



Business Communication and Soft Skills

Writing Business Letters, Resumes and Memos

Business Communication & Soft Skills

Block

2

WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS, RESUMES AND MEMOS

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BLOCK 2: WRITING BUSINESS LETTERS, RESUMES AND MEMOS

The second block of the course on Business Communication & Soft Skills deals with **writing business letters, resumes and memos** and using visual aids and graphics to enhance communication. This block has six units. Units one and two deal with letter writing – pleasant and unpleasant, unit three talks about writing to persuade, units four and five are about resume and application letter writing. Unit six is about writing effective memos.

The ninth unit is *Letter Writing: Writing about the Routine and the Pleasant*: Businesses need to communicate with their customers, suppliers and other business partners to conduct business. An effective business letter is one that conveys the subject clearly. This unit explains the importance of understanding the audience at whom the letter is targeted, organizing the message, the types of business letters and principles of business writing..

The tenth unit is *Writing about the Unpleasant*: A skillful manager is one who handles communicating unpleasant information to the listener, without evoking negative feelings in the listener. This unit lists the various ways in which a manager can write a negative letter, and the points that he/she should keep in mind while handling such communication. It emphasizes the need to have a positive note, while presenting facts and reasons for refusal of favours with fair and realistic explanations. It also explains how to handle complaints and convey bad news. It illustrates how to make web pages, very useful to learners.

The eleventh unit is *Writing to Persuade*: Persuasion plays an important role in day to day business activities. Persuasive letters are written with the aim of getting the reader to respond favourably. All persuasive letters should use an inductive or indirect approach – the message should not be forced on the reader. This unit focuses on writing to persuade in business, and how to construct persuasive sales messages.

The twelfth unit is *Communication for Employment – Resume*: A resume is basically a summary of one's academic profile and work history. But it also reflects one's personality and is often responsible for creating the first impression about the person. This unit is about the fundamental techniques of writing a good resume. It shows how one should plan, structure and choose content for one's resume.

The thirteenth unit is *Communication for Employment – Application Letter*: An application letter, like a resume is also a tool to sell oneself. An application letter usually acts as a covering note for the resume. Therefore, it need not be very detailed, but it must highlight the important aspects of one's resume. This unit

lists the qualities of a well written application letter and how one should plan an application letter. It explains how to write effective cover letters.

The fourteenth unit is *Writing Effective Memos*: A memo is a written message to provide personnel in an organisation with a quick and effective way of communicating with each other. Good memos are organized and clear. This unit showcases the skills required for writing good memos. It explains the types of memos, the fundamentals of a good memo, persuasive memos and how to write memos for unpleasant news.

Each unit is updated with current industry examples and excerpts from reputed journals and magazines. Wherever there is gap in the content, topics are added. For example, in Unit 9 principles of business writing is added. In unit 10, how to handle complaints and convey bad news as also how to make web pages, were included. Tips on writing a cover letter with latest illustration was added in unit thirteen.

Unit 9

Letter Writing: Writing about the Routine and the Pleasant

Structure

- 9.1 Introduction
- 9.2 Objectives
- 9.3 Understanding the Audience
- 9.4 Organizing Your Message
- 9.5 Business Letters
- 9.6 Principles of Business Writing
- 9.7 Summary
- 9.8 Glossary
- 9.9 Self-Assessment Test
- 9.10 Suggested Readings/Reference Material
- 9.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

9.1 Introduction

The previous unit introduced the methods of organizing presentations and explained how organized presentations are more effective and have a greater impact on the listeners. This unit is about letter writing.

Correspondence is an integral part of any business. Businesses need to communicate with their customers, suppliers and other business partners to conduct business. More often than not, this communication is in the written form.

Clarity in messages is an important aspect to enable trust and ensure integrity between the communicator and the receiver. When written communication is written appropriately, clearly, in language which is understood by the receiver, it will clearly define the goal expected to be achieved through the communication, identify problems that are present and arrive at the most clear, positive or appropriate solution. This kind of communication is very important to businesses for success. When the person representing the business – owner, employee, manager, or any kind of stake holder, communicates to any employee, client or stake holder it should be clear and understood as intended. Hence clear written communication is very important.

An effective written communication letter is the one that conveys the subject clearly. The writer should have a good knowledge of the subject, clear purpose, and target audience. These principles of letter writing hold good for both oral and written forms of communication. Writing is more active than passive communication and enables critical thinking and problem-solving skills and

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help identify and clear personal misconceptions. Ineffective written communication leads to work place incompetence, waste of time and worst - misinterpretation leading to loss of trust and efficiency. Hence written communication requires to have a quality benchmarked by the organisation and be relevant as well as implemented efficiently. The communication should enable feedback as well.

This unit explains the importance of understanding the audience at whom the letter is targeted, organizing the message and the types of business letters.

9.2 Objectives

By the end of this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of understanding the audience for selecting appropriate content in letter writing
- List the ways of organizing letters for focusing on the central idea to be conveyed
- Identify the types of letters that are used commonly in business situations to make messages meaningful and appropriate
- Discuss the principles of business writing letters for effective business communication

9.3 Understanding the Audience

Before composing any message, the writer should be aware of the subject and have a clear picture of what he/she wants to convey and what he/she wishes to achieve through the communication and last but not the least at all, about the audience or the beneficiary of the communication.

It calls for cultivating a “you” or “reader-oriented” attitude. The writer then has to transfer this understanding or mental picture of the audience into the written form by selecting the content carefully and organizing the different parts of the message effectively.

Cultivating a “You” Attitude

Any communication finds more relevant and appealing if it is written from the reader’s perspective. If this is to happen, the writer should ensure that

- The message is truthful and is ethical.
- The message is brief and simple to understand.
- The ideas stated are tactfully and positively shared in a manner that preserves the reader’s self-worth and cultivates future business.

If the writer concentrates on these points, it will help to boost the reader’s confidence in the writer’s competence and will communicate nonverbally that the reader is valued enough to merit the writer’s best effort.

How Can We “Understand the Audience”?

To help the writer see a situation from the reader’s point of view, he/she must focus on relevant information about the reader-background, values, opinions, preferences, and so on. Knowing how the reader reacted in similar, previous experiences will help the writer greatly in anticipating how a reader is likely to react in the current situation.

To understand unfamiliar readers, the writer can consider all he/she knows about the reader and how this information might affect the content and style of the letter. Major factors like age, economic level, educational/occupational background, culture, rapport, expectations, and needs of the readers have to be carefully considered before writing a letter.

One of the best ways to understand the readers is to place oneself into the readers’ shoes; further, the writer should be prepared to receive a positive stroke or a refusal or disagreement from the reader. This will lead to a proper organizing the message to be conveyed by the writer.

Simple ways of expressing the reader oriented attitude would be to:

Write centering the reader – eg: Would you be keen on discussing this? Instead of -I would like to have a discussion on this.

if it is a reply to the readers mail, then refer to their request often as possible – eg: your requirement for the month of April2020 will be completed on time. This is instead of the usually used “we will complete the order....”

Try to avoid discussion on your feelings. Unfortunately, professional settings do not care nor does call for feelings. It is not considered appropriate either. This is unless you are offering congratulations or condolences or sympathy for some reason. – eg: a) congratulations on your promotion/ my condolences for your loss. b) you can now join the contact classes on Sunday. This would be better rather than “we are pleased to announce that the contact classes have been open on Sunday”.

Try to reduce the use of “I” and use more “you” – eg: “I will try to get your order ready”. Use: “Your order will be ready as soon as possible”.

At any cost, jargons have to be avoided but do not patronize either.

While delivering a not so favorable or negative information avoid the use of “you” – eg: “because you were not able to convince the client you have lost the order” instead, we could say “we would have got the order had we been able to convince the client”. One of the ways the use of “you” can be avoided in these situations is by placing emphasis on anything but the people in question. So focus on the contract not the marketing manager. Another strategy that can be used here is to use passive verbs.

9.4 Organizing Your Message

Let us look at the need for organizing a message before discussing how to achieve better organization.

Why Organization is Essential

Organizing a message brings in focusing on the central idea to be conveyed while interweaving the other minor ideas. Thus sequencing the central idea with the other minor ideas is called outlining or organizing a message.

Organizing before actually getting down to writing helps the writer to concentrate on writing as the ideas that have to be included and their emphasis has already been decided upon. Organizing also helps the readers, as the message is clearer and the relationship among the ideas easier to interpret and remember.

How to Organize Letters

A writer can decide on an approach depending on the central idea of the letter and the likely reaction of the reader. Any letter can be said to evoke one of the following reactions from the reader – 1) Pleasure, 2) Displeasure, 3) Interest but neither pleasure nor displeasure, and 4) No interest. After deciding on the category of reader reaction the letter can invoke, the writer can decide on using either an inductive or deductive approach.

In a deductive approach, the main idea is placed first and the evidence follows it; whereas in the inductive approach, the evidence is placed first so that a discussion will lead to the main idea. Normally a deductive approach is used; if it fails, the inductive approach is resorted to.

However, not all communication problems can be solved by simple formulae. The writer needs to exercise his/her judgment to ensure that communication is effective.

Check Your Progress - 1

1. What does a “you” attitude imply?
 - a. Think and write from writer’s point of view
 - b. Think and write from the reader’s point of view
 - c. Think and write from the concept point of view
 - d. Think and write from learner’s point of view
 - e. Think and write from everyone’s point of view
2. Which of the following is not a possible reader reaction to a letter?
 - a. Interest only
 - b. No interest only
 - c. Pleasure only

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- d. Displeasure only
 - e. All kinds of reactions
3. A letter should begin _____ if the reader is eager or interested in hearing the news.
- a. With a neutral statement
 - b. With a jingle
 - c. In an inductive style
 - d. With the request or main idea
 - e. With a negative statement
4. If the expected audience reaction to a letter is “pleased or neutral,” letters conveying routine or good news should begin _____.
- a. With the main idea or good news
 - b. With an attention-getter
 - c. With the bad news
 - d. With a neutral statement or buffer
 - e. With a casual note
5. To make a mental picture of a reader, you are unfamiliar with, consider all the following factors EXCEPT
- a. Age
 - b. Economic level
 - c. Educational background
 - d. Color of hair
 - e. Cultural background
-

9.5 Business Letters

These letters begin with the major idea and supporting details follow. This approach puts the readers in a pleasant state of anticipation with regard to the rest of the contents. This approach is commonly used for “yes” business replies. A good news or routine letter written in an inductive style might bore or annoy the reader.

