Writing Professional Letters

Business letters are powerful ways to deliver formal or persuasive information, establish permanent records, or send significant, sensitive, or confidential messages. Although e-mail has become the most popular way to exchange written messages, business letters are still a necessary communication tool. You usually write letters to communicate with people outside of your organization, though you can also use letters to send formal messages to colleagues. Besides the words you write on the page, your letter's design and format tell your reader about you, your attention to detail, and your level of professionalism.

In this unit, you learn about the common guidelines to follow when you compose and format your letters. You also learn how to write business letters that respond to requests, convince readers to take action, and express goodwill. Ron Dawson, vice president of marketing at Quest Specialty Travel, has received a few customer inquiries recently, and he asks you to write letters responding to their requests. In addition, Ron wants you to work on a marketing letter to send to anyone who has enrolled on a Quest tour.

**OBJECTIVES**

Understand professional letter writing
Write business letters
Use salutations
Close business letters
Write routine letters
Answer request letters
Write persuasive letters
Write for goodwill
Understanding Professional Letter Writing

A business letter is a professional communication tool for delivering messages outside of an organization. Although business letters are used less frequently than other communication media such as electronic mail and faxes, when you need to communicate with suppliers, other businesses, and most importantly, customers, a business letter is the most appropriate choice. Figure E-1 shows examples of typical business letters. Before you start working on the letters Ron Dawson asked you to write, you want to review the guidelines for composing business letters.

Use a business letter when you need to:

- **Communicate with someone you don’t know**
  
  If you need to communicate with someone you haven’t met or don’t know personally, send a business letter to establish a professional relationship. Although an e-mail message is easier to write and faster to send, its informal, spontaneous nature can make your message seem too personal or bold.

- **Document your communication**
  
  If you need to maintain a written record of formal communication with someone outside your company, a business letter is often the best choice. Business letters produce a permanent record, especially when they accompany contracts, terms of agreement, or special offers.

- **Deliver bad news or discuss a sensitive matter**
  
  A business letter printed on company stationery conveys more formality and respect than channels such as e-mail. Composing a written letter shows your reader that you take its subject seriously. In addition, business letters can be confidential and are more private than digital forms of communication.

- **Develop goodwill**
  
  A written letter is appropriate when you want to offer thanks, congratulations, sympathy, or apologies. In each case, a letter—including the stationery, typeface, and signature—expresses emotion more effectively than an informal message.

Use a telephone call, personal visit, or e-mail message when you need to:

- **Deliver a message as quickly as possible**
  
  Business letters are typically sent via first-class mail, which can take several days to be delivered. Overnight express services are an option, though delivery costs are high.

- **Contact someone with whom you have a good working relationship**
  
  For day-to-day communication with someone you know, a letter is generally too formal. Exceptions are when you are writing to develop goodwill or need to produce a written record.

- **Write about a routine subject**
  
  E-mail is popular because it’s efficient, and phone calls and visits are more personal than written messages. For routine communication such as requests and responses that do not need to create permanent records, maintain confidentiality, express formality, or deliver persuasive arguments, use e-mail or phone calls.
FIGURE E-1: Examples of business letters

**A&I Training**

March 3, 2011

Mr. Richard
Manager of Informational Communications
A&I Training
12345 Street
Uttlesburg, OH 89212

Dear Mr. Richard,

Thank you for attending the training session and for reaching out to discuss professional development. Enclosed are two copies of the slides for your reference and distribution to all training attendees.

Following is a summary of the training:

Course Title: Professional Web Design

Objective: Students will learn to analyze, design, and create effective websites.

After reviewing the content, creating agreements, and receiving feedback from attendees, A&I Training will contact you to conduct one-on-one training sessions.

Sincerely,

Eric Bowers
A&I Training
Training Specialist

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**Erie Bicycles**

June 12, 2011

Mr. Alan Billings
12345 Street
Syracuse, NY 13205

Dear Mr. Billings,

Thank you for your letter requesting clarification of our bicycle warranty. We do understand that your bicycle was purchased on March 1st and that the warranty has expired. However, if you are willing to bring the bicycle into our shop, we can check the serial number and provide you with an adjustment to the warranty period. We understand the inconvenience this may cause and we apologize for any misunderstanding. The warranty on your bicycle was issued to the original owner, so it is important to have the bicycle’s serial number and proof of purchase.

The warranty does not cover repair due to normal wear and tear or slight damage. If you would like to schedule a repair, please call our service center at 1-800-123-4567, and someone will be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

Eric Brown
Erie Bicycles
Service Center

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**The world’s most effective business letter?**

In 1975, Martin Conroy, an advertising executive, wrote a letter as a subscription pitch for the *Wall Street Journal*. The letter was so effective, the *Journal* used it continuously for 28 years, making it the longest running direct response letter ever written. It’s the ‘Hamlet,’ the ‘Iliad,’ the ‘Divine Comedy’ of direct-mail letters,” said James R. Rosenfield, a direct-marketing consultant. What makes this simple, two-page letter so successful? In a nutshell, it uses plain language to tell an engaging story. The letter begins with the lines, “On a beautiful late spring afternoon, twenty-five years ago, two young men graduated from the same college. They were very much alike, these two young men.” The letter describes how the men return to their college for a reunion. They are still very much alike and even work for the same company, except one is the manager of a small department and the other is the company president. The letter asks, “What made the difference?” implying that the answer involves reading the *Wall Street Journal*. Millions of readers responded to the letter by buying subscriptions, making it one of the most effective business letters in the world.

