

Business Correspondence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you will be able to understand

- the seven characteristics of business letter writing
- the basic principles of effective business correspondence
- the various common components of business letters
- strategies required for writing business letters
- the various kinds of business letters
- how to write effective memorandum reports

INTRODUCTION

When *Fortune* magazine once questioned many successful executives about what business school should teach, the answer was, 'Teach them to write better.' The message that these top executives were reiterating was that managers should be made to learn the functional importance of effective business writing. Persuasive letters are important. And so are the routine ones, such as writing an application for leave, or explaining a situation, which has gone wrong, through a letter or a memo. In business deals, precision of writing and clarity of meaning are extremely important. Time is a valuable factor and those who can save time through precise communication will be able to use it as an asset for the organization. An organization that values time and communication is bound to gain out of their superior use of communication skills.

When you write a letter you create an image of your company and yourself in the reader's mind. A good letter should be effortless reading that makes the reader want to read more. It should be clear and concise, with short sentences and simple words. It should keep to the facts, and be easy to read and understand.

In this chapter, we will focus more on business letters, although the principles involved in effective written communication also apply entirely to business letters.

BUSINESS LETTER WRITING

Business letter writing is effectual when one knows why one is writing a letter, understands the reader's needs, and then clearly writes what is needed. Every business letter

A good letter should be clear and concise, with short sentences and simple words.

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should be clear, human, helpful, and as friendly as the topic allows. The best letters have a conversational tone and read as if the reader was being spoken to. In brief, the seven Cs of business letter writing include being:

- clear,
- concise,
- correct,
- courteous,
- conversational,
- convincing, and
- complete.

In a business letter, sometimes, a reader has to be convinced to act or react in a constructive way towards the business. The reader will respond quickly and constructively only if the letter is clear and concise, and has a friendly and helpful tone. The company business should not be represented in any business letter as one that cannot make a mistake and is always in the right.

EFFECTIVE BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE—BASIC PRINCIPLES

Let us now consider certain basic principles for communicating effectively in business situations.

Place the Reader First

For all writers, the most important people are their readers. It is also true for business letter writing. If you keep the readers in mind when you write, it will help you use the right tone, appropriate language, and include the right amount of detail. What do readers want from business letters? They want relevant information, presented in a clear and easy-to-understand style. They do not want muddled thinking, background information they already know, business-speak, and jargon. Above all, they want to get the gist of your message in one reading—they do not want to dig for the meaning through long sentences and a boring style. The better picture you have of the readers, the better you can communicate.

Keep to the Point

In business letter, try not to waste a reader's time. The first step in any writing task is to set down the aim. Ask yourself, why am I writing and what do I want to achieve? The clearer you are in your own mind about what you want to achieve, the better your letter. It will help you focus on the information that supports your central aim, and to remove information that is irrelevant. You may also draw an outline to plan your letter, by adhering to the following steps:

1. Make a list of the topics you want to cover but do not worry about the order.
2. Under each topic list keywords, examples, arguments, and facts.
3. Review each topic in the outline for relevance to your aim and audience.
4. Cut out anything that is not relevant to your aim or audience.
5. Sort the information into the best order for the readers.

Set the Right Tone

In a business letter, it is important to use a tone that is friendly, yet efficient. Readers want to know that there is someone at the other end who notices and takes an interest in their concerns. Therefore, you need to observe a helpful and friendly tone, by maintaining a conversational approach throughout the letter.

Always try to present information in a clear and easy-to-understand style.

- Try to be direct and use your words positively so that the reader has a good impression from the beginning of your letter.
- A closing paragraph should end the letter on a polite and business-like note.

Write Effective Openings

Your first job when writing a letter is to gain your reader's attention. It is an important principle of effective writing to put the most important information first. The opening paragraph is both the headline and the lead for the message that follows in the rest of the letter. Some examples of openings in business letters are as follows:

Thank you for your letter dated 8 March 2011, which has been brought to my attention.

I refer to the previous correspondence in respect of the above, please note that to date we have not received your cheque for those outstanding arrears.

With reference to our telephone conversation yesterday regarding ...

Make your first paragraph stand out—get straight to the message and do not waste the reader's time. As the opening paragraph sets the tone for your letter, avoid using tired phrases that are wordy, give little information, and create a formal and impersonal tone. Be direct and use your words positively so that the reader has a good impression from the beginning of your letter. Include the most important information in the first paragraph. Do not be afraid to start your letter strongly.

Write Effective Conclusions

A closing paragraph should end the letter on a polite and business-like note. Typical final paragraphs in business letters invite the reader to write again or use overused and meaningless phrases that detract from the impact of the letter. Consider the following examples of good closing sentences for business letters:

I again apologize for the delay in replying and trust that this letter has clarified the points you have raised. However, if you wish to discuss any points I have not clarified, or need any further information, you may certainly contact me again.

I look forward to hearing from you and in the meantime, should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

I regret that I cannot be of more assistance in this matter, and should you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

In a longer letter, the last paragraph can summarize the key points or repeat the key message. If some action is needed, explain what you want the reader to do or what you will do. Use positive words such as 'when' not 'if'. The letter should end positively and politely. Use the final paragraph to explain or repeat what you want your reader to do.

COMMON COMPONENTS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

This section discusses the common components of business letters (Fig. 6.1).

Heading The heading of a business letter contains the writer's address and date of the letter. The writer's name is not included and only a date is needed in headings with letterhead stationery.