Routine Claims

Claim letters are meant for seeking a refund, or replacement or exchange or compensation for damages, etc. They are of two types, namely routine and persuasive claims.

Persuasive claims assume that the request will be granted only after explanations and persuasive arguments have been presented. Routine claims-possibly because of guarantees, warranties, or other contractual conditions-

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assume that the request will be granted quickly and willingly, without the need for persuasion. Persuasive claims will be discussed in a later unit.

Written above is a claim from the owner of a construction company addressed to the heater suppliers that calls for the replacement of 30-liter capacity heaters with 50-liter capacity heaters.

A routine claim letter is considered as a request for adjustment. Mostly the writer writes the claim in a routine format because there is a belief that due to promises, warranties and other terms and conditions the claim will be granted and would not require any persuasion. The belief of receiving a positive reply leads the writer to begin by stating claim in the beginning of the first paragraph and would not have voiced any complaints. Write in the given sequence -

A routine claim letter can 1. At the outset, solicit for immediate action. 2. Enlist the details supporting the request. 3. Close with thanks note for an early positive action.

Eg:

Direct stating of the claims – “I request you to refund the money as soon as possible”

Giving reason - “The product has been returned within the stipulated time and unused“

Conclude – “I would be thankful for the reimbursement to happen before the 20th of this month”

The person who receives the claim letter should accept it with an open mind and refrain from being angry with the sender. At any given situations any business letter should be respectful and polite. It should also not carry negative expressions, accusations or harsh language. Neither the letter writer nor the recipient should indulge in blaming each other.

The reply letter can directly grant the request, reassure the claimant about the choice they have made. In case of a mistake by the client, the reply has to be in positive language and the client has to be made aware of the mistake.

Eg: Dear....

The refund has already been processed. Please check your account for the deposit information. Thank you for always being our loyal customer. We have also enclosed the miniature trial sets of our recently launched line.

Regards,

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A routine claim letter can 1. At the outset, solicit for immediate action. 2. Enlist the details supporting the request. 3. Close with thanks note for an early positive action.

Favorable Response to a Claim Letter: The response to a claim letter is called an “adjustment” letter. By responding favorably to legitimate requests, businesses can gain the reputation of always standing behind their goods and services. A loyal customer is likely to become even more loyal after a business has demonstrated such integrity.

1. Express the good news at the outset.
2. Detail the circumstances.
3. Close the letter on a pleasant and forward-looking note.

Given above is the favorable response to the earlier claim letter.

Routine Letters about Credit

Request for Information: Exchange of credit information is common in business due to the wide network of credit associations. An effective request for credit information about an individual should:

1. Identify the request and name the applicant early, preferably in the opening sentence or in the subject line.
2. Assure the reader that the reply will be kept confidential.
3. Detail the information requested. A tabulated-form layout should be used to make the reply easy.
4. End courteously.

A desirable item of this letter is the use of fill-in items as it enables the recipient to provide the required information with minimal effort.

Request for credit: The request can be placed in the first sentence if the writer expects credit to be extended willingly due to his financial soundness. This can then be followed by details.

Activity 9.1

You are the manager of Rainbow, a local garment outlet that caters to the clothing needs of the elite. You have received several requests from customers for the collections of eminent fashion designers from Mumbai. Write a letter to the fashion designers, requesting supply of merchandise on credit to meet customer demand.

Answer:

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Favorable response to a request for credit: Effective “yes” replies to requests for credit should use the outline given below:

1. Begin by saying credit terms have been arranged; or if an order has been placed-begin by mentioning the shipment of goods, thus implying that credit has been extended.
2. Indicate the foundation upon which the credit extension is based.
3. Present and explain the credit terms. Include some resale or sales-promotional material.
4. End with a confident look toward future business.

Routine Letters about Orders

1. Routine letters about orders put the main idea in the first sentence followed by details in a tabulated form. Routine order letter should be clear in the communication and should give complete details about the product, its delivery details and mode of shipment.
2. Eg. Dear
3. We have shipped you the miniature collectors set of our new cosmetic line as a thank you for your continued loyalty to our brand of products. We have kept in mind the declared allergies and have avoided packing products including any nuts as its ingredients. Even then we would advise you to look in to all the ingredients before usage.
4. Regards
5. When the replies are “yes” affirmative in other words, the letter should begin with the reason for the reply, continue to the middle paragraph with the reaffirmed the guarantee or adherence to conditions and clauses in a positive language and end it with a positive thank you note for being the loyal client.

With negative or No reply, the letter has to begin by describing the situation that is being claimed in the readers request. While giving a letter with “no” it is mandatory to provide facts and reasons for giving a negative answer. It is mandatory to high light that the reply is negative. Ultimately the refusal should be written in such a way as to foster the relationship for future with the client.

Order Letter. These letters constitute the offer portion of a contract. The contract is fulfilled when the shipper sends the goods. To receive the shipment, the writer has to place an order through the order letter. He/she can use the following deductive outline for order letters:

1. The first sentence can begin with “please ship,” “please send,” “I order,” or some similar statement that assures the seller of the desire to buy. Observe that these are words with specific action. Verbs like “I’m interested” or “I would like to” should be avoided.

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2. The items ordered should be listed and precise details given about catalog numbers, prices, colors, sizes, etc.
3. A payment plan and shipping instructions should be included.
4. The letter should be closed with a confident expectation of delivery.

Activity 9.2

You are the stores manager of Alpha Ltd., a manufacturing company that is into manufacturing commercial heaters. Write an order letter to the suppliers ordering the materials required for production.

Answer:

Favorable Response to an Order Letter: Most orders are acknowledged by shipping the order. As it is not cost effective to send individualized letters of acknowledgment, companies typically send a copy of the sales order.

Non-routine acknowledgments require individualized letters. Although initial orders can be acknowledged through form letters, the letters are more effective if written individually. Well-written acknowledgments create customer goodwill apart from acknowledging an order.

An important purpose of the acknowledgment letter is to encourage future orders by stating that the merchandise has been sent, including resale, and implying that future orders will be handled in the same manner.

Letters about Routine Requests

Routine Requests. Business people often write letters requesting information about people, prices, products, and services. Because the request opens the door for future business, readers accept it optimistically. Some tips are given below to write routine requests effectively.

1. The opening sentence will speak of the major request.
2. Provide details that strengthen the request.
3. Close the letter with a pleasant forward look.

9.6 Principles of Business Writing

Any business communication follows the 7Cs of communication. However, the principles of business writing also follow the 7Ps, which are *purpose, plan, procure, prioritize, prepare, proofread and present*. Finding the purpose of writing the document, to whom it needs to be submitted, planning the various topics to be covered, procurement of information through various resources,

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prioritizing the info that needs to be added and that which can be excluded, preparing the drafts, proofreading multiple times and presenting in the desired form (hard/ soft copies, PPT) are the principles of business writing.

Some points to be adhered while writing for business are:

- Adopting the ‘You’ attitude.
- Using positive tone and right words, even while writing negative messages by opening with buffer statements and communication cushion, deductive/inductive approaches as per the content of the message.
- Avoiding clichés and complicated language, using short and simple sentences and easy to comprehend words in a concise form are important.

Exhibit 9.1 illustrates principles of business writing

Exhibit 9.1: Principles of business writing

Writing business letters is a great art. Communication can make or break a relationship. Ineffective communication creates complications and leads to misperceptions at workplace due to which relationships with superiors or subordinates can suffer. To improve business writing, there are top five principles to be followed. They are:

Principle #1: Connect writing style with audience’s goals: To align writing style with the audience goals, one should talk about not only their goals, but also their pain points and motivations.

Principle #2: Be empathetic in communicating and if necessary, go beyond professional levels. When HR sends a letter, it needs to be crafted at a higher level of empathy, chatting with live customer should be more concerned and brief and not in depth.

Principle #3: Well-structured and formatted letter can be always effective in communicating the message. Long email or letter that runs in to pages suppresses the main content and audience loses the interest.

Principle #4: Constantly communicating with audience or clients is important. It is important to continue business relationships and maintain trust. This leads to brand recognition and brand trust that is most important for the business sustainability.

Principle #5: Clearly define the action expected from the client/customer. This impacts and generates results. A clear call to action enhances positive relationships, improves internal productivity and prevents misunderstandings.

Source: <https://www.grammarly.com/business/learn/top-principles-effective-business-writing/>, Oct, 2021.

As discussed in the foregoing, ‘You’ attitude captures the attention of the reader better than ‘I’ attitude. The following Example 9.3 illustrates a few phrases.

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Example 9.1: 'You' Attitude vs. 'I' Attitude

I Attitude	You Attitude
I have received your quotation	Thank you for your quotation
I am happy to inform you that we have approved your loan	Congratulations! Your loan is approved
We have shipped your order by rail and we are sure it will arrive in time for your sales promotion	Your order will be delivered in time for your sales promotion
Your request for credit cannot be accepted	We regret, at the time, we cannot accommodate your credit needs
We cannot deliver the goods until Friday	We will deliver the goods by Friday

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Activity 9.3

Apply principles of effective writing on the following sentences:

1. You failed to meet the sales target.
2. I hope you will agree that my qualifications match your job profile.
3. I am sure you will agree that our Company has the best reputation for quality and service.
4. You sent your complaint to the wrong department. You should have sent it to the shipping department.
5. We are more interested in your satisfaction than in making profits.
6. Our bank will be open 24 hours.

Effective way of writing the above sentences:

1. With a little extra effort, you could have achieved the target.
2. On reviewing my CV, you will find that my qualifications match your job needs in the following respects...
3. We shall try to live up to our reputation for quality and service.
4. We have sent your complaint to the concerned department, who will be contacting you shortly.
5. We value your goodwill and we will make quick efforts to ensure your satisfaction.
6. You can avail the round-the-clock banking service.

