

CHAPTER FIVE

Writing for a Positive Effect



Overview

- ▲ Need for effect
- ▲ Conversation style, rubber stamps, old language
- ▲ You-viewpoint
- ▲ Positive language
- ▲ Courtesy
- ▲ Emphasis
- ▲ Flow, transitional devices

The Importance of a Positive Effect

- ▶ Effective business writing sometimes must create the right effect.
 - ▶ The right effect can help to build goodwill.
 - ▶ And it can help in achieving message goals.

Create the right effect by (1) using conversational style.

Stiff and Dull

Reference is made to your March 16 letter, in which you describe the approved procedure for initiating a claim.

Enclosed herewith is the brochure about which you make inquiry.

I shall be most pleased to avail myself of your kind suggestion when and if prices decline.

Conversational

Please refer to your March 16 letter, in which you tell how to file a claim.

Enclosed is the brochure you asked about.

I'll gladly follow your suggestion if the price falls.

Create the right effect by (2) avoiding rubber stamps.

- ▲ At an early date
- ▲ Attached please find
- ▲ Complying with your favor of
- ▲ Due to the fact
- ▲ Hit the road
- ▲ Bit the hand that feeds you
- ▲ Take it with a grain of salt
- ▲ Too many irons in the fire
- ▲ As per
- ▲ Neither here nor there
- ▲ A good man is hard to find
- ▲ You'd better believe
- ▲ Let her hair down
- ▲ Rat race
- ▲ Thanking you in advance
- ▲ Couldn't care less

Create the right effect by (3) avoiding the old language of business.

In Openings

- ▲ we beg to advise
- ▲ your esteemed favor
- ▲ this is to inform you

In Contents

- ▲ deem it advisable
- ▲ attached hereto
- ▲ please be advised

In Closings

- ▲ Thanking you in advance
- ▲ We beg to remain
- ▲ Anticipating your favorable response

Letter filled with old-style, rubber stamp wording

Dear Mr. Canfield:

In re: Policy 437 H721 411

Agreeable to your favor of September 6, we have consulted our actuarial department to ascertain the status of subject policy.

Inasmuch as said policy was due on September 1 and this classification carries a 31-day grace clause, I am pleased to advise that your period of grace does not expire until October 1.

Therefore, permission is hereby granted to delay remittance until said date. Trusting to have your payment by that time, I am.

Yours very truly,

Letter revised with contemporary wording.

Dear Mr. Canfield:

Subject: Your September 7 inquiry about Policy 437 H721 411

You are still covered by your policy. As it has a 31-day grace period, you have until October 1 to pay. So that you may be assured of continued coverage, you should mail your payment a few days before this date.

If I can help you further, please contact me again.

Sincerely,

Create the right effect by (4) emphasizing the you viewpoint. (1 of 2)

We: Our policy requires that you pay by the 10th of the month in order to earn the discount.

You: You can earn the discount by paying by the 10th of the month.

We: We are offering a special discount to all our loyal customers.

You: As a loyal customer, you will receive a special discount.

We: Send us your check for \$741 today so that our books will show you as current.

You: Will you please keep your account current by sending your check for \$741 today.

Create the right effect by (4) emphasizing the you viewpoint. (2 of 2)

We: Our research engineers have worked forty-four years to make Deere a safe mower.

You: You can use the Deere with the comfort of knowing that it is a product of forty-four years of intensive safety research.

We: On February 7 we will deliver the Bush desk and chair set your ordered.

You: You will receive your Bush desk and chair set on our February 7 delivery.

We: I look forward to receiving additional orders from you.

You: I look forward to serving you again.

You: Serving you again will be a pleasure.

Create the right effect by

(5) accenting positive language.

Negative: Your misunderstanding of your policy prompts your accusation that we are at fault.

Positive: Section 3 of your policy makes us responsible only when we service the equipment.

Negative: I regret the inconvenience caused you by the breakdown of the equipment.

Positive: The repaired equipment should give you years of good service.

Negative: We must refuse your request to use our equipment.

Positive: As we are a state office, our equipment can be used for government purposes only.

Common Negative Words

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--|--------------------|--|
| ▲ Afraid | | ▲ Alibi | |
| ▲ Allege | | ▲ Apology | |
| ▲ Beware | | ▲ Blame | |
| ▲ Careless | | ▲ Complaint | |
| ▲ Decline | | ▲ Difficult | |
| ▲ Disappoint | | ▲ Fault | |
| ▲ Fail | | ▲ Impossible | |
| ▲ Inconvenience | | ▲ Misunderstanding | |
| ▲ Unfortunate | | ▲ Ruin | |
| ▲ Waste | | ▲ Unfair | |
| ▲ Worry | | ▲ Wrong | |

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (1 of 5)

Show courtesy by singling out the reader.

not this: Your training report for the third quarter has been received and has been judged to be satisfactory.

but this: Congratulations, Jane, on the good teaching indicated by the third quarter training report you submitted.

not this: A prompt reply will be appreciated.

but this: As the report is due on the 7th, Mr. Adami, will you please reply by that date.

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (2 of 5)

Show courtesy by refraining from preaching.

not this: Pay this invoice by the 12th and earn the 2 percent discount.

but this: You can earn a 2 percent discount by paying by the 12th.

not this: You must realize that we can be held responsible only when we install the equipment.

but this: You will agree, I feel certain, that we are responsible only when we install the equipment.

not this: You want to hire a person who can get along with the office staff.

but this: My three years of experience working with people will help me to fit in well with your office staff.