Writing Business Letters

Before you write a business letter, establish the goal or purpose of the communication. Are you making a request, responding to an inquiry, documenting a decision, or acknowledging an action? Next, consider your audience and anticipate the reaction to your message. When you start to write, follow the standard conventions for business letters shown in Figure E-2. Using the correct form, or block style, shows your professionalism and simplifies your task as a writer. Ron gives you a letter from a customer inquiring about ecotours to the Caribbean and Central America. You begin a letter in response using the block style on Quest stationery.

1. Letterhead
   Most business letters are written on letterhead stationery that includes the company name, street address, telephone and fax numbers, and Web site address. A logo usually identifies the organization. Figure E-3 shows the letterhead for Quest Specialty Travel.

2. Dateline
   Start with today's date. Spell the name of the month and use all four digits in the year. Always use the current date for your letters. Don't pre- or postdate business letters.

3. Inside address
   The inside address includes basic information about the recipient: name, title, and the organization's name and mailing address.

4. Salutation
   A business letter is considered formal communication and should always start with a salutation. This is usually the word Dear followed by the reader's name, as in Dear Ms. Alvarez.

5. Introduction
   Your first paragraph should directly express the purpose of your letter. Explain why you are writing so that your reader can anticipate and better understand your message. Use a polite and conversational tone. Avoid canned introductory statements.

6. Body
   The bulk of your letter should contain one or more paragraphs that provide your reader with information, an explanation, or other details related to your message. These paragraphs should all directly support the main idea presented in your introduction.

7. Closing
   Include a closing paragraph that gracefully concludes the letter. Don't abruptly end a business letter. Instead, end with an expression of goodwill, a polite comment or observation, or a request to take a specific action.

8. Complimentary close and signature
   End the letter with a complimentary close such as Sincerely, Respectfully, or Cordially. Insert your name four lines below the complimentary close to leave room for your handwritten signature.

YOU TRY IT

1. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file E-1.doc provided with your Data Files, and save it as BusinessLetter.doc
2. Replace the missing elements and reorganize the material so it follows the standard format for business letters shown in Figure E-2
3. Save and close BusinessLetter.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
**FIGURE E-2: Standard business letter format**

- Letterhead
- Dateline
- Inside address
- Salutation
- Purpose of the letter
- Introduction
- Details related to your message
- Body
- Request for action or goodwill comment
- Closing
- Complimentary close and signature

**FIGURE E-3: Customer letter and response on Quest letterhead**

**Robert Hibbing**  
568 Oakley Road  
Oceanside, CA 92049  
(760) 555-1223

August 14, 2011  
Marketing Director  
Quest Specialty Travel  
340 West Market Street  
San Diego, CA 92101  

Dear Marketing Director,

Last year, my wife and I particularly enjoyed the tour's powered cactus and spring tour. We are interested in travelling in the future months and would like to inquire about sponsor hikes in the rain forest, which might include exploring the coral reef and Hawaiian tours.

In addition to answering these questions, we are also interested in traveling to the Caribbean and Central America.

Sincerely,

Robert Hibbing

---

April 28, 2011

Mr. Robert Hibbing  
568 Oakley Road  
Oceanside, CA 92049

Dear Mr. Hibbing:

Thank you for your letter about eco-friendly tours that Quest Specialty Travel offers.
Using Salutations

When you write a business letter, you are establishing an image of yourself and the organization that you represent. Often, your letter is the first contact someone has with you and the impression can be lasting. Starting your business letter with a proper salutation and introduction establishes a friendly tone and helps to make a positive impression on your reader. See Figure E-4. In addition to writing a letter about Quest ecotours in the Caribbean and Central America, you need to send similar letters to other customers, including one in France and the other to the dean of a college. You plan to use the same letter with slight adjustments such as revised salutations.

1. **Salutation format**
The format Dear *Title Name* is always correct and should be used in all of your business letters. Use either Mr. or Ms. for the courtesy title, unless you are addressing someone with a formal title such as Dr. or Reverend.

2. **Punctuation**
The punctuation in your salutation signals the intent of your letter. Follow salutations in business correspondence with a colon (:), and follow salutations in personal letters with a comma (,).

3. **First names**
When writing a formal letter, do not include the reader's first name in the salutation (as in Dear Ms. Louisa Jones or Dear Mr. Carl Roberts). However, if you have a friendly relationship with your recipient, you can use their first name only (as in Dear Bob).

4. **Impersonal salutations**
If you don't know the name of your recipient, use an impersonal salutation, such as the reader's title (Dear Operations Manager) or the name of their department or unit (Dear Human Resources Department).

5. **Titles of rank and honor**
When writing particularly formal business letters, you might need to include job titles, rank, or titles of honor in your salutation (such as Dear President Cunningham, Dear Dr. Smith, or Dear Ambassador Wharton). Letters sent to political dignitaries can include terms such as Honorable or Excellency. Figure E-5 lists titles used in typical salutations.