Check Your Progress - 2

6. Identify from the following, a letter written for refund or compensation_____.
 - a. Routine claim letter
 - b. Business letter
 - c. Routine credit letter
 - d. Routine request letter
 - e. Routine order letter
 7. The response to a claim letter is also called_____.
 - a. Claim letter
 - b. Credit letter
 - c. Routine letter
 - d. Refund letter
 - e. Adjustment letter
 8. Identify the drawbacks in the following response to an order letter:
Thank you for your order, which we really appreciate. We sincerely welcome you to our ever-growing list of satisfied customers. We were delighted to send you 30 Porta-phone telephones. They were shipped by express today.
This letter _____.
 - a. Delays the main idea and sounds cliched
 - b. Is too direct and positive
 - c. Is too aggressive and direct
 - d. Delays the main idea and sounds too sincere
 - e. Is too polite
 9. In the first sentence of a routine order letter, one should say_____.
 - a. "Please ship," "please send," or "I order"
 - b. "I'm interested" or "I'd like to"
 - c. Please consider"
 - d. Thank you
 - e. Give details
 10. A routine request letter should begin_____.
 - a. With the major request and follow it up with details
 - b. With the major request and allow the reader to assume the rest
 - c. With a statement of appreciation and then state the request
 - d. With a neutral statement and provide the necessary details
 - e. With a thank you note.
-

9.7 Summary

- An effective letter conveys the subject to the intended audience in a manner that achieves the writer's purpose.
- Understanding the audience is an important task in letter writing.
- Ideas that are expressed from the reader's point of view gain wide acceptance.
- Organization makes the messages meaningful and benefits both the reader and the writer.
- Letters can be organized deductively or inductively.
- In the deductive approach, the central idea is placed at the beginning, followed by the evidence.
- In the inductive approach, the evidence is placed first, followed by the main idea.

9.8 Glossary

Routine Claim/ Routine Claim Letter: A claim letter is a request for an adjustment. When writers ask for something to which they think they are entitled – a refund, replacement, exchange, or payment for damages, the letter is called a claim letter.

Routine Letters about Credit: These include letters for credit information, request for credit in business, and responses to requests for credit.

Routine Letters about Orders: Routine letters about orders put the main idea in the first sentence followed by details in a tabulated form. They include order letters and favorable responses to order letters.

Routine Requests: Business people often write letters requesting information about people, prices, products, and services.

9.9 Self-Assessment Test

1. Knowing the subject, the purpose, and understanding the audience are essential for business correspondence. What are the different ways through which writers can gain an understanding of the audience?
2. Communicators rely on organization to make their messages meaningful. Write about the importance of organization.
3. Writers need organization to ensure that their ideas are presented clearly and logically. What are the different ways in which letters can be organized?

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9.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (b) Think and write from the reader's point of view

“You” attitude refers to reader-oriented communication. In other words, one has to write from the reader's point of view.

2. (e) All kinds of reactions

The reader can be interested, not interested, pleased or not pleased at the message conveyed. All kinds of reactions emerge from the readers.

3. (d) With the request or main idea

Since the reader is eager to hear the news, the writer should begin with the request or main idea. Beginning with a jingle, neutral statement or using an inductive style will bore or frustrate the reader. The reader may not even read the letter.

4. (a) With the main idea or good news

Since the reader is “pleased or neutral,” the letter should begin with the main idea or good news. The “pleased” reader would be happy to hear the news right away and the neutral reader would not mind seeing it first. Such readers do not require an attention-getter to get their attention for reading good news. The use of a neutral statement or buffer would delay the good news and annoy such readers.

5. (d) Color of hair

Knowledge of the reader's age, economic level, and educational background will help you design an appropriate message. Information on hair color will not help you write a suitable letter.

6. (a) Routine claim letter

Routine claim letters are written when a letter is written for compensation or refund of money.

7. (e) Adjustment letter

The response to a claim letter is also called as adjustment letter.

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8. (a) Delays the main idea and sounds clichéd

Considering that this was a favorable response to an order letter, there was no need to delay the main message until sentence 4. The opening sentences sound clichéd and say the same thing that has been said to thousands of other customers.

9. (a) “please ship,” “please send,” or “I order”

In the first sentence of a routine order letter say “please ship,” “please send,” “I order,” or some other similar statement that assures the seller of the desire to buy. Avoid indefinite statements like “I’m interested,” or “I’d like to.”

10. (a) With the major request and follow it up with details

Businesspeople often write letters requesting information about people, prices, products, and services. Because the request is a door opener for future business, readers accept it optimistically. Such letters, therefore, can be written deductively, i.e., they can begin with the major request and follow it up with details.

Unit 10

Writing about the Unpleasant

Structure

- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Objectives
- 10.3 Writing for the Reader
- 10.4 Saying “No” to an Adjustment Request
- 10.5 Saying “No” to a Credit Request
- 10.6 Saying “No” to an Order for Merchandise
- 10.7 Saying “No” to a Request for a Favour
- 10.8 Special Problems in Writing about the Unpleasant
- 10.9 Summary
- 10.10 Glossary
- 10.11 Self-Assessment Test
- 10.12 Suggested Readings/Reference Material
- 10.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

10.1 Introduction

The previous unit explained the importance of understanding the audience, at whom a business communication letter is targeted, organizing the message and the types of business letters. It also helped to identify the types of letters that are used commonly in business situations.

Many a time, an unpleasant situation can arise in business. These situations have to be communicated to other parties. It may be a bank refusing a loan to a customer, or a manager turning down a request for a favor by a subordinate. It is important that bad news is conveyed delicately, but clearly. A skillful manager is one who handles communicating unpleasant information to the listener, without evoking negative feelings in the listener.

Diplomacy and tact are required in all such communication, and those are the key attributes that a manager in this situation will require. It must be done in such a manner that audience co-operation is ensured, and they can be persuaded to accept tough decisions. The writer should ideally place himself/herself in the audience's shoes to understand the feelings that the letter might evoke.

This unit lists the various ways in which a manager can write a negative letter and the points that she should keep in mind while handling such communication.

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It emphasizes the need to have a positive note while presenting facts and reasons for refusal of favors with fair and realistic explanations.

There are three modes of conveying information: face to face, voice to voice and written to read. While face to face is regarded as the best mode of communicating irrespective of what the news is, in an organisation and professional setting we require to adhere to written to read mode of conveying messages. Unfortunately, it is considered the most ineffective given that the body language is absent in entirety as well as context sometimes.

10.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Demonstrate how to write in order to gain the reader's attention
- Describe various letters conveying bad news for different situations to retain customers
- Discuss special problems involved in writing about the unpleasant to gain goodwill of stakeholders

10.3 Writing for the Reader

Conveying bad news requires tact. It must be done in a manner that will ensure the audience's cooperation and persuade them to accept tough decisions. Before composing a letter containing unpleasant news, the writer must put himself or herself in the audience's shoes to understand the feelings the letter will provoke.

Sequence of Ideas

Just as good news is supported with details, bad news must also be backed by details. A logical message is easier to understand and accept. A writer conveying unpleasant news needs to organize the message so that the reasons are clear. The sequence-of-ideas suggested for unpleasant messages is as follows:

1. Begin with a neutral idea that leads to the reason for refusal – The first paragraph in the letter must convey what the letter is about and serve as a transition into a discussion of reasons.
2. Present the facts, analysis, and reasons for refusal – Explanations for the refusal have to appear fair and realistic to the reader and must precede the bad news.
3. State the refusal using a positive tone and de-emphasizing techniques – If the preceding statements appear logical and valid to the reader, it can be hoped that the sentence stating the bad news will evoke little or no resentment.

4. Close with an idea that moves away from the refusal – A closing paragraph that discusses some aspect of the topic other than the bad news itself helps to de-emphasize the unpleasant part of the message. It could convey some additional useful information and will also help to unify the whole message.

Although four ideas for paragraphs have been discussed here, it is not essential to stick to this format. In addition, the opening and closing paragraphs should be short, not more than two sentences each. Additional paragraphs may be required to discuss the reasons for refusal.

Few common rules to be observed in delivering unpleasant information

- Be very clear on the fact and explanations
- Make use of impersonal expressions and passive verbs and refrain from assigning blame to the receiver.
- Making the receiver defensive is to be avoided at all cost, if possible
- Refrain from using euphemism which could mislead readers or might convey an attempt from the part of the writer to avoid the issue.
- Always share and explain the relevant facts and if possible, reasons too. It's also probable to gain goodwill when the message is forthright
- It is also advisable to avoid quoting company policy or hiding behind it each time there is a bad news to be delivered
- Be candid. Give facts as much as you can or the trust will be broken
- Guide or offer solutions if applicable. When the communication is factual, candid and presents positive aspects, solutions are also accepted

Always consider the chance of having an audience of more than one person

Style of Expression

Stylistic techniques can be used to subordinate the bad news by using the passive voice, explaining in general terms and using abstract nouns. Although the reasons must be clearly stated, the subordination of the message allows adequate stress to be laid on the reasons for refusal or the explanation. Bad news messages should have three stylistic qualities. They are:

1. Emphasis / De-emphasise – To maintain good human relations, it is vital to emphasize the positive and de-emphasize the negative.
2. Positive language – Positive language evokes positive feelings – it is important to stress what can be done instead of what can't be done. To write positively, strive to see the good in all the difficult business situations you could be in.

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3. Empathy and apology – The attitude of considering the reader is very much important here too. By understanding, being empathetic about the reader would help the writer to be kinder in words.
4. Dignity – The recipients of the bad use – have to be treated with respect and dignity. The word should be professional and factual. It should not contain any word or sentence that disrespect or even implies disrespect to the recipient.
5. Honest and direct -The news being conveyed have to be given in a very clear precise language. Any ambiguity should be avoided, so should personal view points or opinions.
6. Implication – Implication is an effective way to transmit unpleasant ideas. For e.g., instead of saying, “I can’t do this”, the sentence could be framed, “I wish I could do this, but.....”

Check Your Progress - 1

1. If a bad newsletter begins with a refusal and then follows it up with an explanation for the refusal
 - a. The reader will most likely read the explanation
 - b. The reader will accept the explanation with an open mind
 - c. The reader will most likely not read the explanation with an open mind
 - d. The reader will accept the explanation
 - e. The reader will try to make amendments
2. Letters about the unpleasant begin with
 - a. A neutral idea that leads to the reason for refusal
 - b. A clear statement of the refusal
 - c. A statement that leads the reader to expect good news
 - d. Present misleading facts, analysis, and reasons for the refusal.
 - e. Give negative aspects of the deal
3. Letters about the unpleasant close with
 - a. An idea that moves away from the refusal
 - b. A clear re-statement of the refusal
 - c. An explanation for the refusal
 - d. A de-emphasized refusal
 - e. An emphasis on the negative aspects of the deal
4. The sentence conveying the bad news
 - a. Should use negative language
 - b. Should use positive language

- c. Should be emphatic
- d. Should emphasize the bad news
- e. Should be neither positive nor negative

10.4 Saying “No” to an Adjustment Request

Example 10.1 deals with saying no to an adjustment request.