Inside address The inside address shows the name and address of the recipient of the business letter. This information helps prevent confusion. Also, if the recipient has moved, the inside address

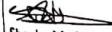
6 June 2012 11/17 Campian Street Egmore, Chennai 78703	Heading—the date and the sender's address.
Mr Raji Patricks 30/05 Aruna Asaf Ali Road New Delhi 110067.	Inside address—name and address of the recipient of the letter.
Dear Mr Patricks,	Salutation
I received your 6 June 2012 letter requesting consultation, and am providing my recommendation in the following. First, let me review my understanding of your inquiry. The question you raise revolves around whether the heating registers should be located in a low sidewall, or in the ceiling, and if ceiling registers are used, which type—step down or stamped-faced—will deliver the best results. Additionally, the problem concerns whether there is any benefit to having heating registers near the floor, whether moving heated air down in ducts negatively affects blower performance, and whether adequate injection that can be achieved on the low speed of a two-state furnace.	Body text of the letter: single spaced text with double spacing between paragraphs; no paragraph indentation.
My recommendations are as follows:	Use of special formatting within the letter—use bulleted or numbered lists, even headings and graphics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I can find nothing in either Carrier, Trane, or ASHRAE design manuals that indicates drop as being a factor in duct design any different from normal static losses. If you have different information on this, I would like to have references to it. I cannot see any advantage to low sidewall application. The problem is injection and pattern. I do see an advantage to low sidewall return; Carrier Design Manual-Air Distribution is a good reference on both items. I recommend step-down diffusers with OBD because they have pattern and volume control that is superior to stamped-faced diffusers. I am opposed to low sidewall diffusers or floor diffusers in the application you describe. The increased static losses that result from trying to get the ducts down through the walls will only increase installation cost and reduce efficiency. 	
If there is anyone in your organization who is uncomfortable with these recommendations, let me know. I would be very interested in reviewing any actual documented test results. Let me know if you have any further questions or if I can be of any further assistance.	Complimentary close
Sincerely,  Sheeba Mathew HVAC Consultants Enc: Invoice for consulting services	Signature block
	End notations

Fig. 6.1 Parts of a business letter

helps to determine what to do with the letter. In the inside address, include the appropriate title of the recipient, and copy the name of the company exactly as that company writes it.

Salutation In a business letter, the salutation—the 'Dear Sir' of the letter—is usually followed by a comma, except sometimes when a colon is also used. If you do not know whether the recipient is a man or woman, traditionally you simply write 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Sirs'. More recently, however, salutations such as 'Dear Sir or Madam', 'Dear Ladies and Gentlemen', 'Dear Friends', or 'Dear People' have been recommended.

Subject or reference line The subject line replaces the salutation or is included with it. It announces the main business of the letter.

Body of the letter The actual message is contained in the body of the letter, the paragraphs between the salutation and complimentary close. Strategies for writing the body of the letter are discussed later in the chapter.

Complimentary close The 'Sincerely yours' element of a business letter is called the complimentary close. Other common ones are 'Thanking you', 'Cordially', 'Respectfully', or 'Respectfully yours'. Notice that only the first letter is capitalized, and it is always followed by a comma.

Enclosures To make sure that the recipient knows that items accompany the letter in the same envelope, use such indications as 'Enclosure', 'Encl.', or 'Enclosures' (when two or more attachments accompany the letter). For example, if you send a résumé and writing sample with your application letter, you would write this: 'Encl.: Résumé and Writing Sample'. If the enclosure is lost, the recipient will know.

Copies If you send copies of a letter to others, indicate this fact among the end notations also; for example, if you were upset by a local merchant's handling of your repair problems and were sending a copy of your letter to the Better Business Bureau, you would write: 'Cc: Better Business Bureau'. If you plan to send a copy to your lawyer, you can write, 'Cc: Mr Saurav Mishra, Lawyer'.

STRATEGIES FOR WRITING THE BODY OF A LETTER

In this section, various strategies that help in writing effective business letters have been discussed.

State the Main Business, Purpose, or Subject Matter Right Away

The very first sentence of a business letter should talk about its main objective. When business people open a letter, their first concern is to know what the letter is about, what its purpose is, and why they need to spend their time reading it. Therefore, roundabout beginnings need to be avoided. If you are responding to a letter, identify that letter by its subject and date in the first paragraph or sentence. To illustrate, let us look at the following examples:

Dear Mr Anupam

I am writing in response to your 1 September 2011 letter in which you described the problems that you have had with one of our chainsaws. I regret that you have suffered this inconvenience and expense and ...

Business letters should include short paragraphs, between three and eight lines long.

Dear Ms Rehman:

I have just received your 4 August 2011 letter in which you list names and other sources from which I can get additional information on the manufacture and use of plastic bottles in the soft-drink industry ...

Keep the Paragraphs Short

The paragraphs of business letters tend to be short, some only a sentence long. To enable the recipient to read your letters more rapidly and to comprehend and remember the important facts or ideas, create relatively short paragraphs that are anywhere between three and eight lines long.

Provide Topic Indicators in the Beginning of Paragraphs

Analyse some of the letters you see in this chapter in terms of the contents or purpose of their individual paragraphs. In the first sentence of any paragraph of a business letter, try to locate a word or phrase that indicates the topic of that paragraph. If a paragraph discusses your problems with a personal computer, include the word 'problems' or phrase 'problems with my personal computer' into the first sentence. Doing this gives recipients a clear sense of the content and purpose of each paragraph. Let us now examine how an excerpt is modified after the topic indicator, 'work experience', is incorporated into it.