6. **Writing internationally**
Titles and salutations are taken more seriously in some countries than they are in the U.S. However, the rules for their use vary from place to place and using the wrong form of address can be embarrassing. If you are writing to someone internationally, the safest approach is to use the traditional Dear *Title Name* salutation and write your letter with a formal tone. Table E-1 summarizes the do's and don'ts for writing salutations.

**You Try It**

1. Open the file E-2.doc provided with your Data Files, and save it as Salutations.doc
2. Based on the information in Salutations.doc, write appropriate salutations, similar to the ones shown in Figure E-4
3. Save and close Salutations.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
### Written Communication 111: Writing Professional Letters

**FIGURE E-4: Salutations in Quest business letters**

French salutations do not include “Dear” in business letters.

Some international letter formats set the inside address and date to the right.

People in academics require special salutations.

**FIGURE E-5: Typical titles in salutations**

- **Academics**
  - Professor First Name Last Name (inside address)
  - Dear Professor Last Name:
  - Example: Dear Professor Cleary:

- **Armed Services**
  - Dear Full Rank Last Name:
  - Example: Dear Admiral Williams:

- **Professions**
  - First Name Last Name, M.D. (inside address)
  - Dear Dr. Last Name:
  - Example: Dear Dr. Franke:

- **Social**
  - Dear Mr./Ms. Last Name:
  - Example: Dear Ms. Prescott:

**TABLE E-1: Salutation do’s and don’ts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salutation Element</th>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Use the format Dear Title Name</td>
<td>Don’t omit the “Dear”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Include a colon (:) at the end for business letters</td>
<td>Don’t use comma at the end except in personal letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Include the reader’s last name</td>
<td>Don’t use “Miss” or “Mrs.” as a title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use only the reader’s first name for a letter with a personal message</td>
<td>Don’t include the reader’s first name in a formal letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International readers</td>
<td>Become familiar with letter customs in your reader’s country</td>
<td>Don’t assume you can be personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use formal salutations</td>
<td>Don’t use an informal greeting, even if you have a personal relationship with your reader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Closing Business Letters

The way you close your business letters affects your readers’ understanding of your message, their willingness to act on your requests, and their impression of you. Business letters always end with a complimentary close, such as Sincerely. Your signature block appears at the end of the business letter and consists of your signature, typed name, and title (if you are writing a formal letter). Figure E-6 shows examples of closings for a formal business letter. Before sending your response letters to Quest customers, you need to write a closing, insert a complimentary close, and add a signature block.

1. **End with a call to action**
   
   Readers typically scan the last paragraph in your letter to find action requests, deadlines, and activities that you are asking them to complete. Due dates are especially helpful. Remember to be courteous in your requests because people respond more favorably when treated with respect. Table E-2 summarizes the do’s and don’ts of ending a business letter.

2. **Express appreciation**
   
   Express appreciation when asking for something. You can include your appreciation directly in your request, as in “I appreciate your help in completing this report by March 15.”

3. **Maintain goodwill**
   
   If you are not making a specific request, you can close with a positive statement, observation, or desire for a continued relationship. Even when you are writing about a negative subject, try to end your business letter on a positive and professional note.

4. **Use a traditional close for formal business letters**
   
   The most common complimentary close in business correspondence is Sincerely. Others are variations on that close, such as Sincerely yours. Closings built around the word Respectfully typically show deference to your recipient, so use this close only when deference is appropriate.

5. **Use a personal close for informal letters**
   
   For personal or informal letters to friends and acquaintances, you can use complimentary closes such as Cordially, Warm regards, and Best wishes.

6. **Insert your position in the signature block**
   
   In a formal business letter, include your title or job position next to your printed name. A good rule of thumb is to list your position if you also included one for your recipient.

7. **Include your company name in the signature block**
   
   If you are acting as an agent of your company, such as when you submit a proposal or contract, include the company’s full legal name one line below the complimentary close and four lines above your signature. This shows that you are acting on behalf of the company, not individually.

8. **Provide additional notations**
   
   When appropriate, include Enclosure (or Enc) to indicate you are sending material with the letter. Include reference initials if you wrote the letter but someone else typed it. For example, KL:md shows that KL wrote the letter and MCD typed it.

---

**YOU TRY IT**

1. Open the file E-3.doc provided with your Data Files and save it as Closing.doc
2. Review the letter in Closing.doc, and then add a closing paragraph, complimentary close, and signature block
3. Save then close Closing.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
FIGURE E-6: Sample closings

**Action**

We plan to send you the proposal by March 15. Can you then send me the production estimates by April 30? That allows plenty of time to calculate the final estimate.

Sincerely,

John Robertson

**Appreciation**

Thank you so much for volunteering to represent our department at the fall trade show. If you need additional resources to prepare for the show, please let me know.

Sincerely,

John Robertson

**Goodwill**

Congratulations on your promotion, and good luck in the future.