Adjustment letters that say “no” follow

a general sequence of ideas:

First Paragraph – Attention getter

Begin with a neutral idea or a factual sentence that leads to the reason for refusal

Main text

Present the reasons and explanations.

Present the refusal.

Closing Paragraph

Reveal the refusal in a compound statement.

Close with an off-the-subject thought.

Example 10.1: Saying “no” to an adjustment request

Dear Ms. Nandini,

Your teakwood chest was delivered earlier than predicted when the purchase papers were signed. The invoice you received shows a pre-payment of cost and transport.

As the import duty can only be calculated on the shipping date, the tax is paid when the shipment is delivered. Buyers are told of their responsibility to pay the import tax. This is clearly mentioned on the sales ticket.

The responsibility for the tax is yours, but you have reason to feel good about your purchase. By ordering from the manufacturer, you have saved about 40%. You are now the proud owner of a beautiful chest.

Sincerely,

Manager.

Source: ICFAI Research Center

10.5 Saying “No” to a Credit Request

Refusing credit to prospective buyers has to be done very tactfully so that it does not offend them or deter them from buying in the future. The buyers have to be kept interested in the company’s goods and services and convinced to buy on a cash basis. In credit refusal letters, the major portion of the message should be the explanation of the reasons behind the refusal. If a request for credit is accompanied with an order, the refusal letter can also serve as an

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acknowledgment letter. Moreover, of course, every business letter is directly or indirectly a sales letter too, so a resale statement may also be included. Including a resale – favorable statement about the product ordered in the letter is useful for four reasons-

1. It might encourage the buyer to buy the product and may even make them buy on a cash basis
2. It suggests that the writer is trying to be helpful.
3. It makes writing easier because negative thoughts are easier to de-emphasize when cushioned by resale material.
4. It can serve as an indirect compliment to the buyer by endorsing their judgment in choosing the merchandise.

Check Your Progress - 2

5. The following letter is refusing a request for credit:

Your order of July 6 has been received and your request for credit privileges has been given to me for evaluation. At this time, we do not believe it is in our interest to sell you on a credit basis.

What is the drawback of the second sentence of the letter?

- a. It is a positive but writer-oriented sentence
- b. It is a negative but reader-oriented sentence
- c. It expresses too much belief in the writer
- d. It is a negative and writer-oriented sentence
- e. It is a caution to the customer

10.6 Saying “No” to an Order for Merchandise

Businesses may sometimes have to convey bad news about orders. For example, the product ordered by the customer may not be available with the company or only a part of the order can be fulfilled currently. In some cases, the order itself may not be clearly worded by the buyer. When conveying negative news concerning an order, writers should have three basic goals:

1. To work towards an eventual sale along the lines of the original order.
2. To keep instructions or additional information clear.
3. To maintain an optimistic, confident tone so that the reader will not lose interest.

Exhibit 10.1 illustrates saying no to an order for merchandise.

Exhibit 10.1: The Hourglass method

Juliet Funt, author of “A Minute to Think”, says that saying ‘no’ at work is as important as you say yes to what you want at work. While saying yes is necessary and a critical skill needed, saying no saves energy and time, enhances focus. But most often, people fail to say no in a hurry to give a flash response – a quick answer. They realize that they should have said no only

Contd.

when they fail to do so. Juliet Funt, after a long term research done on productive employees, came up with a unique framework, the Hourglass method — a step-by-step guide for deliberately defining when to say no.

Steps in Hourglass method:

When somebody sends a request, take some time and try the Hourglass.

First, remember the flash response you gave, either yes or no, not down the response you felt that time.

In critical consideration phase, take some time and observe three important things- your motives, history and future.

Examine yourself - are you accepting the request by yourself, or accepting on fear, or please. Whatever is the case, try to own the truth.

List out ideas based on your motives, may be negative or positive

Think of the past with similar situations and the choices you made, then try to make choice

The final step is to think of the future. Estimate whether your yes or no would harm or benefit your team. If so, for how long would it take and then check its impact on the results. Also check whether it supports or challenges your relationships with the team.

If you are struck at this stage, collect more information to come out with the solution.

Finally, make your decision, write it down and deliver with confidence.

Source: https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/04/the-smartest-people-use-this-simple-model-to-say-no-says-productivity-expert.html?utm_content=Main&utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook#Echobox=1632941468

Back Orders

Sometimes as a seller, you may not be able to fulfill a customer’s order. You are unable to fulfill the order or are only able to fulfill part of it. When sending part of the order, there is both good news and bad news. The introduction to the letter can contain the good news that part of the order is on the way. After that, the delay in the shipment of the rest of the order can be explained. A positive ending encourages a favorable attitude towards the total transaction. Even in cases where it is not possible to fulfill the order as a whole, the indirect approach helps. The introduction can be a buffer with confirmation of the order, followed by a clarification that it will be fulfilled as soon as possible.

Substitution

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Sometimes a customer may ask for a product that you no longer sell or produce. If you are sure that the customer will accept a substitute product, you can go ahead and directly send it. However, in most cases, it is advisable to inform the customer of the change beforehand. In your correspondence with the customer, do not refer to the new product as a “substitute”, as this has a negative connotation to it. Instead, tell the customer that you now stock superior or a more improved version of the product, exclusively, at no extra cost. In case the new product does cost more, the challenge is greater! In such cases, the customer has to be convinced of the superior quality and efficiency of the second product and the additional costs have to be justified. The reasons for unavailability of the first product have to be explained in terms of the customer’s needs. The ending of the letter must ask the reader to authorize shipment of the substitute product, make the action easy and reinforce the benefits described earlier.

Offering a More Suitable Product

Sometimes customers unknowingly order a product when they can more profitably buy and use another product. Fulfilling such an order can be a mistake, as it would ultimately dissatisfy the customer.

In such cases too, the customer has to be tactfully informed about the better alternative. If the letter is well written and is based on a sound decision, then the recipient will recognize that the sender has done them a favor by saying “no” to the original request.

Activity 10.1

Imagine you are the Marketing Executive of a special, edible ink manufacturing company. One of your regular customers, a candy manufacturer, has asked you to supply 20 bottles of Red Ink in anticipation of increased demand for his candies in the near future. Unfortunately, you can only supply 5 bottles at this time. However, you can supply 20 bottles of Blue Ink. Write a letter to your customer explaining the alternative and suggest that the Blue Ink can be bought this time.

Answer:

Check Your Progress - 3

6. A letter informing a customer that the order cannot be filled and that the product requested will be substituted with another has to be worded very carefully. Above all, the word _____ should never be used.
 - a. Superior
 - b. Satisfaction
 - c. Substitute
 - d. Qualitative
 - e. Beneficial
7. The “neutral statement” of a bad newsletter is also known as _____.
 - a. Sales promotion
 - b. Resale
 - c. Buffer
 - d. Equivocation
 - e. Substitution
8. A ‘buffer’ in a ‘bad news’ letter is often referred to as _____.
 - a. An apology
 - b. A neutral statement
 - c. An act of co-optation
 - d. A liaison
 - e. The obvious
9. In a ‘bad news’ letter, the buffer should express any one of the following attitudes EXCEPT _____.
 - a. Agreement
 - b. Aggrandizement
 - c. Fairness
 - d. Cooperation
 - e. Understanding

10.7 Saying “No” to a Request for a Favour

When a request for a favor has to be denied, it must again be done in a sensitive, logical manner, so that a positive relationship with the concerned person can be maintained. An alternative to the favor requested, that is, a counterproposal may also be offered.

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It is recommended, that in this case too, reasons must be given before the actual refusal is worded.

10.8 Special Problems in Writing about the Unpleasant

As discussed earlier, for the writer of unpleasant news, it is always important to convey a clear message and retain the recipient's goodwill at the same time. An inductive approach will usually serve the purpose. Though you may feel that the reader is likely to become impatient with an inductive letter, a concise, well-written explanation is always welcome. In addition, even if the reader tends to become impatient with long explanations, the impatience will do less damage than the annoyance that follows encountering bad news in the first sentence itself.

Placing a refusal in the first sentence can be justified only when:

1. The letter is a second response to a repeated request.
2. A very small, insignificant matter is involved.
3. A request is obviously ridiculous, immoral, unethical, illegal, or dangerous
4. The writer's intent is to shake the reader.
5. The writer-reader relationship is so close and long-standing that a satisfactory relationship can be taken for granted.
6. The writer wants to demonstrate authority.

Communicating negative performance feedback

Most of the time twice a year, all managers face the difficult task of communicative negative performance feedback to at least one of their team members. Though the performance feedbacks are expected to improve performance, there is a lot of emotions involved and sometimes do bring out negative or adverse reactions from employees. To communicate such feedback, which while sometimes can be verbal, is mostly also written format, managers are seen to use evidence and emotive combined communication tactics. Emotive conversations use phrases that are expected to bring forth emotional reactions from the reader. Even though emotions are not professional and are considered not quite suitable for organisational settings, some aspects like performance management communication uses the emotive aspect to reduce adverse results.

Eg: A newly joined employee is being apprised for the offer of permanent position. The job description had clearly stated fluency in Mandarin. But after 3 months the employees' fluency level in the given language is still basic. The review officer was asked to communicate to the employee that he will be in probation till his knowledge in Mandarin is improved.

He called the employee to convey the message. Apart from his speaking, the gist of the letter given was "You have been a model employee since you have

joined us. It's been wonderful to see you grow in to the company culture. One of the aspects required in the job profile you handle as the marketing manager for middle east and China was fluency in Mandarin which will help you to talk with the employees in the office at Huan, as well as the local businesses while negotiating. This competency is key to end your probationary status as well. It is indeed a difficult language. Hence the organisation has decided to offer on site classes for the same. You have been enrolled for this. Please avail this and bring up the level of your Mandarin fluency as fast as possible. Till then you will remain in probation as previously stated in the appointment order. Wish you luck and assure you that all support required will be given for you to achieve this."