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (3 of 5)

Show courtesy by doing more than expected.

Little extras like:

- ▲ giving more than the minimum information requested
- ▲ making helpful suggestions
- ▲ wishing good luck
- ▲ making encouraging remarks

Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (4 of 5)

Show courtesy by avoiding anger.

not this: You failed to state whether you intend to use the equipment inside or outside.

but this: So that I can meet your needs exactly, please tell me whether you will use the equipment inside or outside.

not this: We have been very patient with your failure to reply to our letters.

but this: Probably there is a good reason why you have not answered our letters.

not this: Your negligence in this matter has caused us a loss in sales.

but this: Because corrective action was not taken, our sales declined.

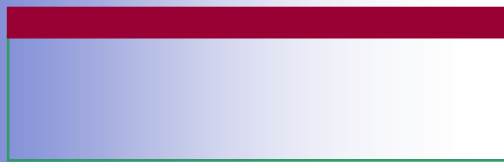
Create the right effect by (6) showing courtesy. (5 of 5)

Show courtesy by being sincere.

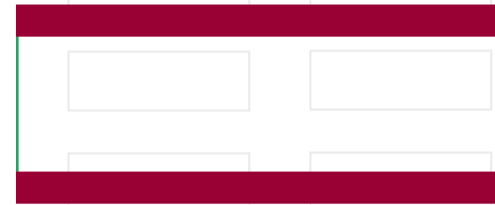
Honestly want to be courteous and friendly.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (1 of 5)

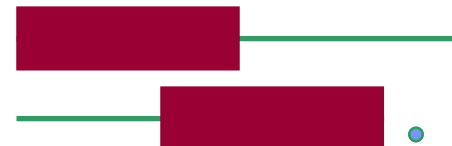
Emphasis by Position



beginning
and ending of
the message



beginning and
ending of the
paragraph



beginning and
ending of the
sentence

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (2 of 5)

Emphasis by Volume

Topic A

Topic A receives more space than Topic B -- thus more emphasis.

Topic B

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (3 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

These short sentences give equal emphasis to all items.

The Cc field is for courtesy copies. Courtesy copies are for the recipient's information. To send courtesy copies, put the recipients' addresses in the Cc field. They won't be expected to answer. They can answer if they choose. You can send yourself a courtesy copy for your file. Do this by placing your address in this field.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (4 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

Here some items get more emphasis than others.

Put the addresses of those to whom you want to send courtesy copies in the Cc field. Courtesy copies are for the recipients' information. The recipients have a choice whether or not to respond. By placing your address in this file, you can receive a copy for your file.

Create the right effect by (7) giving proper emphasis to contents. (5 of 5)

Emphasis by Sentence Structure

This one emphasizes different items.

If you want others to have the information in your message, send them courtesy copies. Do this by placing their addresses in the Cc field. They have a choice whether or not to respond. Place your address in this field if you want a copy for your file.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (1 of 6)

Show coherence through tie-in sentences.

Initial Sentence

As always, we are willing to do as much as we reasonably can to make things right.

Abrupt Shift: The facts in every case are different.

Smooth Tie-in: What we can do in each instance is determined by the facts of the case.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (2 of 6)

Show coherence through tie-in sentences.

Initial Sentence

We sincerely hope that this progress will continue.

Abrupt Shift: There are many new regulators which you can

Smooth Tie-in: use.

To assure yourself of continued progress, you will want to use one of the various new electronic regulators.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (3 of 6)

Show coherence through tie-in sentences.

Initial Sentence

We are eager to serve you whenever we can.

Abrupt Shift: The checks you authorized us to make were made.

Smooth Tie-in: In determining what we can do for you in this case, we made all the checks you authorized.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (4 of 6)

Show coherence through repetition of key words.

- ▲ Before buying plants you should know which varieties are **adapted** to your area. **Adapted** varieties usually are sold by local nurseries.
- ▲ Preferably you should state the **problem in writing**. Stating the **problem in writing** is good for many reasons.
- ▲ The state of order of your findings depends on much on the plan you followed in your **research**. This **research** plan probably was the product of the preliminary analysis you made of your problem.
- ▲ Nouns are the **doers of action**. As **doers of action**, they attract the reader's attention.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (5 of 6)

Show coherence through the use of pronouns.

- ▶ Transitional **sentences** are essential to good writing. **They** are the mortar that holds bricks of thought together.
- ▶ If you think **Mr. James** is most interested in the conclusion, begin with the conclusion. A direct beginning will permit **him** to make **his** decision without delay. If **he** has confidence in your work, **he** may not choose to read beyond this point.

Create the proper effect by (8) making the message coherent. (6 of 6)

Show coherence through the use of transition words.

- ▲ The promotion failed for **two reasons**. **First**, we had very little preparation time. **Second**, we were extremely short of experienced salespeople.
- ▲ For three years we had no funds for maintaining the equipment. **As a result**, we have suffered a succession of breakdowns.
- ▲ After the incident, we installed two additional video cameras. **Nevertheless**, theft losses continued to increase.
- ▲ They built the building on the site that had been filled. **Consequently**, the foundation cracked.
- ▲ Flights attendants at US Airways went on strike. **Similarly**, pilots and mechanics refused to cross the picket line.

Good business etiquette should guide the use of effect.

Whatever you write should be

▲ true

▲ fair

▲ considerate

“Write as though you were addressing intelligent people you understand and respect. Don’t patronize them, but don’t talk over their heads.”

--Patricia T. O’Conner
Words Fail Me