Sincerely,

John Robertson

---

**TABLE E-2: Closing and signature block do’s and don’ts.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>closing element</th>
<th>do</th>
<th>don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Closing paragraph** | • Be specific and courteous when making a request  
• Include a deadline  
• Provide a reason for the request and deadline  
• Make it easy to respond by providing contact information | • Don’t command the reader, as in “Respond with an answer as soon as possible”  
• Don’t close with a cliché such as “Thank you for your attention to this matter” |
| **Complimentary close** | • Use the traditional Sincerely for most of your business letters  
• Close with an alternative such as Cordially for personal letters  
• Use Respectfully to communicate deference, such as in letters sent abroad | • Don’t use a close that reflects a negative emotion, such as Angry or Disappointed  
• Don’t omit the complimentary close or the comma that follows it in formal letters |
| **Signature block** | • In formal letters, print and sign your full name  
• Include your title if the inside address includes your recipient’s title  
• Insert the name of your company if you are acting on its behalf | • Don’t sign your first name only in a formal letter  
• Don’t sign with your initials only (as you do in a memo)  
• Don’t use a computer-generated signature |
Writing Routine Letters

Although you use the block style for formal business letters, you can use a more direct, informal style called the simplified letter format for routine letters sent as mass mail, such as sales letters and announcements sent to customers, shareholders, suppliers, or employees. The simplified letter format omits the salutation, complimentary close, and signature, while focusing on the opening line and the body of the letter. See Figures E-7 and E-8. Ron Dawson wants to send a sales letter to current and past Quest customers offering a discount on selected tours. You start by outlining this letter using the simplified letter format.

1. Replace the salutation with a subject line
Starting a letter with the subject emphasizes your purpose so readers can immediately anticipate and understand the rest of the letter.

2. State your purpose in the first line
Present a clear statement of your offer, request, answer, problem you propose to resolve, or action you are taking.

3. Provide specifics in the body paragraphs
In the body paragraphs, explain the details that support your statement of purpose in the first line. These details might provide specifics about your offer or request, list the benefits of your ideas, or provide related facts. Arrange information logically, such as chronologically or from most important topic to least important. Address readers directly as “you,” and focus on how the content of your letter can benefit them.

4. Format the body paragraphs for readability
Minimize the use of paragraphs whenever possible. Instead, use numbered or bulleted lists, tables, and graphics to make your letter easier to read.

5. Omit the complimentary close
The simplified letter format is not for formal letters and does not require a complimentary close. Instead, you should conclude the letter with your closing paragraph.

6. Forgo the signature
A handwritten signature is not required with the simplified style. In many cases, you are sending numerous copies of the letter and signing each one would be impractical. If you are using a color printer to produce your letters, you have the option of printing your signature in blue ink.

YOU TRY IT
1. Open the file E-4.doc provided with your Data Files and save it as Routine.doc
2. Based on the rough draft of the letter in Routine.doc, compose a letter in the simplified letter format
3. Save then close Routine.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
FIGURE E-7: Outline of the simplified letter format

- Letterhead
- Dateline
- Inside address
- Subject line
- First line
- Body
- Closing
- Printed name and title

FIGURE E-8: Quest letter in simplified format

August 20, 2011
Ms. Helene Diaz
1785 Westport Drive
Carlsbad, CA 92008

Subject: Discount on upcoming Quest Specialty Travel tours

Quest Specialty Travel is offering a discount to travelers who enroll in the following tours by September 30, 2011:

- Cultural tour of Indonesia
- Adventure in Argentina
- Active Australia
- Spain by the back roads
- Yucatan highlights

340 West Market Street
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 555-1234
WWW.QUESTSPECIALTYTRAVEL.COM
Answering Request Letters

When you receive written requests asking for information or action, your response is determined by whether you choose to comply. If you are responding favorably, tell your reader that you can accommodate their request in the opening line. If you are not agreeable to the request, you can respond directly or indirectly. A direct response is appropriate if you know your reader prefers directness or reasonably expects that you might deny the request. If your reader is likely to react negatively to your response, opt for an indirect approach. Start your response letter by establishing goodwill, then explain the circumstances of your decision, and gradually build up to your response. In either case, you should be tactful, polite, and careful about the language you use. Table E-3 summarizes the do’s and don’ts of response letters.

Ron Dawson received a letter from a customer requesting a partial refund of a tour throughout eastern Canada. Because you helped develop the tour, Ron discusses how to respond to the customer, and then asks you to write a letter answering the customer’s request.

1. **Use a subject line**
   Instead of starting your letter by summarizing the original request, insert a subject line after the salutation. The subject should remind your reader about the original request letter and provide a context for your reply. Figure E-9 shows a response letter with a subject line.

2. **Respond directly**
   Unless an indirect approach is more appropriate, provide your reader with an answer in the first sentence of your letter.

3. **Clarify your commitment**
   Follow your introduction with additional details and information to support your answer. When you agree to someone’s written request, your response might have legal implications. Be sure to review your letter carefully before you send it.

4. **Write for readability**
   If you are responding to multiple questions or providing a detailed reply, use tables, graphics, lists, headings, and other visual cues to make your response easier to read.

5. **Present the good before the bad**
   If you can comply with only part of your reader’s request, start with the good news. Explain the bad news clearly in the body of your letter, but don’t dwell on it.