A long letter where they never used the term failed, nor created a "we vs you" situation. On the other hand, they give the employee the reason for his failure to capture the language as "it's difficult". They offer the solution as well. This might not be possible in all situations but avoiding a confrontational state and thus creating adverse effects are important for successful business.

There is an area where negative communication tactics to create negativity is used by design. This is the political arena where negative campaigning tactics are used with careful planning. It is given a great deal of thought before such tactics are employed by the political leaders and their consultants. It has also been found that they do weigh in the backlash from such a campaign tactic is employed.

One of the regular methods used in feedback is easing in. The issue with easing is that its results are inconsistent. The issue with easing in is that, the process is not required if the manager is prepared to have an open conversation. What happens during an easing is that the employee might become defensive and irrespective of how it ends, the employee will stop having confidence in the manager, might agree with whatever the manager says all the while, unbelieving the feedback what has been given.

Easing in is a wager and not necessary that it will end in expected results. The few reasons are 1. Usually, while easing happens, people are trying to analyze someone's behavior where the tendency is to overestimate the effect of people's characteristics as in capabilities and disposition and mostly tend to under estimate the effect of environment around the person. 2. The tendency of managers to take to consideration the first available explanation for a person's behavior.

Let us now examine the difficulties involved in writing a letter that conveys unpleasant news.

First Paragraph

The introductory paragraph informs the reader of the subject of the letter without saying the obvious. It should be a neutral, relevant, and succinct lead to

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the bad news. Most important, it should not be misleading. Some things to avoid writing the introductory paragraph are:

1. Avoid saying “no”- Reader encountering unpleasant news at the beginning of the letter is bound to react negatively.
2. Avoid using a know-it-all tone – Phrases such as “you should be aware that...” make the reader feel uncomfortable and they become resistant.
3. Avoid wordy and irrelevant phrases and sentences – Space need not be wasted by using unnecessary phrases such as “this letter is in reply to your request” or “we have received your letter”.
4. Avoid apologizing – An apology weakens your explanation for the unfavorable decision.
5. Avoid writing an introduction that is too long – Briefly identify an issue on which both you and your audience agree on, before proceeding in a businesslike way.

Exhibit 10.2 presents some examples of buffers or opening sentences.

Exhibit 10.2: Some Buffers or Neutral Opening Sentences

Objective	Buffer	Example
Agreement	If you can mention an issue shared commonly by you and the reader, it is worth mentioning.	Both of us agree that penetrating into the market needs a thorough analysis.
Appreciation	Acknowledge the receipt of cheque.	Your remittance through cheque for ₹ 10 000 has been received.
Cooperation	Express your willingness to extend your helping hand.	I will be more than happy to assist you in identifying your areas of interest in your department.
Fairness	Make the reader believe that the problem was studied or quote an appropriate remedy taken by you.	It was noticed that the printer in your department is not working and the purchase department has been alerted to place a latest printer cum scanner to suit your future needs.
Good News	At the outset, you write a favorable and positive note.	A replacement battery for the UPS is on the way and will be delivered tomorrow at 11.30 am.

Contd....

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Praise	Use an appropriate word for praising your employee.	Your efficiency in delivering the software solution on time has been appreciated by our client and they have extended another contract to us. I appreciate and it is placed on record.
Resale	Discuss the important attributes of the product.	The fineness and precision of the equipment have been appreciated by a large number of customers like you and we are pleased to ship 10 units by today evening.
Understanding	Prove in your communication that you understand the client's needs.	Based on the discussion we had with you, we have selected the latest gadget that suits your requirement.

Adopted from: <http://slideplayer.com/slide/3934184/release/woothree>.

The Bad News Sentences

An explanation containing reasons for a refusal must precede the actual refusal. The refusal must be as positively worded as possible. Consider the following examples.

Your request is, therefore, being denied. – Stated negatively, the idea is not very pleasant. The word “denied”, stands out, being the last word of the sentence.

We are therefore denying your request – Using the active voice makes the sentence emphatic and abrasive.

The financial statements do not justify increasing your credit limit to ₹ 3,00,000 as requested, but they surely support raising your limit to ₹ 1,00,000.

The sentence manages to convey the negative but ends on a positive note.

My department is already shorthanded, so I will need all my staff for at least the next two months – Bad news is implied and subordinated in a complex sentence. *If the quotation was given for ₹ 40 000, it would be possible to accept to accept the contract*—this message implies that the answer was obviously “yes” and not “no”. Please note the beauty of using subjunctives ‘if’ and ‘would’ in this sentence.

Last Paragraph

The last paragraph must contain useful information and demonstrate empathy for the audience. Keep the following in mind:

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1. Do not refer to or repeat the bad news.
2. Do not apologize for the decision or reveal any doubt about the readers accepting the reasons. Avoid statements like “I trust our decision is satisfactory.”
3. Do not urge additional communication unless you are really willing to discuss your decision further.
4. Do not anticipate problems. Avoid sentences like “Should you have further problems, let us know.”
5. Do not include clichés that are insincere in view of the bad news. For eg. “If we can be of any help, please contact us.”
6. Do not reveal any doubt that the person will remain a customer. Avoid phrases such as “We hope you will continue to do business with us.”

The final paragraph must be short, usually one or two sentences, enough to unify the whole message and end the letter. The final sentence can also include a reference to some pleasant preceding discussion, resale, or an alternative solution to the readers’ problems.

Activity 10.2

Imagine you are the Director of a popular Cold Drinks Manufacturing company. A group of students from the local university approach you for sponsorship of the Annual University Festival. As the Director, the company allows you to sponsor such events, as they are a good marketing and advertising platform. The students request you for a sponsorship of ₹ 1, 00, 000 to be paid in cash before the event begins. You are however, not very enthusiastic about this particular festival but you think the company can sponsor up to ₹ 20,000. The payment can only be made by cheque after the event is over. Write a letter, informing the student representative, Manoj, about the alternative.

Answer:

Check Your Progress - 4

10. In a ‘bad news’ letter, the writer should not
 - a. Be courteous to the reader
 - b. Apologize for the decision taken

- c. Be tactful
- d. Be empathetic
- e. Be rational

10.9 Summary

- Bad news must be conveyed with a delicate touch, it must be done so that it will ensure the audience/reader's cooperation and persuade them to accept tough decisions.
- An inductive approach is suggested for conveying unpleasant news in a letter.
- Stylistic techniques can help convey unpleasant messages effectively.
- Keep the tone of the message positive. Overly negative words or words with negative connotation should be avoided.
- For letters that say "no" to any request or situation, begin with a short introduction that conveys a neutral idea and lead to the reasons for the refusal. In the main text, explain these reasons without emphasis. Close the letter on a positive note with an off-the-subject thought.

10.10 Glossary

Implication: It is an effective way to transmit unpleasant ideas indirectly.

Positive Language: Positive language evokes positive feelings, it is important to stress what can be done instead of what can't be done.

10.11 Self-Assessment Test

1. Why do you think it is important to convey bad news in business tactfully and clearly?
2. What would be the general structure of a letter conveying bad news? Explain how the introduction, main text and last sentences must be written.
3. Assume that a newly appointed distributor for your products asks you for credit on the first consignment of goods being delivered to him or her. The distributor insists on credit, saying that repayment will be done as soon as that consignment is sold. As you have no prior history for this distributor, you do not want to extend credit. Write a letter refusing credit, but remember that you do not want to lose a new distributor. How would you handle a similar situation, if the distributor happened to be a reputed, established distributor of your company with an excellent past record? How would you write a letter to an established distributor refusing credit?

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10.12 Suggested Readings/Reference Material

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10.13 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (c) **The reader will most likely not read the explanation with an open mind**

The reader would be so annoyed upon hearing the bad news that he would not read the explanation with an open mind.

2. (a) **A neutral idea that leads to the reason for refusal**

The inductive sequence-of-ideas pattern used in unpleasant messages is as follows:

1. Begin with a neutral idea that leads to the reason for the refusal.
2. Present the facts, analysis, and reasons for the refusal.
3. State the refusal using a positive tone and de-emphasizing techniques.
4. Close with an idea that moves away from the refusal. Beginning with the refusal or with misleading information would alienate the reader.

3. (a) **An idea that moves away from the refusal**

Letters about the unpleasant close with an idea that moves away from the refusal. A closing paragraph that is about some aspect of the topic other than the bad news itself helps in several ways. It assists in (1) de-emphasizing the unpleasant part of the message, (2) conveying some useful information that should logically follow bad news, (3) showing that the writer has a positive attitude, and (4) adding a unifying quality to the message.

4. (b) **Should use positive language**

The bad news should be de-emphasized and should be expressed in positive language. This approach will help the writer maintain the reader's goodwill.

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5. (d) It is a negative and writer-oriented sentence

This is a negative sentence. It reveals the negative decision before presenting the basis for it. Moreover, it expresses concern for the company's interests, not the reader's interests.

6. (c) Substitute

The word substitute should never be used. It suggests that the product is not as good as the one originally offered.

7. (c) Buffer

The 'neutral statement' of a bad newsletter is also known as the buffer.

8. (b) A neutral statement

Buffers are often referred to as neutral statements. They state the topic of the bad news letter without saying the obvious.

9. (b) Aggrandizement

A buffer should not be used to sing one's praises—that would offend the reader. Buffers should show agreement, fairness and cooperation. So, to write an effective buffer, find a point on which you and the reader share similar views; or convey your willingness to help in any way you really can, or assure the reader that you have closely examined and carefully considered the problem.

10. (b) Apologize for the decision taken

The writer should never apologize for the decision taken. That would show doubt and encourage further correspondence.

Unit 11

Writing to Persuade

Structure

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Objectives
- 11.3 The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages — Identifying Objectives
- 11.4 The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages — Organizing the Message
- 11.5 How to Handle Complaints and Convey Bad News?
- 11.6 Writing a Complete Sales Letter
- 11.7 Claim Letters and Requests for Favors
- 11.8 The Collection Series
- 11.9 Writing for the Web
- 11.10 Summary
- 11.11 Glossary
- 11.12 Self-Assessment Test
- 11.13 Suggested Readings/Reference Material
- 11.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

11.1 Introduction

The previous unit explained the importance of tact in conveying unpleasant news in a business situation. It emphasized the need to have a positive note while presenting facts and reasons for refusal with fair and realistic explanations.

Persuasion would mean to change, motivate or move an audience, by presenting a set of arguments meant to do so. Persuasion can have either positive or negative effects as well as be either implicit or explicit.