Original excerpt I have worked as an electrician at the Bhilai Steel Plant for about six years. Since 2005 I have been licensed by the city of Bhilai as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.

Revised excerpt As for my work experience, I have worked as an electrician in Bhilai for about six years. Since 2005 I have been licensed by the city of Bhilai as an electrical contractor qualified to undertake commercial and industrial work as well as residential work.

Place Important Information Strategically

Information in the first and last lines of paragraphs tends to be read and remembered better. Therefore, important information should be placed in these high-visibility points. For example, in job application letters that must convince potential employers that you are right for a job, appealing qualities should be mentioned at the beginning or end of paragraphs for greater emphasis. Less positive or detrimental information should be placed in less visible points in your business letters. If you have some difficult things to say, a good (and honest) strategy is to de-emphasize by placing them in areas of less emphasis. For example, if a job requires three years of experience and you only have one, bury this fact in the middle or lower half of a body paragraph of the application letter. The resulting letter will be honest and complete; it just will not emphasize weak points unnecessarily. The following are some examples of these ideas:

Place important information in high-visibility points.

1. *Original draft* In July, I will graduate from the University of Bengaluru with a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics. Over the past three years in which I have pursued this degree, I have worked as a lab assistant for Dr Sunetra Roday and have been active in two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the Indian Home Economics Association.

In my nutritional biochemistry and food science labs, I have written many technical reports and scientific papers. I have also been serving as a diet aide at Apollo Hospital in Bengaluru the past year and a half.

As the job calls for a technical writer, in the revised version, emphasize that first, then mention the rest.

Revised draft During my three years at the University of Bengaluru, I have had substantial experience writing technical reports and scientific papers. Most of these reports and papers have been in the field of nutrition and dietetics in which I will be receiving my Bachelor of Science degree this July. During these years, I have also handled plenty of paperwork as a lab assistant for Dr Sunetra Roday, as a member of two related organizations, the Student Dietetic Association and the Indian Home Economics Association, and as a diet aide as Apollo Hospital in Bengaluru in the past year and a half.

2. *Original draft* To date, I have done no independent building inspection on my own. I have been working the past two years under the supervision of Mr Sridhar Saha who has often given me primary responsibility for walk-throughs and property inspections. It was Mr Saha who encouraged me to apply for this position. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and as a clerk in a nuclear construction site.

Do not lie about the lack of experience, but do not highlight it either, as follows in the revised draft:

Revised draft As for my work experience, I have done numerous building walk-throughs and property inspections under the supervision of Mr Saha over the past two years. Mr Saha, who encouraged me to apply for this position, has often given me primary responsibility for many inspection jobs. I have also done some refurbishing of older houses on a contract basis and have some experience in industrial construction as a welder and clerk in a nuclear construction as a site as well.

Develop a 'You-attitude'

In a business letter, the primary focus should be on the concerns of the recipient rather than the writer's. Even if you must talk about yourself in a business letter a great deal, do so in a way that relates your concerns to those of the recipient. This recipient-oriented style is often called the 'you-attitude', where the 'you' refers to the recipient. Let us look at a few examples.

1. *Original draft* I am writing to you about a change in our pricing policy that will save our company time and money. In an operation like ours, it costs us a great amount of labour time (and thus expense) to scrape and rinse our used tableware when it comes back from large parties. Also, we have incurred great expense on replacement of linens that have been ruined by stains that could have been soaked promptly after the party and been saved.

Revised draft I am writing to inform you of our new policy that will be effective from 1 September 2012. It will enable us to serve your large party needs more efficiently. In an operation like ours in which we supply for parties that have guests up to 500, turn-

An 'action ending' makes clear what the writer of the letter expects the recipient to do and when.

around time is critical; unscrapped and unrinsed tableware causes us delays in clean-up time and, more importantly, less frequent and less prompt service to you, the customer. Also, linens ruined by stains, which could have been avoided if they had been immediately soaked after the party, cause you to have to pay more in rental fees.

2. *Original draft* For these reasons, our new policy, effective 1 September 2012, will be to charge an additional 15 per cent on unrinsed tableware and 75 per cent of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked.

Revised draft Therefore, in order to enable us to supply your large party needs effectively, we will begin charging 15 per cent on all unrinsed tableware and 75 per cent of the wholesale value of stained linens that have not been soaked.

Give an 'Action Ending' Whenever Appropriate

An 'action ending' makes clear what the writer of the letter expects the recipient to do and when. Ineffective conclusions to business letters often end with rather limp, non-committal statements, such as 'Hope to hear from you soon' or 'Let me know if I can be of any further assistance'. Instead, or in addition to writing a query letter, ask the editor politely to let you know of his/her decision if at all possible in a month. If you are writing an application letter, subtly try to set up a date and time for an interview. Some examples are as follows:

As soon as you approve this plan, I will begin contacting sales representatives at once to arrange for the purchase and delivery of the microcomputers. May I expect to hear from you within the week?

I am free after 2:00 p.m. on most days. Can we set up an appointment to discuss my background and this position further? I shall look forward to hearing from you.

KINDS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

In this section, some common kinds of business letters such as routine letters, covering letters for job applications, follow-up letters, acceptance letters, rejection letters, resignation letters, inquiry letters, complaint letters, adjustment letters, and persuasive letters are discussed.