6. **Conclude on a positive note**
   If you can’t accommodate a request, offer your reader an alternative solution, if possible. Reinforce the ideas that you value their relationship and want to continue doing business with them.

**YOU TRY IT**

1. Open the file E-5.doc provided with your Data Files and save it as RequestAnswer.doc
2. Analyze the request, then write a response letter that follows the recommended guidelines, similar to the message shown in Figure E-9
3. Save and close RequestAnswer.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
FIGURE E-9: Response to customer request

August 28, 2011

Mrs. Paula Marcus
83 Overlook Drive
Novato, CA 94947

Dear Ms. Marcus:

Thank you for your letter about your tour to eastern Canada. Quest Specialty Travel contracts with local tour guides, and we appreciate learning about their service to our customers.

We apologize for the poor service you received in Montreal. This tour is often one of the most popular that Quest offers, and we regret that your experience was disappointing. As you requested, we have refunded half of the tour price to your credit card account.

We are confident that your next experience with Quest Specialty Travel will be satisfactory. To encourage you to travel with us again, we are offering you a 10 percent discount.

TABLE E-3: Response letter do's and don'ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>response letter element</th>
<th>do</th>
<th>don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject line</td>
<td>Summarize the original request, as in “Subject: Your March 10 inquiry about shipping dates”</td>
<td>Don’t repeat the request in detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct approach</td>
<td>• Use a direct approach if you can comply with the request. • If you cannot comply with the request, use a direct approach only if your reader expects directness</td>
<td>Don’t use a direct approach if your reader might respond negatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect approach</td>
<td>• Use an indirect approach if you need to soften your response. • Establish goodwill • Explain the reason for your decision • Deliver the bad news clearly, then end on a positive note</td>
<td>• Don’t overlook the legal implications of your response • Don’t use negative language or make promises you can’t keep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Persuasive Letters

Persuasion is the process of convincing others to change their beliefs or actions. Although you might not be aware of it, you frequently need to persuade other people to take action, change their opinion, authorize a request, purchase goods or services, or do a favor for you. Persuasion is not only an art for salespeople—it is an important skill for all professionals. Unlike other business letters that start by directly making their point, persuasive communication requires careful planning and an indirect approach. Figure E-10 outlines the elements of persuasive letters.

You have been assisting Ron Dawson as he develops an incentive program corporate customers can use to reward their employees. Ron asks you to write the first draft of a persuasive letter encouraging companies to join the program.

1. Capture your reader’s attention
   Your letter can only change readers’ opinions if they carefully read it. Open with an engaging question, problem statement, unexpected declaration, or other attention grabber.

2. Develop your reader’s interest
   Your readers are interested in information that is relevant to them, helps to solve their problems, or benefits them directly or indirectly. Approach your message from your reader’s perspective to identify their interests and understand what is beneficial to them.

3. Introduce your request
   Let your reader know why you are writing and what you are requesting. Your request should be a logical conclusion to your opening paragraph, as shown in Figure E-11.

4. Answer your reader’s questions
   In many cases your reader will have questions and concerns about your message. It’s human nature to resist new ideas and to be skeptical of offers and requests. Anticipate your reader’s questions and answer them using examples, data, research, or other evidence to support your position and enhance your credibility.

5. Call your reader to action
   Decide what you specifically want from your reader and ask for it in your final paragraph. Maintain a positive attitude when making your request. Avoid the extremes of sounding too aggressive or too timid.

YOU TRY IT

1. Open the file E-6.doc provided with your Data Files, and save it as Persuade.doc
2. Review the contents of the document, which outlines a persuasive letter
3. Write a persuasive letter that includes the elements shown in Figure E-10
4. Save and close Persuade.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
FIGURE E-10: Elements of a persuasive letter

1. Engaging opener
2. Develop reader's interest
3. Introduce request
4. Anticipate questions
5. Call to action

FIGURE E-11: Persuasive letter to Quest customers

August 23, 2011
Mr. Joseph Pagel
Assistant Vice President
TJX Marine
3515 Service Road
San Diego, CA 92161

Dear Mr. Pagel:

Do the most valuable employees in your company stay with you for years? Are they motivated and enthusiastic about your company and customers?

If not, the incentive travel program from Quest Specialty Travel could be a sure way to motivate your employees and see big results in sales and morale. As you know, people work hard to achieve great rewards. We’ll make it easy for you to offer great rewards...

Let us create a proposal designed for your company. Take a few minutes to complete our online form at www.QuestSpecialtyTravel.com. We’ll organize a trip that will engage, motivate, and reward your employees. Filling out the form requires no obligation on your part.

Visit www.QuestSpecialtyTravel.com, and open the world to your employees through our affordable travel incentive program.
Writing for Goodwill

You can develop and foster the professional relationships that are crucial to your career success through *goodwill communication*, which includes messages of appreciation, recognition, condolence, and apology. Finding the appropriate words to express your goodwill can be more difficult than writing a standard business letter, but they can be meaningful and memorable if they are specific, sincere, and short, as shown in Figure E-12. To acknowledge your extra efforts in helping to organize an adventure tour to Hawaii, a pair of customers sent you a gift. You want to write them a letter to express your thanks.