The Oxford dictionary defines persuasion as “the action or process of persuading someone or of being persuaded to do or believe something”. The purpose of persuasion is to bring others towards accepting the view or to undertake an action you want them to take by changing their views or beliefs. The persuasive communication mode is used in organisations for –

To bring about an approval or to vote a disapproval of a policy or a certain process

To bring about a change – in work modes, practices, policies, etc.

Or to adopt the new policy

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Debates of issues to be dealt with – where the author is making the option clear by defining it and giving arguments for all the claims and finally making the advisory clear

In short – think and act like the writer and take an action which the writer supports or needs or advocate

Clearly successful persuasion is about managing to change the minds. The acceptable modes to change minds are –

Given arguments should be based on evidence and facts

The given arguments in the written document should be based on the readers' interest and understanding and the need

While writing the document its important to have and express respect for the reader and the audience as well

Always support arguments with evidence than opinions

If possible, try to quote or bring in or even mention an important person or organisation who has supported, followed or used the particular process

Always give clear true facts information and numbers so that convincing is a possibility

Emotions can help fasten the process of decisions – invoking either happiness, anger, or sadness in the reader (or the audience) or any kind of emotion or passion could make the decision making easier and faster

It's usually easier for people who are trusted to get a more favorable reply

It's important to convince the reader that the topic discussed is important enough to warrant time and consideration as well as to make an immediate decision

There is also the question of ethics while presenting the arguments. Persuasion is the process by which the audience is motivated to change their thoughts to accept the arguments position, change beliefs or at least consider the given arguments.

Persuasion plays an important role in day-to-day business activities. It is used in selling products, to gain the support of colleagues and juniors, and to make seniors see one's point of view. However, persuasion is mainly used as a strategy in sales letters, requests for information and for collection letters. When writing to persuade, one must know one's subject, the purpose of writing, and the target audience, as with all other business communication.

Persuasive letters are written with the aim of getting the reader to respond favorably. All persuasive letters should use an inductive or indirect approach – the message should not be forced on the reader.

This unit focuses on writing how to persuade in business, and how to construct persuasive sales messages.

11.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Show how to write persuasive sales letters for identifying and organizing the message
- Demonstrate how to write claim letters and requests for getting favorable actions
- Discuss how to write the collection series to gain action and goodwill from the customer

11.3 The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages – Identifying Objectives

There are two important steps in constructing persuasive sales messages. The first is identifying the objectives of the letter and the second is organizing the message.

To identify the objectives of a persuasive message, you must understand

1. What product or service is being promoted?
2. To whom the message is being directed?
3. What are the desired results?

Know the product or service

It is easier to persuade others about a product when you know your product thoroughly. To write about a product, you need details such as:

1. The benefits of the product.
2. The material the product is made up of.
3. The process by which the product is manufactured.
4. The superior design features of the product.
5. The price
6. The maintenance or servicing that will be needed for the product.

You should also know the advantages of this product when compared to other similar products.

Know the customer

You must know your readers to understand their needs and their attitude towards the product. You must know:

1. The potential buyers.

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2. The reason for their purchase.
3. The frequency of their purchase.
4. The usage of the product for the buyer.
5. Whether the product is a necessity item or a luxury item.
6. What people like about the product.
7. What people dislike about the product.

Know the desired action

You must be very clear about the purpose of your writing and the action you want the readers to take after they have been through your letter. Do you want them to reply to the letter, return a card requesting a representative to call, fill out a form, or make an outright purchase?

Check Your Progress - 1

1. To identify the objectives of a persuasive message, the writers must ask themselves the following questions, EXCEPT _____.
 - a. What product or service is being promoted?
 - b. To whom is the message being directed?
 - c. What are the desired results?
 - d. How long will it take to write the message?
 - e. What are likes and dislikes of customers?
 2. A letter requesting information started with the following sentences:
Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the envelope provided. I dislike having to impose on the valuable time of a busy executive such as you, but in order for me to complete the research for my thesis at the university; I must seek first-hand information from business leaders.
These sentences are too _____.
 - a. Writer-oriented
 - b. Reader-oriented
 - c. Subject-oriented
 - d. Response-oriented
 - e. Confusing to the reader
-

11.4 The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages – Organizing the Message

An inductive or indirect approach is effective for sales letters and other persuasive messages. The selling procedure includes four steps:

1. Getting the readers' Attention
2. Introducing the product and arousing Interest in it.
3. Generating a Desire for the product through evidence.
4. Encouraging Action.

This model is popularly called the AIDA model and it constitutes the basic outline for sales letters. Sales letters may be "solicited" as when a prospective customer has asked for information, or "unsolicited", in which case the prospect has not asked for information but you want him to know about your product.

There are four broad divisions of the message: using the attention-getter, introducing the product, convincing the reader, motivating action.

The First Paragraph: An Attention-Getter

For an unsolicited letter, the opening sentences must work as an attention-getter. Some common attention-getting techniques are:

- A solution to a problem: e.g. Writing-analysis software that identifies your mistakes helps you create error-free, professional documents.
- A startling announcement: e.g. More teens die because of suicide each month than in auto accidents.
- A what-if opening: e.g. What if you could reduce your electricity costs by 25%, by just changing your bulbs?
- An outstanding feature of the product: e.g. An answering machine that lets you check messages in the office when you are hundreds of miles away on business!
- A gift: e.g. Ten free sheets of embossed, personalized stationery are enclosed as a free sample.
- "Offering a solution to a problem," "making a startling announcement," and "offering a gift"

While you can use the techniques mentioned above, avoid using boring, clichéd statements, such as "A stitch in time saves nine". You must also avoid opening your letter with foolish questions, such as "Are you interested in improving your health?"

Also, keep the following in mind:

Start with the Product: Begin with a short, emphatic sentence or question that suggests some relationship between the product and the recipient of the letter. In addition, the sentences that follow the first sentence should flow naturally from it.

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Focus on a Central Selling Feature: The product's unique features must be stressed in the opening sentence itself. They may go unnoticed in the middle of a paragraph.

Address the reader's needs: Empathize with the audience's needs. Before writing, think in terms of the reader's interest.

Keep paragraphs short: Keep the opening paragraph short; even a one-line sentence is acceptable.

Introducing the Product

A persuasive message is off to a good start if the first sentence manages to catch the reader's interest. It must make the reader think, "Here's a solution to one of my problems," or "Here's something I need."

Be natural and cohesive. If the attention-getter does not introduce the product, it should lead naturally to that introduction. The product must be introduced in the next few sentences, but keep in mind that each sentence should flow naturally from the previous one. It is not enough just to have ideas that are related to each other; these ideas must be closely interwoven in such a way that one sentence leads smoothly to the next.

Be action-oriented. To introduce a product in an interesting way, be action-oriented. In fact, you should first understand that you do not sell the product – you sell what it will do or the purpose it will serve. Therefore, instead of giving boring technical details of a product, you must explain to the user in as an interesting a manner as possible what the product will do for him/her. A small amount of the product description is necessary, but too much of it will bore the reader.

Stress the central selling point. As soon as readers have visualized the product, you must draw their attention to its outstanding features. The unique aspects of the product must be mentioned early in the text so that more space can be devoted to discussing their features. While you talk about the unique features, you can also stress other special points. For example, while ease of operation of a camera is being stressed, other features such as its pitch control, swing-out film gate, 750-watt bulb could also be mentioned.

Check Your Progress - 2

3. Solicited sales letters are _____ by the prospect.
- Invited
 - Rejected
 - Instigated
 - Received
 - Endorsed
-

Convince the Readers with Evidence

After introducing the product in an interesting way, you have to convince the reader to purchase the product. To do this, you should present him with evidence to support the features you have mentioned in the preceding sentences. Do not show inconsistency by talking about one feature and giving evidence in support of another. For e.g., to emphasize the economy of operation of a car, you could talk about its mileage, but not about its looks or other unrelated features.

Use concrete language: Give convincing evidence based on facts to support the special features that you have emphasized. For e.g., you can convince the reader of the durability of a toy for children by mentioning the quality of the plastic and rubber used in it and the process used in manufacturing it. Facts and figures can also be used, but they should be kept simple and to the minimum so as not to confuse the reader.

Be objective: Avoid using superlatives, exaggerations, and flowery language – they will make the contents look superfluous. Use specific, concrete statements to support your product. For e.g., saying that “These are the best plastic pipes in the market today” provokes the reader to ask, “How do we know these are the best?” and “they reflect negatively on your product.”

Interpret the evidence: Present the evidence in a manner in which the reader can interpret the message clearly. For e.g., if you are emphasizing on the lightweight of your calculator, instead of saying “our calculators weigh a mere 14gm” you could write, “compare the weight of our calculator with the weight of a credit card.” That will help the reader interpret the message in terms of the advantages of the calculator rather than get lost in numerical data.

Be careful when you talk about price: Once the reader’s interest in the product has been aroused, he is bound to ask, “How much is this going to cost?” Price must be handled very tactfully; to the reader, the product must appear affordable. Keep the following in mind when disclosing the price:

1. Introduce the price only after presenting the product and its virtues.
2. Keep price talk out of the first and last paragraphs – unless the price is the distinctive feature. The price should be mentioned at the beginning of a paragraph only if it is the most important selling point.
3. Use figures to illustrate how enough money can be saved with the product to pay for the expenditure.
4. State price in terms of smaller units. (Twelve rupees a month seems a lot less than ₹ 144 a year).
5. If it is practical, invite comparison with similar products.
6. If facts and figures are available, use them to illustrate that the price is reasonable.

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7. Mention price in a complex or compound sentence that refers to the virtues of the product. In this way, the sentence that mentions the price also reminds readers of the benefits they get in return.
8. The price should not be the first or last word of a sentence. First and last words are emphatic; and unless it is the central selling point, the price should be subordinated.

Activity 11.1

As the manager of an Exclusive Fashion Store, draft a sales letter for your elite clientele, inviting them to a special fashion show and exhibition that is being conducted as a part of the Diwali celebrations. Also, inform them of a special 30% discount they will receive if they carry this letter with them to your store.

Answer:

Motivating the Reader to Action

The reader has to be ultimately guided to take action. Your chances of getting action are increased if you:

Mention the specific action you want: In clear terms, specify the action you want the reader to take after he finishes reading your letter. General requests such as, “let us hear from you,” are usually ineffective. Instead, attach an order form or an inquiry card and ask the reader to fill and return it with a check. When such predefined actions are specified, you are more likely to get a response.