• You can refer to the CD for several samples of business letters.

Routine Letters

Any routine correspondence can be planned in three steps—opening, middle, and closing paragraph. These are discussed as follows:

Opening Paragraph

Most routine business letters begin by referring to a previous correspondence. While it is not an exciting way to open a letter, it is efficient and saves the reader the time spent on searching for what is being referred to. Rather than forcing the recipients of letters to match replies with copies of related letters or documents, it is better if the correspondence begins with references to specific communications. Some examples are as follows:

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION INSIGHT**Tips and Tricks for Better Letters**

The first part of writing an effective business letter is following a proper formatting style. The content of a poorly formatted letter is unlikely to be read—in one study of HR personnel, more than 80 per cent said they would throw out a résumé even if there were only one or two errors in the cover letter. However, a well-formed letter is unlikely to be acted on unless the content is powerful and engaging.

An old copywriting formula that can be very helpful in letter writing is AIDA, which stands for attention, interest, desire, and action.

First you get the reader's attention, then you get them interested, then you arouse their desire, and then you tell them what action to take. Consider, for example, the following openings for a business letter:

- Attached please find a résumé for your consideration for ...
- I am writing to inform you that ...
- This letter is in regard to your recent ...

None of them give the reader's mind much to stick on. Some attention-grabbing strategies and few

examples are as follows:

- Flattery: I have been a fan of your work for a long time ...; It has always been my dream to work for your company ...
- A question: Did you know that ...; Have you ever had this problem ...
- Surprise: 10 million people will be killed in traffic accidents this year; In the last three years, I've tracked down and brought to justice 8 of the FBI's 10 most wanted criminals

Once the reader's attention has been caught, you need to create interest in whatever you are offering. For example, you may promise to solve their problems—with a great product, with your services, with a partnership, with whatever it is you are writing about.

Source: Wax, Dustin M., 'How to Write a Business Letter That Gets Results', <http://www.lifehack.org/articles/communication/how-to-write-a-business-letter-that-gets-results.html>, accessed on 22 November 2011.

Here is the information you asked for in your letter dated 12 November 2011.

In your letter dated 9 June 2012, you asked for ...

In reply to your letter dated 8 August ...

If your letter is in response to a telephone call or an in-person conversation, you might use the following beginnings:

Following our conversation this morning ...

Your telephone call this morning reminded me that ...

Middle Paragraph

In the middle paragraph, complete information needs to be given to the reader. Providing complete information means giving all the necessary details. This involves trying to answer any possible questions that the reader may want to ask. A bulletin or brochure, whenever possible, is a useful way to minimize detail in letters.

Closing Paragraph

Letters should be closed with a note of goodwill to avoid sounding abrupt. When we walk away from someone, we tend to say something like 'Look after yourself', 'It was good to see you again', or 'See you soon'. In the same way, in a letter, it is good to end the communication in a way that will enable the reader to think well of the company.

A covering letter is the first step in the selection process.

Covering Letters for Job Applications

A covering letter is the first step in the selection process, whereby the prospective applicant puts forward his/her candidature to the employer so that he/she can be considered for the necessary assignment/work. It has to be meticulously written since it creates the first impression, and many a times, it is here where half the battle is won or lost. It is normally accompanied by a detailed résumé. The format of a typical covering letter is given in Fig. 6.2 and sample of a covering letter is given in Fig. 6.3.

Recommendation Letter

A recommendation letter is a written reference that offers information about your character, work history, and/or academic history. Recommendation letters can help you find a job or get into college. Figure 6.4 provides two sample recommendation letters.

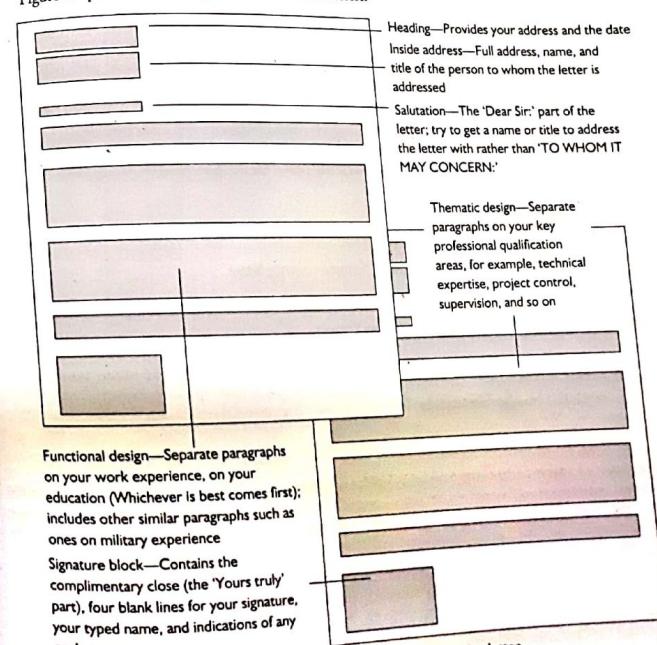


Fig. 6.2 Format of a typical covering letter

B3 DLF Carlton
Gurgaon 78719

4 August 2012
Personnel Department
Technics Ltd
P.O. Box 178
Gurgaon 78733

Hi,
I am writing with regard to your newspaper advertisement in The Hindu dated 2 August 2012 concerning your needs a programmer. I believe that I have the qualifications, experience, and enthusiasm that you are looking for.
As for my work experience, I have been employed with two organizations over the past three years that have given me a lot of exposure on my computer programming skills. My work at Logani Corporation involved the setting up of new software, management of personnel, and the direct use of AutoCAD on a 10-user LAN. I worked as an assistant programmer at Hydrotech Corporation, doing much of the same design, code, and test work as the regular programmers/analysts.
In December, I will graduate with a Bachelor of Science from Haryana University. My overall grade point average is 3.125. In my degree program, I have studied and developed a thorough understanding of the following programming languages: Pascal, Assembler, COBOL, RPG, and C.
You will find enclosed with this letter a copy of my résumé which provides a much more detailed description of my education and employment history. I would welcome any opportunity to talk further with you about the programme analyst position. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time at the numbers listed on my résumé.

Sincerely,
Shobhana Mohan
Encld. Résumé

Fig. 6.3 Sample covering letter

Sample 1: Letter of Recommendation (Open Ended)

Salma Hayat
Associate Professor, Finance
Room No 22, IISSM Management Institute
Kolkata
Salma.hayat@iissm.edu

This letter is to serve as my recommendation for Divya Krishnan. I have known Divya for four years and she is an extraordinary young woman. As her finance professor, I have seen many examples of her talent and have long been impressed by her diligence and work ethics. She has been interested in obtaining an MS degree for some time now and I feel that she would be an excellent candidate for your esteemed program.

Divya has outstanding analytical skills. She is able to successfully complete multiple tasks with favourable results despite deadline pressures. She did a commendable job on two projects related to 'stock market crashes' and 'stock market performance in the automobile industry' as part of her coursework in Security Analysis and Portfolio Management and Functions and Working of Stock Exchanges. Her passion for entrepreneurship led her to spearhead the Centre for Entrepreneurial Leadership which is one of the centres for excellence at BITS, Pilani.

This is a student-led think-tank organization functioning in collaboration with the National Entrepreneurship Network (NEN). As the vice-president of the sales and marketing team, she has organized Conquest—the nationwide business challenge.

I must also make note of Divya's exceptional academic performance. Out of a class of 75 students in the management group, Divya stands in the top 5 per cent. Her above-average performance is a direct result of her hard work and strong focus.

She has also been an active member of the BITS Management Association. Her leadership skills were reflected during her tenure as the student coordinator for INTERFACE 2005, the Annual Management Convention. She was also the chief editor of the management magazine Phoenix.

Divya is a good team player. She also has excellent communication and negotiation skills. She has always taken the initiative to motivate her team and been at the forefront in guiding her peers and colleagues. She has successfully demonstrated leadership ability in group discussions, class projects etc. and is quite comfortable in the role.

If your graduate program is seeking superior candidates with a record of achievement, Divya is an excellent choice. She has consistently demonstrated an ability to rise to any challenge that she must face.

To conclude, I would like to restate my strong recommendation for Divya Krishnan. If you have any further questions regarding Divya's ability or this recommendation, please feel free to contact me at the details given on the letterhead.

Sample 2: Letter of Recommendation (Close Ended)

Recommendation letter
Sun Technologies Ltd
32, Race Course Road
Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Please answer the following questions regarding the applicant, making sure to save your work regularly.

How long have you known the applicant and in what connection?

I have known Sindhu for the last three years. She was my student at the Birla Institute of Technology & Science (BITS), Pilani, where I was teaching finance and management. She completed three courses—Fundamentals of Finance & Accounting, Security Analysis & Portfolio Management, and Management Accounting, and also worked on a project—"Role of Indian stock market regulator in curbing insider trading practices"—under my guidance. It was during this period, that I interacted with Sindhu and closely monitored her performance as well as assessed her capabilities. Over these years, I became an informal career counselor and mentor to Sindhu, and we have discussed her career aspirations at some length.

What do you consider to be the applicant's major talents and strengths?

While there are several positive attributes of Sindhu, a few things that I wish to highlight are—team work, leadership, and creativity. Sindhu thrives in a team environment—a critical skill for success at the BITS program as the evaluation process includes several group assignments.

As a member, she is very hard-working and works closely with rest of the team members to achieve the team goal. She is an excellent leader as well. She seeks to get a clear sense of what is expected and collaboratively arrives at

common goals, role-delegation, and timelines. She works towards creating a trusting, participative environment and motivates her team to deliver more than what they set out to achieve. For instance, as the student coordinator of the Economics and Finance Association at BITS, she effectively interfaces with the student body and the faculty to initiate and organize university events throughout the year such as technical conferences, guest lectures, inter-university competitions/festivals.

What do you consider to be the applicant's major weaknesses or areas for improvement?

What do you consider to be the applicant's major weaknesses or areas for improvement? Sindhura is an exceptional student with several talents. One area of relative weakness that I have observed is oral communication skills. She needs to work on her voice-modulation and diction.

In what developmental areas has the applicant changed most over time?

In her initial years at BITS, she had difficulty in conceptualizing the larger picture to understand real-life business scenarios and needed regular guidance. By the junior year, her continued analysis and research gave her thorough understanding of business environment. This learning is reflected in a paper on 'Mergers and Acquisitions' that she authored. The paper was selected at the prestigious All India Input Output Conference (2005).

What will this individual be doing in 10 years? Why?

While in her junior year, the annual academic festival—APOGEE—was facing a revenue crunch. As the head of photography club, Sindhura pioneered the idea of generating revenues through selling photographs taken during the event to the audience. This was a successful idea that continues to be a revenue source even today. She is a problem-solver who is not afraid of taking the road less traveled.

She was a topper of her class and also led various extra-curricular initiatives. She does not shy away from taking responsibility for her mistakes, nor does she blame others for the consequences of her decisions.

These qualities of Sindhura make me believe that she will be a very successful entrepreneur. I am sure she will be a great role-model that BITS would be proud of.

I strongly recommend Sindhura for admission to the London Business School. If you require any elaboration, please feel free to contact me.

Fig. 6.4 Sample recommendation letters

Thank-you/Follow-up Letters

Thank-you letters are critical to your job search success, and interviews are not the only occasions to send thank-you and follow-up letters. If you have ever helped or done something for someone, and not received a thank you, you understand how employers view this lack of courtesy on the part of job seekers.

A thank-you letter should be written after an interview; when a contact is helpful to you in a telephone conversation or email; provides information; helps you at a career fair; or any other reason for which you want to express thanks and develop a good relationship. Figure 6.5 provides a sample thank-you letter after an interview. It can be observed how the letter creates a positive impression, and shows that Shubendu has exceptional follow-up skills and consideration for the interviewer's time. This letter creates yet another opportunity for Shubendu to offer her skills.

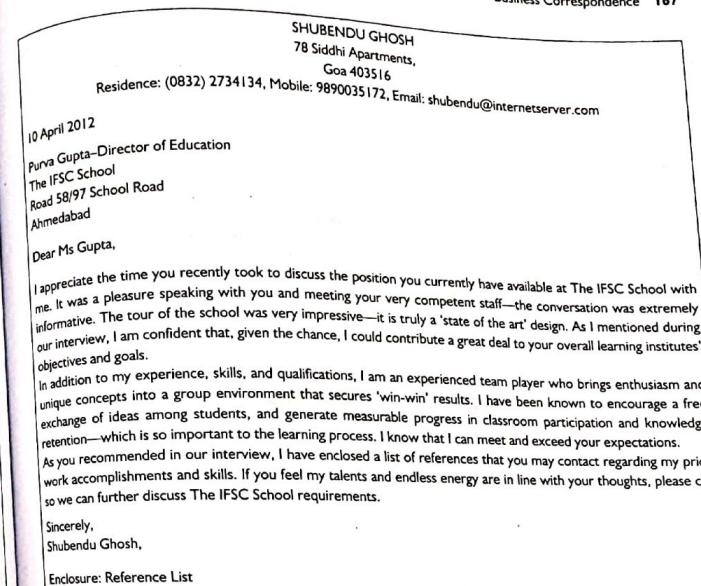


Fig. 6.5 Sample thank-you letter

Acceptance and Rejection Letters

An acceptance letter is required to formally notify the employer of your decision to accept his/her offer of a job. In the acceptance letter, specify the job you are accepting and the name of your supervisor. Also, review your starting salary, basic job responsibilities, and the date on which you will start work. In the rejection letter, tactfully state your reasons for not taking the job. It is beneficial to convey your appreciation for the interview and the employer's time because you may want to work for him/her in the future. Figures 6.6 and 6.7 provide sample letters of acceptance and rejection.

Resignation Letter

Many job seekers do not understand the importance of a carefully-worded resignation letter. When people resign, it is imperative that they do not 'burn any bridges'. As you will see, the sample resignation letter (Fig. 6.8) is very carefully worded. Even if the person concerned (Roshan) may have disliked his supervisor's attitude, the letter does not convey his actual opinion.

Hamilton College 198
College Hill Road, Pune
30 April 2012

Mr Peter Selvaraj
Director, Human Resources
Biotech, Inc., Ferry Brand Building
34th Floor, Noida City Centre, Noida

Dear Mr Selvaraj,

I am delighted to accept your offer to join Biotech as a sales representative. Your phone call this morning made my day. To review our conversation, I will be starting at Biotech on 17 July 2012 at an annual base salary of ₹325,000, a 5% per cent commission, and a review after six months. My primary duties will be selling pharmaceutical products to hospitals and drug stores and researching organizations in the Delhi NCR region under the supervision of Mr Gautam Gupta.

I am very excited about joining the Biotech team.

Sincerely,
Harish Maaran

Fig. 6.6 Sample acceptance letter

Roshan William
Recruiter
Power Recruiters Ltd
Chennai

30 April 2012
Ms Mini Mohan
Manager, Power Recruiters Ltd
8595, Sunset Road, Chennai

Dear Ms Mohan,

Please accept this letter as resignation of my position as Recruiter, effective 30 April 2012. I am offering two weeks' notice, which will give you an opportunity to find a suitable replacement. If you would like, I am more than willing to provide training and orientation to the newcomer.

My decision to resign was finalized after a long and careful consideration of all factors. I regret leaving friends here; however, I feel the change will be beneficial to my long-term career goals and objectives. I assure you that I will complete any outstanding projects and business affairs before my departure—the transition will be handled professionally to ensure no internal or external problems.

Again, it has been a pleasurable learning experience working as part of your team and I wish nothing but success for Power Recruiters Ltd.

Sincerely,
Roshan

Fig. 6.8 Sample resignation letter

Hamilton College 198
College Hill Road, Jangpura, New Delhi
13 October 2012

Mr Kiran Rao
Principal
Windsor School
Green Park, New Delhi

Dear Mr Rao,

Thank you for offering me the position of a French teacher at Windsor School. The offer is very appealing and I appreciate your giving me extra time to make a decision.

After much consideration, I have decided to decline your offer. The decision was very difficult, but I have accepted a position as a teacher at Darpan School. The opportunity to work with a mentor teacher with a reduced teaching load seems to be the most appropriate course of action for me as I begin my career in independent school teaching. Perhaps our paths will cross again in the future.

Thank you again for your interest. Your consideration has been greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Elsa Mathew

Fig. 6.7 Sample rejection letter

Inquiry Letters

An inquiry letter is useful when you need information, advice, names, or directions. Be careful, however, not to ask for too much information or for information that you could easily obtain in some other way, for example, by a quick trip to the library.

Solicited and Unsolicited Inquiry Letters

A solicited letter of inquiry is written when a business or agency advertises its products or services. For example, if a software manufacturer advertises some new package it has developed and you cannot inspect it locally, write a solicited letter to that manufacturer asking specific questions. If you cannot find any information on a technical subject, an inquiry letter to a company involved in that subject may put you on the right track. In fact, that company may supply much more help than you had expected (provided of course that you write a good inquiry letter).

A letter of inquiry is unsolicited if the recipient has done nothing to prompt your inquiry. For example, if you read an article by an expert, you may have further questions or want more information. You seek help from these people in a slightly different form of an inquiry letter. As the steps and guidelines for both types of an inquiry letters show, you must construct the unsolicited type more carefully, because recipients of unsolicited letters of inquiry are not ordinarily prepared to handle such inquiries.

Persuasive letters are an attempt to convince your reader to do something.

Persuasive Letters

Persuasive letters are an attempt to convince someone to do something. These are requests to a reader. Persuasive letters may have two consequences: either a request will be granted or declined. When writing letters of request that the reader is very

likely to grant, simply bottom-line the request, then give all the necessary details. A perfect example of this type of letter is the request for a letter of recommendation. If you find yourself writing such a letter, make sure that you tell your reader the name of the person or organization to whom the letter of recommendation is to be addressed. Also, include all information you have concerning what the letter of recommendation should include—in particular a job description or an account of what the organization is looking for.

The purposes of persuasive letters are threefold. First, the letter wants the reader to act. Therefore, you must provide enough information so that readers know exactly what to do, and you must anticipate and overcome any possible objections. Second, the letter should build a good image of the writer and his/her organization. Finally, the letter should create or cement a good relationship between the reader and the writer—just in case you wish to contact this reader again. In order to meet these purposes and write a good persuasive letter, you must know four things—the details of what you are requesting, facts about your reader, specific action desired from the reader, and any possible objections the reader might have. Refer to Fig. 6.9 for a sample persuasive business letter.

The Society of Insurance Agents
R.S. Puram, Basavangudi
Bengaluru 560 056
10 November 2012

Dr Rahila Khan, Ph.D.
Hyderabad University
Prof. C.R. Rao Road, Gachibowli
Hyderabad 500046
Phone: (040) 3632145

Dear Dr Khan,

Your recent article, 'Are Insurance Agents taking Themselves too Seriously?', which appeared in the July 2012 issue of *Insurance Monthly*, rang a familiar note with our group. We, at the Society of Insurance Agents, agree with the important message of your article and heartily concur that 'insurance must closely monitor our colleagues and must protect against an attitude of righteous self-importance'. In addition, your views and vision have drawn favourable comments from our sister group, Women in Insurance. Both groups have often felt the need for more information in the area of self-monitoring, especially from the point of view of an expert such as yourself. Shortly after the first of the year, about 200 members will be attending our annual meeting, whose theme this year is 'Self Appraisal'. We would be gratified if you could meet with us and make the keynote address.

By accepting our invitation to be our featured speaker, you will be able to assist the appraisal profession and make your message heard on a personal level. The annual meeting will be held on 18 and 19 January 2013 in Bengaluru at the City Tower Convention Centre. We would love to have you and your spouse as our guests for the entire weekend. We can promise lovely weather and an attentive as well as receptive audience.

We would appreciate receiving your acceptance so we can schedule your flights and accommodations as soon as possible.

Sincerely,
Asmita Malik, President
Enc: Annual Meeting Schedule

Fig. 6.9 Sample persuasive business letter

The organization of a persuasive letter is like an inverted pyramid. You should begin broadly by capturing the reader's interest and stating the common ground—get the reader to buy into your problem or situation. Then you should specifically detail the shared problem and its solution. Should you suspect that your reader might sense negative elements (and this is the norm), outline the benefits. Then you should narrow the focus by telling the reader exactly what he/she should do. A very special type of persuasive letter is direct mail. More commonly known as 'junk mail', direct mail is common to sales and fund raising and usually asks readers to part with their money. We get scores of this type of mail every year—and usually toss them out. Yet, organizations continue to send them—for one good reason. They work. Direct mails usually contain an emotional and convincing appeal. The mailing lists are carefully compiled and monitored. The writing is thoughtfully crafted. Next time you receive direct mail, read it closely and try to identify what the writers have done.

WRITING EFFECTIVE MEMOS

The key to writing an effective memo is to keep the goal of all business communications in mind: to get our readers do what we want them to do and to promote goodwill. Understanding how memo reports are written is a very important aspect of business correspondence. Memos, once organized, can help us accomplish organizational goals effectively. Memos and memorandum reports are not the same thing. A memo can be a handwritten note to your co-worker about meeting for lunch. On the other hand, a memo report is a report. It is always typed, and usually has an introduction, a well-developed body with headings, and a conclusion. In this chapter, we will use the term memo to mean memorandum reports. Since the purpose of writing a memo is to convey news and information, any word that is meant to give order or advice should be avoided.

The following command words—called imperative verbs—with 'you' as their subject, which should be avoided, are as follows:

- Come here.
- Do not overuse bullets.
- Please pick up your messages.

In all of these examples, the subject is not stated because it is understood to be 'you'. These sentences tell the reader what to do giving instructions, advice, and by requesting. It is inappropriate to use a memo report to give instructions and advice. Memo reports must not tell the readers what they should do.

Refer to the CD for memo templates and style.

Imperative verbs (and the 'you' pronoun) are condescending; they 'talk down' to readers. For example, if our boss tells us to 'be courteous', s/he is implying that we are rude. Insulting our readers is

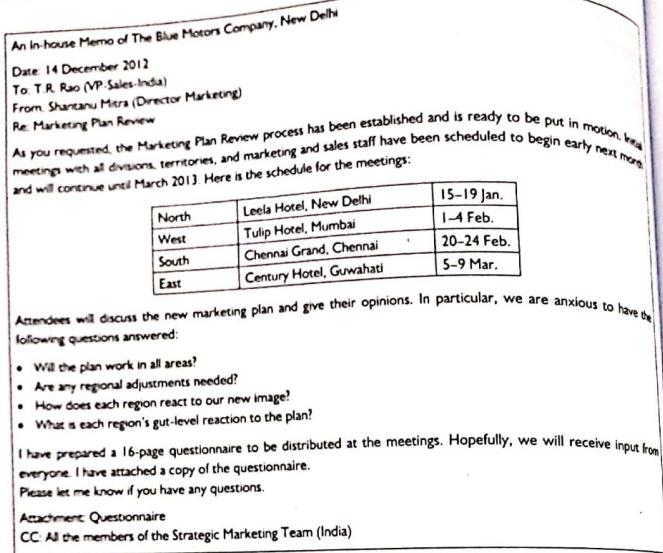


Fig. 6.10 Sample memo report

not the way to get them to do what we want them to do. Instead of giving instructions that tell what the readers must do, a memo report should focus on giving information.

Memo Report Format

All business documents, and therefore, a memorandum report too, requires a specific format and organization. A memo report is carefully designed so that the reader acts upon it correctly the first time it is read, thereby avoiding the need for follow-up messages. It also has an introduction, main body, and conclusion that are discussed in detail here. Refer to Fig. 6.10 for a sample memo report.

Introduction

An introduction to a memo report (a) builds goodwill and (b) answers the two questions a busy executive asks every time he/she receives a piece of correspondence—'what is this' and 'why me?' It has the following characteristics:

1. The topic tells a busy executive what the memo is about. It answers 'What is this?'

The body is the main and largest part of a memo report.

2. The reason for sending tells why that reader is getting the memo, answering 'Why me?'
3. The language is conversational and plain and avoids the outdated and unfriendly 'Per your request' or 'Pursuant to your request'.
4. The tone is friendly, courteous, and positive to make a good first impression. An effective introduction establishes a rapport with the reader. Memos and letters should not begin with 'I' or 'we' since the focus must be on the reader and not on the writer.
5. The length is short and the writing concise so the reader can understand the message in a quick reading without being scared off by a long paragraph.

Body/Discussion

The body is the main and largest part of a memo report. Its function is to report complete, correct, and current information. It includes the following points:

1. The headings (first, second, and third levels) help the reader follow all the ideas within the text. A memo has level headings to help your eye make sense of the content before you actually read it. Main headings are usually centred, while sub-headings are at the left margin. This hierarchy is easy for every reader to see.
2. Conversational and plain language reaches the reader, who might not have the education, vocabulary, or experience that you have. Short sentences and paragraphs are much easier to understand.
3. Concise and precise language gets to the point and ensures that the messages are clear. Concise messages save time and money by being clear the first time, thus eliminating the need for follow-up letters and explanations.
4. The eight C principles—completeness, clarity, concreteness, correctness, conciseness, consideration, courtesy, and candidness—are the guidelines for effective messages.
5. Good document design—bullets, spacing, and headers—make memos look professional and help the reader to understand them the first time he/she reads it.
6. Visual aids are used if they help the reader understand the message better.

Conclusion

The conclusion of a memo summarizes it and ties up any loose ends. It includes the following points:

1. It restates the topic of a memo in one–two sentences.
2. A polite closure offers the best way to contact the writer to ask questions, look at samples, or talk story. It is friendly, uses conversational, plain language, and avoids wordy and vague sentences such as 'feel free', 'do not hesitate to', and 'contact'. An effective polite closure provides extension numbers or email addresses with sentences such as 'If you have any questions, please call me at Ext. 1234.'
3. Its tone is friendly, courteous, and positive to make a good last impression. An effective conclusion also builds goodwill. It avoids implying that the reader needs the information. For example, 'Following the guidelines will make you a good writer' implies that the writer is not good now. A better sentence is, 'Following the guidelines makes us better writers' or 'Following the guidelines results in better messages'.