### Essential Elements

1. **Promptness is important**
   If you want to thank someone for a gift or favor, express sympathy, or offer congratulations, write a goodwill letter as soon as possible so you can compose your thoughts while the idea is fresh. A prompt message is also more meaningful to your reader.

2. **Explain why you are writing**
   Provide brief details about the reason for your message. A common problem with goodwill messages is they don't explain why they are offering thanks or encouragement. Instead of writing *Congratulations on a job well done*, be specific, as in *Congratulations on your promotion to assistant manager. That is quite an accomplishment.*

3. **Focus on your reader**
   Goodwill messages should focus on your reader, not on you. Avoid starting sentences with “I” or making yourself the subject of the sentence. In most cases, you can rewrite these sentences to focus attention on your reader.

4. **Keep your message short**
   Goodwill messages should communicate a single idea and do not need to fill an entire page. Most can accomplish their purpose in a single paragraph.

5. **Handwrite when appropriate**
   A handwritten note is more memorable and personal than a typed letter and is particularly well suited for appreciation messages. Short thank-you and recognition notes are often handwritten on note cards or personal stationary.

6. **Write the way you speak**
   Goodwill messages are personal communication and should be written as though two people were having a conversation. Use a friendly, informal tone and choose words that reflect sincerity. Figure E-13 shows a goodwill message written to a group of Quest customers.

### Quick Tip

One way to focus on the reader is to address him or her by name.

### You Try It

1. Open the file E-7.doc provided with your Data Files and save it as Goodwill.doc
2. Based on the information in the document, write a goodwill letter similar to the one shown in Figure E-13
3. Save and close Goodwill.doc, then submit it to your instructor as requested
FIGURE E-12: Examples of goodwill messages

Thank you message

Thank you, Alice, for the welcome gift of a potted plant. The shape of the vine is beautiful, and the ceramic pot is perfect for my office. More than anything, however, I appreciate your thoughtfulness in welcoming me to the department.

Sympathy message

I’m so sorry to hear about the loss of your aunt. I recall how warmly you spoke of her and how special she was to you. Please know you’re in my thoughts.

FIGURE E-13: Thank-you letter to Quest customers

August 25, 2011

Mr. Warren Schroeder
Ms. Teresa Woodbury
1144 Yakima Avenue South
Tacoma, WA 98401

Dear Mr. Schroeder and Ms. Woodbury:

Thank you both for your Hawaiian gift basket, which I received this morning. The Kona coffee, macadamia nuts, and chocolates are delicious indulgences I’ll share with others here at Quest.

I’m so glad you enjoyed your adventure tour to Hawaii, and I appreciate you thinking of me while you were snorkeling and parasailing in Maui.

Sincerely,

840 West Market Street
San Diego, CA 92101
(819) 555-1234
WWW.QUESTSPECIALTYTRAVEL.COM

Respond to complaints with goodwill messages

If you receive a complaint from a customer about your company’s goods or services, what’s your first response? If you dismiss the complaint or act defensive, the customer is likely to leave your business dissatisfied and voice their displeasure to people they know. Instead, according to Janelle Barlow and Claus Moller, authors of A Complaint Is a Gift, your first response should be to thank the customer. “Complaints are one of the most direct and effective ways for customers to tell businesses that there is room for improvement,” the authors state. Apply your skills in writing goodwill messages to thank the customer for the comment, explain why you appreciate it, apologize for the mistake, and then correct it promptly. Southwest Airlines takes a step beyond this approach by anticipating complaints though a management position dedicated to overseeing proactive communications with customers, held in 2008 by Fred Taylor. After a flight was delayed many times because of weather and pilot schedules, Taylor sent letters to the travelers along with ticket vouchers. “It’s not something we had to do,” Taylor said. “It’s just something we feel our customers deserve.” It’s also a surefire way to build customer loyalty.

Technology@Work: Instant Messaging

**Instant messaging (IM)** is a technology that involves communication between two people who type text messages to one another using a computer, mobile phone, or other device connected to the Internet. Because they are short, informal, and impermanent, instant messages are the opposite of letters, which are longer, more formal, and more permanent. IM and e-mail are more similar because both technologies send messages across the Internet. IM, however, is like an electronic conversation—you see a message and respond to it immediately. IM software for personal use is classified as consumer instant messaging (CIM). Figure E-14 shows the Web site for Yahoo Messenger, a popular CIM. IM software for business use is considered enterprise instant messaging (EIM). Figure E-15 shows the Web site for Quick IM, an instant messenger designed for businesses. Ron Dawson is considering using IM at Quest Speciality Travel for communication among travel tour developers and the office. He asks you to research IM, including its pros and cons.

**1. Organize contacts into categories**

Instant messaging software lets you separate contacts into business, friends, and family categories, for example. This means you can easily keep your professional IMs separate from personal IMs. However, to participate in any type of instant messaging, you sign on to the software. Your friends and family can see when you are signed on, even at work. Make sure they know you need to concentrate on professional conversations when you are working.

**2. Send and reply to messages instantly**

The instantaneous feature of IM is both an advantage and disadvantage. Instead of waiting for an answer to a letter or e-mail, you can receive a response from a colleague or vendor immediately. However, IM can be a distraction when you need to focus on a project, conversation, or meeting.

**3. Save instant messages for future reference**

Like e-mail, you can save IMs when you need to reference a conversation with customers or colleagues, for example. You can also send, receive, and save attachments to messages. However, viruses can infect IMs as easily as they do e-mail messages, so you should make sure you open only attachments you expect to receive or that have been scanned by antivirus software.

**4. Use professional language**

Personal text messages often use slang, shorthand, “text speak,” and emoticons to abbreviate common words or expressions and to reduce the amount of necessary typing. For example, LOL (for laugh out loud) is a common IM shorthand response. However, these techniques are inappropriate and overly casual in professional settings. Your language can be more informal than in a standard business letter, but it should still be clear, complete, and professional.

**YOU TRY IT**

1. Use your favorite search engine to research enterprise instant messaging (EIM) and consumer instant messaging (CIM)
2. Find at least one example of EIM and one example of CIM software
3. Write a list of their differences, and submit the list to your instructor as requested
Practice

▼ SOFT SKILLS REVIEW

Understand professional letter writing.

1. For what purpose do you write a business letter?
   a. For routine communication with colleagues
   b. To send a message as quickly as possible
   c. To deliver messages outside of an organization
   d. To write to a close friend

2. In which of the following circumstances is a business letter not the best choice?
   a. You need to create a permanent record
   b. You need to deny a written request
   c. You want to contact someone you don’t know
   d. You want to organize a meeting

Write business letters.

1. What should you do before you write a business letter?
   a. Identify the goal of the letter
   b. Write the complimentary close
   c. Call the letter recipient
   d. Format the letter

2. The block style is:
   a. more appropriate for personal notes
   b. the standard form for business letters
   c. a format that omits the salutation and signature
   d. appropriate for casual messages

Use salutations.

1. Why should you start a business letter with a salutation?
   a. To sound formal and serious
   b. To avoid delivering bad news directly
   c. To personalize the letter with handwritten text
   d. To open with a friendly, proper greeting

2. When do you usually need to include job titles, rank, or titles of honor in a salutation?
   a. When writing particularly formal letters
   b. When writing complaint letters
   c. When responding to complaint letters
   d. Only for goodwill messages

Close business letters.

1. What is important about the closing paragraph of a business letter?
   a. It sets the tone of the rest of the letter
   b. It explains the purpose of the letter
   c. It can affect the reader’s willingness to respond to your request
   d. It presents the main idea

2. Which one of the following should you not include in the closing?
   a. Deadline
   b. Reason for request
   c. Contact information
   d. Direct command, such as “Respond as soon as possible.”

Write routine letters.

1. You use the simplified letter format for:
   a. direct, informal letters
   b. goodwill letters of sympathy
   c. formal invitations
   d. mixed messages

2. How should you start a letter written in the simplified letter format?
   a. With a clear statement of your offer
   b. With a joke or anecdote
   c. With an expression of gratitude
   d. With an apology
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Answer request letters.

1. When should you respond to a request using an indirect approach?
   a. If you are responding favorably
   b. If you know the reader personally
   c. If your reader might react negatively to your response
   d. If you are using the simplified letter format

2. How should you start a letter written using the indirect approach?
   a. By immediately denying the request
   b. By establishing goodwill
   c. By listing facts
   d. By summarizing the problem

Write persuasive letters.

1. Which of the following is not a goal of a persuasive letter?
   a. To change the reader’s opinion
   b. To express appreciation
   c. To convince the reader to take action
   d. To have the reader authorize a request

2. What is an effective way to open a persuasive letter?
   a. Introduce your request
   b. Answer potential questions
   c. Ask a question that captures the reader’s attention
   d. Motivate action by requesting a specific response

Write for goodwill.

1. What kinds of messages are included in goodwill communication?
   a. Appreciation
   b. Persuasion
   c. Bad news
   d. Routine business

2. Goodwill messages should:
   a. clarify requests for information
   b. follow the block format
   c. explain and justify your claims
   d. focus on the reader, not on you

Technology@work: Instant messaging.

1. How can instant messages be considered the opposite of business letters?
   a. They are short, informal, and impermanent
   b. Their purpose is to entertain
   c. They have a corporate audience only
   d. They are not intended to establish goodwill

2. Why should you avoid typical IM techniques such as slang and shorthand?
   a. No one understands them
   b. They focus on the writer, not the reader
   c. They are inappropriate and overly casual in professional settings
   d. They are entertaining

▼ CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

1. A supplier sends you an expensive gift with a note that thanks you for “bending the rules” to his benefit. Is the gift a legitimate business courtesy or a bribe? How do you respond in either case?

2. Do you think persuasive writing techniques involve deception? Find examples of deceptive persuasive writing and analyze how they attempt to persuade readers.

3. A customer writes you a letter complaining about a colleague. How do you handle your response?

4. Your supervisor hands you a stack of letters and asks you to respond to them. One of the letters is from a customer complaining about your supervisor’s inappropriate conduct during a sales call. How do you respond to the letter? How do you handle the situation with your supervisor?

5. You are responding to a complaint from a customer who is angry because you made a mistake. Should you blame the error on a computer problem or explain that someone else is responsible? Or should you accept the blame, even if it means losing this customer? What if it means losing your job?
INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE 1

You work in the Marketing Department of a small Web design company named Overland Designs. Marshall Aronson, the director of marketing, hands you a letter from a customer who is requesting information about Overland Design’s services. Figure E-16 shows the customer letter. Marshall asks you to write a letter in response.

FIGURE E-16

J&L Enterprises
1595 S. Pine Street
Chicago, IL 60620
(612)593-9028

January 12, 2011

Director of Marketing
Overland Designs
920 Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Director of Marketing:

I am the owner of a sports equipment manufacturing company, and I would like to set up a Web site to attract and service customers. Please let me know the answers to the following questions:

- What types of Web site design services do you offer?
- Can you provide graphic design services?
- What types of clients do you have?
- How can we start to work together?

Please also send me any examples of your work or other promotional materials.

Sincerely,

Carl Lopez
Carl Lopez
President

a. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file E-8.doc provided with your Data Files, and save it as WebRequest.doc. Review the contents of the document.
b. Start a new document and save it as WebServices.doc. Enter the information for the Overland Designs letterhead, the inside address, and today’s date.
c. Write an opening sentence that directly responds to the request in the WebRequest document.
d. Write the letter body that provides the details of your response. (Respond positively to each request.) Use lists and graphic highlighting techniques to make the letter body easy to read.
e. End the message with an appropriate closing statement, complimentary close, and signature block.
f. Proofread the document carefully to fix any grammar or formatting errors.
g. Save and close WebServices.doc.

INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE 2

You are the manager of the flagship Four Winds Apparel store in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Four Winds Apparel specializes in affordable active wear for men, women, and children and has three other stores in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Allison Crandall, the Four Winds regional manager, is working with an English-speaking supplier in France. She asks you to format and finish a letter she started requesting information about the French apparel. You need to revise and format the letter.

a. Use a word processor such as Microsoft Office Word to open the file E-9.doc provided with your Data Files, and save it as FourWindsLetter.doc.
b. Review the FourWindsLetter document, and then plan your revision. Enter the information for the Overland Designs letterhead, the inside address, and today's date. Format each as appropriate for a French reader.
c. Write an opening statement that establishes goodwill and a courteous tone.
d. Write and format the body of the letter.
e. Include a closing statement that is polite and informative.
f. Proofread the document carefully to fix any grammar or formatting errors.
g. Save and close FourWindsLetter.doc.

**REAL LIFE INDEPENDENT CHALLENGE**

This Independent Challenge requires an Internet connection.

You are applying for a summer internship in Washington, D.C., and need to send a letter to someone who can act as a reference, such as an instructor or former employer.

a. Using your favorite search engine, search for internship programs in Washington, D.C., such as those in government, media, communications, or the arts. Find a page that describes the eligibility requirements and application procedures.
b. Read about the eligibility requirements and application procedures.
c. Write a letter to someone who can act as a reference for the internship, such as an instructor or employer. Be sure to include the following elements:
   - Clearly stated subject
   - Direct opening sentence
   - Well-organized message body
   - Professional formatting
   - Appropriate closing statement
d. Proofread the message carefully to fix any grammar or formatting errors.
e. Save the letter and provide it in the format specified by your instructor.

**TEAM CHALLENGE**

This Independent Challenge requires an Internet connection.

You work for Farley Worldwide, a company specializing in information services, and have been promoted recently. You travel overseas with a small group and help your client companies install computers and software. You are planning a trip to Beijing, China, and need to set up hotel accommodations and arrangements for travel in Beijing.

a. Using your favorite search engine, search for information about the proper letter format to use when writing to English-speaking Chinese professionals in Beijing. Note the addresses of the Web sites that provide the most useful information.
b. Meet as a team to assign the following tasks:
   - Research hotels in Beijing
   - Research transportation in Beijing
   - Research restaurants in Beijing
c. As a team, decide on a hotel. Also compile a list of transportation alternatives and restaurants near the hotel.
d. Individually, write a letter to the appropriate hotel staff member inquiring about rooms for your team, cost per night, additional charges, and use of a conference room. Include any other details that seem appropriate based on your research.
e. Save the letter and provide it in the format specified by your instructor.
BE THE CRITIC

Review the poorly written letter shown in Figure E-17. Create an e-mail message that lists the weaknesses of the letter and makes specific suggestions for improvement. Send the critique to your instructor.

FIGURE E-17

AllCity Electronics
151 Appleton Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53215
(414) 555-1600

Dear Mr. Edward Lavine,

I received your complaint about the issues that you claim have occurred recently. Keep in mind that electronics equipment is delicate, and that dropping music players or submerging them in water is considered abuse.

Our Customer Satisfaction Team will be reviewing the information you have sent us. If there is a valid reason for your complaint, the Team will conduct a full investigation as deemed appropriate to resolve this matter.

At the conclusion of our investigation, you will be contacted with our findings.