Refer to the reward for taking action: In the same sentence, remind the reader of the benefits that the product will give him and encourage him to take action. The reader will feel that he is being rewarded for taking action.

Present action as being easy to take: Instead of asking the reader to fill in his name and address on order forms, or return cards and envelopes, do that work for him. If action is easy or consumes little time, there is more of a chance of his acting immediately.

Provide a stimulus for quick action: The persuasive effect will wear off with time; so encourage the reader to take instant action. You can emphasize special

prices or availability of stock by saying, “Buy while present prices are still in effect” or “Buy while the present supply lasts”.

Ask confidently for action: Instead of saying “if you want to save time in cleaning, fill in and return..,” say confidently, “to save time in cleaning, fill in and return...”.

For proper emphasis, keep the last paragraph relatively short. However, the paragraph must indicate the specific action wanted, refer to the distinctive selling feature, and encourage quick action.

Check Your Progress - 3

4. When discussing the price of an expensive product in an unsolicited sales letter
 - a. Place the price discussion in the first paragraph
 - b. State price in terms of smaller units
 - c. Mention price in a simple sentence
 - d. Do not compare price with similar products
 - e. First mention price and then its features and benefits
-

11.5 How to Handle Complaints and Convey Bad News

In business communication, conveying news like a loan rejection or handling a grievance becomes more challenging when the communication is via technological channels like emails. The absence of one-to-one communication makes it difficult for the recipient to gauge the reactions and exact tone, facial expressions, etc., of the sender. While communicating negative or less positive news via technological communication mediums care should be taken such that:

1. The message should be conveyed clearly. No additional, irrelevant information should be communicated as it may confuse the recipient. *For example, while informing a customer about the non-availability of a desired product, information regarding unrelated products, promotional offers etc. should be avoided. Staying focused on the issue at hand and expressing regret over the same may prove more effective.*
2. The language should be polite. This shall help the receiver understand the news and accept the same in a better manner.
3. The reason for the decision should be conveyed using a neutral language. Highlighting negative points, reasons etc. should be avoided.
4. The tone should be neutral without any form of personal emotions or feelings of guilt or anger. *For instance, “I personally feel very bad that our*

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organization can no longer associate with you. I feel guilty of having to convey this message to you.”

5. Passive voice may be used to convey the negative message in a polite manner.

The following Example 11.1 showcases how a customer relations manager conveyed the news of non-availability of a product to a customer.

Example 11.1: Example of Conveying bad News

“Dear Sir,

We appreciate your interest in our company’s product. The product is growing both in popularity and in demand among our existing and new customers. We are working relentlessly to satisfy the demands of all our customers.

Our team has made a note of your contact details. You shall be hearing from our team about the status of the product dispatch latest by the end of this week.

We deeply regret the inconvenience caused to you. We aspire to continue the valuable association with your company.

Best Wishes,

Rajeev Kamath,

Senior Customer Relations Manager

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Activity 11.2

You are responsible for sanctioning personal loans at ‘Maalamal Bank Ltd.’ Mr. Rao, a 45 year old, owner of a small book shop is planning to expand his book shop and repeatedly visited your loans department. Mr. Rao had raised a request of a loan of INR 20 lacs. However, due to certain concerns regarding the expansion proposal, the bank decided that it would not be possible to sanction the loan now. Write a loan rejection letter to the customer.

Answer:

Exhibit 11.1: explains how to handle customer complaints.

Exhibit 11.1: How to Handle Customer Complaints

Receiving customer complaints occasionally is obvious in business. Generally complaints are treated as bad. However, if you can manage it properly and politely, it creates an opportunity for the business to develop and grow. A procedural policy should be framed and make it accessible to staff. This would help staff in handling the customer complaints in a more professional manner. Some important points to be considered while drafting the procedure are listed below:

Point 1: Customers always wish to be heard. Spare time and listen actively to them.

Point 2: Keep records of all the transactions, agreements, promises and undertakings the business had with the customer. These stand as a basis for communication and prevents any misunderstandings.

Point 3: Documenting all the customer complaints is important to business. Clear return policies are made available to them Though consumer laws exist, internal procedures for returning goods are recommended.

Point 4: Fair trading is always good. Having detailed description on pricing policies, warranties, and refunds are safe.

Point 5: After handling the complaint, take feedback from the customer about the process and the way complaint was handled. This helps in improving the customer service in the future.

Source: <https://business.gov.au/people/customers/manage-customer-complaints>, 4 August 2021.

11.6 Writing a Complete Sales Letter

A complete sales letter must have an inductive sequence of ideas. Remember a solicited letter does not require an attention-getter, whereas an unsolicited letter requires a strong one. Example 11.2 illustrates an example of complete sales letter.

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Example 11.2: A Good Example of a Complete Sales Letter	
	Dear Mr. Lalchandani,
Attention getter, relates to the recipient's experience and introduces the product.	→ If you need an afternoon swinging a golf club, but you are worried you will miss an important call, you need the Wipro Call pager.
Emphasizes product solving the user's problem.	→ To make sure you will be able to catch that important call wherever you are, Wipro Systems is introducing the Wipro Call pager. Wherever you go, you carry it with you. When people need to reach you, they simply need to call Wipro Call's 800 number and key in your code. Within seconds, our nationwide satellite system relays the message to your Wipro Call pager -- and you never miss a call.
Emphasizes the Central selling point. Conveys other data to support the product.	
Gives the user a reason to buy the product.	
Talks of price in a sentence that reinforces the main selling feature.	→ The Wipro Call system reaches you almost anywhere in India and weighs less (50 grams) than a golf ball. It keeps you in touch with your important calls for only ₹ 10 a day.
Inspires Action by enclosing a card.	→ To receive your Wipro Call pager, just sign the enclosed card. You can avail free service for the first month, provided you revert before June 1.
Informs the user the benefit of fast action	
	Sincerely, Sales Executive

Source: <http://nadiraindriyana.blogspot.com/>

Check Your Progress - 4

5. A persuasive message started with the following sentences: Would you like to make a million?
We wish we knew how, but we do know how to make you feel like a million. Have you tried our latest mentholated shaving cream?
What is wrong with the above statements?
 - a. No one can make a million
 - b. The attention-getter is not related to the product
 - c. The attention-getter is too short
 - d. The attention-getter is long
 - e. The attention-getter is explained in a monotonous way
6. In persuasive messages, which of the following should an attention-getter not be or not do?
 - a. The attention-getter should be related to the product

- b. The attention-getter should focus on a central selling point
- c. The attention-getter should use statements like “A stitch in time saves nine”
- d. The attention-getter should address the reader’s needs
- e. The attention-getter should be crisp and emphatic

11.7 Claim Letters and Requests for Favors

In business, claim letters and letters that request special favors are common types of persuasive requests. Such letters are written to get a favorable action, but the action can only be induced after a desire to take action has been aroused in the reader.

Example 11.3 gives an example of persuasive claim letter.

Example 11.3: A Good Example of a Persuasive Claim	
Seeks attention by using the Company name.	→ Dear Mr. Mehta,
Reveals the subject of letter.	→ When I bought my Sony Music system from XYZ Distributors six months ago, I was assured of quality service and customer satisfaction. When the music system started giving problems, I took it to your services department with the confidence that I would receive the promised quality service from your company.
Introduces a central appeal.	→
Reveals the details for dissatisfaction.	→ After paying ₹ 500 for the repairs, I was informed that the head of the music system needed to be replaced and that the ₹ 500 I paid were only the labor charges. The head costs ₹ 1000 and would be charged separately. Your service manager said that the head had been damaged by overuse! The system was bought six months ago and has not been in much use and I am sure a Sony head does not require replacement in six months.
Presents reasoning.	→ My problem remains as such; I have paid ₹ 500 for a service that has not improved the condition of my music system in any way.
Refers to the refund indirectly.	→ Please refund my ₹ 500 and repair my music system free of charge, proving that quality service and customer satisfaction are indeed important to you.
Repeats a request for refund.	→
Requests further action.	→
Ends as a reminder of the central appeal.	→
<p><i>Source: ICFAI Research Center</i></p> <p>Sincerely, Ravi Singh.</p>	

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Making a Claim

Generally, claims are made against some guarantee or assurance and therefore, they are mostly a routine business exercise. Most businesses pass on the claim letters to their claims department for adjustment. Therefore, a simple claim letter, asking for an adjustment, specifying the terms under which the claim is sought and a description of the damage to the purchased goods is generally sufficient to get a claim. Not much persuasion is required. However, in cases where a claim is doubtful, persuasion is necessary. Like sales letters, persuasive claim letters should use an inductive sequence. Writing inductively reduces the chances of getting a negative reaction from the claims adjuster. Expressing very strong displeasure or anger in the letter may also result in alienating the reader, which will not be beneficial in the case of persuasion. In addition, you should take care to stress on an appeal for claim throughout the letter.

Asking a Favor

You may sometimes need to ask for a favor of an individual or an organization. Generally, people are not inclined to grant favors. They have to be persuaded to do it. Therefore, a letter asking for a favor has to use the inductive approach and must give adequate importance to the reader to secure a favorable response. When a deductive approach is used in a persuasive situation, there is much less of a chance of getting cooperation.

Check Your Progress - 5

7. What organization pattern should the writer use when composing a persuasive claim letter?
 - a. Deductive
 - b. Inductive
 - c. Point-to-point
 - d. Hypothesis
 - e. Hierarchy

11.8 The Collection Series

A letter that is written to remind the reader of some outstanding payments has to serve two purposes. First, it must get some action and second, it must maintain the customer's goodwill. Like other persuasive letters, collection letters are also written inductively but they are usually shorter. If a letter is short, its main point stands out more vividly and it is more likely to be read completely. Normally, a customer who owes a payment expects to be asked for it, but he may not respond to the first attempts at collection. Therefore, businesses that use collection letters normally use a series of letters to get the required action. A series of collection letters has the following characteristics:

1. **Timeliness** – Ask the debtors for the outstanding payments promptly. Do not delay sending a collection letter. In the letter, mention specific dates by which you expect the payments.
2. **Regularity** – A series of regular reminders puts pressure on the debtor to pay. Never let the obligation out of the debtor's mind.
3. **Understanding** – Understand the nature of your debtor. Check out his/her past payment patterns. Some debtors may have a valid reason for delayed payments; give them more time and consideration than others. Adapt your letters to the nature of the debtor you are dealing with.
4. **Increasing stringency** – Increase the stringency in the tone of the letters as the debtor delays the payment. Impress the urgency of payment on him.

A series of letters for collection will follow the following sequence:

Reminder

Most defaulters are likely to pay when they receive a reminder of their outstanding payments. The reminder is typically a duplicate of the original statement with a rubber-stamped notation saying “second notice,” “past due,” or “please remit.” The assumption is that the obligation has been overlooked due to some reason and will be paid when the reminder is received. Most companies use two or three reminders before moving to the next letter-writing stage in order to preserve customer goodwill.

Inquiry

Companies resort to an inquiry when they do not get results from reminders. The assumption here is that something has prevented the debtor from paying. The aim is to get some action from the debtor – either the payment or an explanation for non-payment. The following should be kept in mind while drafting an inquiry:

- Encourage the debtor to take an action at this stage. Either a payment or an explanation is expected.
- With empathy, think and write positively.

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

- Make it easy for the debtor to reply, but do not provide excuses for nonpayment.

Just one letter of inquiry is sufficient. Additional letters may give the debtor the idea that you are willing to wait. You must increase stringency as you proceed from one stage to the next.

Appeal

This is a short letter containing only the appeal. Being short, there are more chances of its being read and it appears more stringent. The following types of appeals are used:

- **Fair Play:** Collectors often appeal to the debtor's sense of cooperation, loyalty, and honesty. For example, "The mutual contract we entered into was based on two things. The first was our ability to make delivery as agreed. The second was your ability to pay as agreed. We kept our part of the agreement, and the only way to complete the agreement is for you to send a check for ₹ 15,000 today."
- **Closure:** People gain satisfaction from concluding whatever they have begun. In a business transaction, payment is the final step: "Send your check for ₹ 15,000 today so that we can mark your account 'paid in full'."

Activity 11.3

Imagine you are the Collections Manager at an Electronics manufacturing company. Normally your company gives a 30-day credit period to distributors. The industry norm is 15 days. One of your distributors has not paid for the last consignment of 10 refrigerators, and this amounts to ₹ 3,00,000. You have already sent reminders and a normal appeal. The distributor has responded by saying that the slow market condition does not allow him to make the payment. You know that the market is slow, but the collection has still to be made. Write a letter to him at this stage, explaining your point, specifying that the payment be made by a certain date.

Answer:

- **Pride:** Many people wish to preserve their reputation: "You must be proud of your excellent credit rating. Help us to retain that rating by making quick payment against your account."
- **Fear:** Collectors know that many people fear loss of credit privileges and the possibility of litigation. For example, "so that you can continue to offer

your customers the quality merchandise they demand, you must safeguard your good credit report. To do so, please send your check for ₹ 15,000 today.”

Only a single appeal must be sent. Appeals in this stage intimidate only slightly, if at all. Typically, fear appeals are reserved for the strong-appeal or ultimatum letters.

Urgency

The ‘urgency’ stage in the collection series is also referred to as the “strong appeal” stage. If the payment has not been made by this stage, it is clear that the customer will pay only after considerable pressure is applied. Resort to a deductive approach. The letter must shock the debtor into payment. At this stage, you will have to decide also whether you are ready to take stronger action and risk losing the customer. Some suggestions for writing a letter of urgency:

- Become more demanding and less persuasive.
- Instead of explaining that a debtor must preserve his creditworthiness, imply that the debtor is about to lose it and may have to face a distasteful situation.
- Instead of discussing why the debtor *does not* pay, talk about why the debtor *must* pay.
- Offer the debtor some alternative to encourage action, maybe partial payment or time notes.
- Let the debtor know that the weight of evidence and the legal aspects definitely favor you and not him.

11.9 Writing for the Web

Technology has opened numerous avenues for writers to be a part of the digital space. Starting one’s own blog and becoming a professional blogger or developing content for a company’s website are some of the many options that technology offers to those aspiring to write for the Web. Writing on the Web is used for selling products and services, creating a brand image, building customer relations, increasing brand awareness, collecting customer feedback, handling customer grievances, social listening, etc. However, given the wide reach of the Web and the easy accessibility to audiences worldwide, the following points should be taken into account while writing for the web:

1. Appropriate title

Each page on the web should have a single heading. If the information being provided is vast, it may be grouped under sub-headings. The sub-headings should be clearly demarcated from the main heading.

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2. The content should be simple and short

People enjoy reading articles that are short and keep the reader engaged. Long articles, running into several pages may not interest online readers' as they are busy and pressed for time. Crisp content that catches the attention of the online readers', answers all his queries like 'why should I buy this product, what is it for me?' should be the focus of the writer.

3. The focus should be on the 'readers'

The content on the web should be written keeping the target audience in mind. Content that is irrelevant and dull will not interest a reader. It should also offer the expected information or value addition that the reader is seeking. For instance, while writing for a travel blog, it would be relevant to highlight the main attractions of the destination, the must-see places, reservation, and accommodation (price and service quality), etc.

4. Include links

The content on the main page should be focused on the main idea that is being communicated. However, for more clarification, useful links can be provided at the end of the page. These related links may re-direct the reader towards other pages that offer more information on the topic or area of his or her interest. These links should be added only after careful research on their relevance and the quality of the information they offer. The authenticity of these links should also be verified before offering them on the page.

5. Make it appealing

The content can be made visually appealing by adding images at the appropriate places. The images should not be used as a substitute for the content. It should complement the content published and should help to attract and retain the reader's attention.

6. Use of 'appropriate' words

The content posted on the Web shall serve no purpose if it does not have the right 'key words'. The words used in the article/post, etc. must increase the chances of it appearing in the first page of search options. *For instance, a blog on authentic Indian cuisine must have the names of popular Indian dishes and should be titled appropriately. This shall help the website to appear each time someone types these keywords in the search bar.*

Exhibit 11.2 provides additional perspectives on web writing.

Exhibit 11.2: Web Writing Requisites

Remember

Web writing is very different from writing for print media and it is usually half the content of what is found on print document.

(i) Write clear, simple, and effective content

- Content should be easy-to-read.
- keep your target audience and communication goals in mind

The very first paragraph should speak of the most important message.

- Person who reads scan pages, you don't want him or her to miss your main idea

Chunk your content

- Cover only one topic per paragraph

(ii) Use active voice instead of passive voice

- Yes: Sheela took the session
- No: The session was taken by Sheela.

(iii) Choose lists over long paragraphs

- Use lists to make your material easier to scan

(iv) Use Common Language

For SEO (Search Engine Optimization) be consistent in your links, headers, and key words, so that your article can appear on search engines.

(v) Tone

Readers expect an individual, positive tone in web writing. Readers get engaged if "I" "we" and "you" are used instead of third person.

(vi) Keep it Short

It is considered as an art to write smaller sentences.

(vii) Sub-headlines, Lists, and Scanning

Most of the readers do not read more than 20% of the content.

Be concise & relevant.

(viii) Formatting

Don't underline or use bold, italics, headings, and indentations unnecessarily as frequently doing so may distract your reader.

Contd.

Block 2: Written Communication

Inverted Pyramid style:

Inverted pyramid is a writing style where the most important information is placed first at the top of the web page.

Load the most significant material at the top of the page and at the top level of your site. This could be a few sentences or bullet points.

Excerpts from: <https://www.umaryland.edu/cpa/toolbox/website-manual/prepare/web-writing/>

Check Your Progress - 6

8. In a collection letter, writers should use
 - a. One appeal
 - b. Two appeals
 - c. Three appeals
 - d. As many appeals as possible
 - e. No appeals
 9. *"We believe something has prevented you from continuing your prompt paying habits. Please send an explanation."* In what stage of the collection series would you make this kind of statement?
 - a. Inquiry
 - b. Reminder
 - c. Appeal
 - d. Repeal
 - e. Ultimatum
 10. In the 'ultimatum' stage of the collection series, the letter should be organized _____.
 - a. Deductively
 - b. Inductively
 - c. Legally
 - d. Graciously
 - e. Politely
-

11.10 Summary

- Persuasive letters, be it a sales letter, a letter requesting a favor, or a claims letter, are written with the aim of getting the reader to respond favorably to your request or to prompt the reader to respond in the way you want him to.
- All persuasive letters, exceptions being strong collection letters, use an inductive or indirect approach. Do not force your message on the reader. Lead the reader to the main message.

- Before writing a Sales letter, know your product thoroughly and try to get as deep an understanding as possible about your customer.
- Sales letters generally follow the AIDA model, i.e., Attention, Interest, Desire and Action.
- Claim letters are generally shorter, written inductively, and contain an appeal throughout the text.
- A letter requesting a favor is generally longer, inductively written with all details and request favorable action.
- Collection letters are still shorter. A whole series of collection letters can be used to get the desired action from your debtor. The first letter in the series starts on an inductive tone and the letters become more stringent as more time elapses. An ultimatum has a deductive tone.

11.11 Glossary

Claim Letters: claim letters are common types of persuasive requests

Collection Series: A letter that is written to remind the reader of some outstanding payments.

Persuasive Sales Messages: Persuasion is used as a strategy in sales letters, requests for information, and for collection letters.

Reminder: The reminder is typically a duplicate of the original statement with a rubber-stamped notation saying “second notice,” “past due,” or “please remit.”

Request for Favors: A letter asking for a favor from an individual or an organization.

11.12 Self-Assessment Test

1. Consider that as part of your assignment for the marketing management course, you are doing a project to understand the sales and distribution network of FMCG goods. You need information from the marketing heads of popular FMCG companies. You have designed a questionnaire, which you want these busy people to fill. Write a letter requesting the Marketing head of a popular company to fill in the questionnaire.
2. Explain the AIDA model that is used for Sales letters.
3. Discuss collection letters. What are the different stages in the collection-letter series?

11.13 Suggested Readings / Reference Material

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11.14 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (d) How long will it take to write the message?

Writers should not concern themselves with the time taken to write a message. Instead, they should focus on the subject, audience and purpose of the message (a, b and c).

2. (a) Writer-oriented

It is too writer-oriented. It offers no benefit to the reader nor does it seek to get the reader's attention by discussing the importance of the research to the reader.

3. (a) