wide range of electric fans and air conditioners.
5. One of our customers is interested in your products and would like to receive some samples and a price list.

6. We would be grateful if you would send us your catalogue, price list and other particulars of your products.
7. Please quote us your lowest price CIF New York for the goods mentioned above, including our 3% commission.
8. Thank you for your enquiry of May 5 concerning ... (omitted). We are sending our latest catalogue and price list for your information by email attachment.
9. We were pleased to receive your enquiry of May 8, and are happy to inform you that some samples are being dispatched separately.
10. We regret that the goods you ordered are out of stock at the moment. We will get back to you as soon as possible to let you know when they will be available.

Section 4

Guide to Writing

1. The following points are often included in a first enquiry:

- 1) Mention how you obtained your potential supplier's name and address. Useful sentences can be:
 - a) We have seen your advertisement in ...
 - b) We have received your name from our associates...
 - c) The Bank of China, Jinan Branch, has informed us that
 - d) We saw your latest models demonstrated recently at ...
 - e) We understand that you are offering ...
 - f) Your representative has just visited us and told us that ...
- 2) Introduce your company briefly. Examples are:
 - a) We are one of the leading importers of ...
 - b) We deal in ...
 - c) Our company is a major distributor of ...
 - d) We are one of the largest Scandinavian manufacturers of ...
 - e) Our company supplies the market with ...
 - f) We do extensive business in ...
- 3) State your market conditions, for example:
 - a) We are thinking of placing an order for ...
 - b) There is a growing demand for private cars in our country.
 - c) There is considerable demand in the Swedish market for ...
 - d) The market for products of this kind is expanding, and we will require ...
 - e) There has been a significant increase in demand for the type of goods you manufacture...
 - f) We are considering introducing goods such as those you produce on the Chinese market...
- 4) State clearly your specific requirements, including prices, discounts, delivery time and other concerns:
 - a) Please send us your quotation for ...
 - b) Kindly let us know what discount you would allow us on a quantity of ...

- c) We would be grateful if you would let us have your catalogue and price list as well as terms of payment.
 - d) Prompt delivery is essential: would you be able to ship the consignments within three weeks of receiving orders from us?
 - e) Your quotation should be in US dollars, CIF Qingdao Incoterms 2000.
 - f) We would appreciate a visit from your representative. Please show us samples of ... and discuss terms of ...
 - g) When quoting, please state your terms of payment and the discount you would allow on purchases of quantities of not less than 100 dozen individual items. Prices quoted should include insurance and freight to Liverpool.
- 5) Encourage your correspondent to reply:
- a) We look forward to hearing from you.
 - b) We hope to hear from you very soon.
 - c) We would appreciate an immediate reply by fax.
 - d) Since we need these articles urgently, a prompt reply is essential.
 - e) Please let us know as soon as possible whether you are able to supply us.
 - f) We are looking forward to receiving this information, and to doing business with you.

In a follow-up enquiry, it is not necessary to mention the first two points.

2. The following points are usually included in replies to enquiries:

- 1) Thank the enquirer for his/her interest in your products. Examples are:
 - a) Thank you for your interest in our products.
 - b) We are pleased to learn that you are interested in our products.
- 2) Assure your customer that you have faith in your product, which means that you have to "sell" it. Examples are:
 - a) Our products are both high in quality and reasonable in price.
 - b) Our goods are enjoying increasing sales in various countries of the world.
 - c) Our products have a high reputation in the world for their excellent (superior) quality.
 - d) Our goods are famous for their good quality and fine workmanship. They have been especially popular in the European market.

Otherwise, offer an alternative
- 3) Make sure that you do not leave out information and have supplied the printed matter that you think will help your customer.
 - a) We are airmailing you the pricelist and catalogue you asked separately.
 - b) Enclosed please find the samples you requested, namely children's cars in the "Sprite" range of toys.
 - c) All the information you need has been sent out under separate cover today.
- 4) Encourage an early reply, e.g.
 - a) We look forward to your early reply.
 - b) We would appreciate a prompt reply.

Section 5

Exercises

I. Drills

Directions: Complete the sentences as in the examples, making changes as needed.

Example 1: Further/to your request, /please find enclosed a catalogue and price-list

1. Mr Smith's letter of 19 August/updated quotation
2. Your enquiry of....../our provisional proposals
3. Your telephone call of....../technical specifications and prices of model TX343

Example 2: With reference to your letter of / 26 April/ we/ have pleasure in sending you/ details of our product range

1. 5 May/ we/ details of our product specification
2. 17 January/information on prices and discounts
3. 25 November/catalogue and latest pricelists

Example 3: Please find enclosed (attached)/details of quantity discounts/ as well as/ the names of our retail outlets near your area

1. details of proposed conditions/ sample contract
2. an order form/special discounts
3. provisional contract/proposed conditions

II. Fill-in Tasks

Task One

Directions: Fill in the blanks with correct prepositions:

1. We are _____ the market _____ mountain bicycles. If your price is competitive and your samples are satisfactory _____ our customers, we will place orders _____ you _____ large quantities.
2. We have received your enquiry _____ October 10 _____ TV sets. We are sending our quotation along _____ the catalogue _____ your reference.
3. We have learned _____ the Camquip Company that you are one of the leading manufacturers specializing _____ digital cameras.
4. We very much regret that we are not _____ a position to supply the goods you ordered because they are _____ of stock at present, but we assure you that we will return _____ this matter as soon as they become available.
5. We look forward _____ your early reply.

Task Two

Directions: Complete the following letter with the proper form of words in a box.

enclose, interest, discount, of, in, deliver, term, inquire, contact me, do business, pay, process, quantity
--

Dear Mr Morris.

Thank you for your enquiry (1) 26 May in which you expressed interest (2) our range of kitchenware.

Please find (3) our current brochure and price list.

In response to your request for a 20% trade (4) we regret that we cannot offer more than 10%. However, we can offer a 15% (5) discount on orders over € 20,000. We think our (6) of trade are very competitive.

We believe that (7) in one month will not be a problem. On the first order (8) must be made by sight draft until we establish a business relationship, when terms of credit can be negotiated.

Thank you again for your (9) and we look forward to (10) your order in due course and to (11) with you in the future.

If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to (12).

Yours sincerely,

P. Hislop
Sales Manager

Enc.

Task Three

Directions: Complete the following letter from a supplier to a client, acknowledging his letter of enquiry and informing him that the Sales Manager will be sending him the information he requested and a current price list.

Dear Mr. Lewis

We ____ receipt of your letter of ____ of 16 April.

Our Sales Manager will be ____ you ____ information on our product range, as well as a ____.

We thank you for your interest and ____ to ____ your order in the near ____.

Yours ____

John McCue
General Manager

III. Structured Writing

Task One

Directions: Rearrange the following into a coherent letter of enquiry. Make any changes needed.

- Dear Sirs, I acknowledge receipt of your
- I would be grateful if you could let me
- overseas delivery. Yours faithfully, ...
- interested in your new
- letter of 10 September together with catalogue and we are especially
- have your latest price list as
- range of rainproof cagoules⁵ on pages 10-12
- well as the conditions for

Task Two

Directions: Here is a jumbled answer to the above enquiry. Please give the right order.

- We look forward to
- and we would be happy to send you
- in enclosing our latest catalogue and price lists
- Dear Mr Saulter, we thank you for
- any further information you may need.
- business with you in the future.
- your letter of 18 May
- in which you express an interest in our software range,
- As requested, we have pleasure
- receiving your order in due course and doing

IV. Guided Writing

Directions: Write a letter from Mr Chandler of Greenclean plc, Skinner Street, Stockton, TS18 3GH, to Ms Reynolds of Agribiz Ltd, 12-5 Powley Street, Ilkley, YE8 7BT. Include the following points.

- thank Mrs Reynolds for her enquiry of 10 January
- tell that you are sending a selection of your latest samples
- you are also sending your latest pricelists and a catalogue of your product range
- Say that you would like to draw her attention to the products on pages 20 -24 which may be particularly suitable for her company
- say that you will be happy to answer further questions and encourage her to contact you again at any time
- end with a suitable sign-off and complimentary close

V. Translating

Directions: Translate the following two extracts, one into English, and the other into Chinese, irrespective of medium of delivery.

Extract 1

我公司是中国最大的化工产品进口商之一，我们在该行业已经有 20 多年的经验

⁵ light long waterproof jacket with a hood 有兜帽的轻便长雨衣

了。

我们从 BHT 公司得知你公司的 AL326 型号漆料质量很好，畅销世界各地。现寄去询价单一纸，希望你方报最优惠的大连到岸价，包括我方 2% 佣金，请标明最早船期和可供数量。为方便我方了解你方全部产品，请立即航邮 6 份产品目录。

若你方报价具有竞争力，我们拟大量订购。

盼早复。

Extract 2

Our company is a medium-sized manufacturing company. We are interested in your products.

Please send us a pro forma invoice for five of your machines, CIF Los Angeles. Please indicate your payment terms and estimated time of delivery after receipt of our firm order.

VI. Revising

Directions: Revise the following letter of enquiry with reference to the rules of good business writing presented in Chapter One so as to sound more polite, natural and coherent.

Dear Sirs

We are an importer of mailing machinery. We learn that your new model RW102 Mail Sorter is more efficient. Your price is the same.

The post office is undergoing a technical reform. There is a great demand for the machine.

We wish to place a trial order for three sets only this time. If your conditions are suitable, further larger orders will follow.

Please let us know your detailed terms. Please confirm the sale. Please deliver soon.

Please reply quickly.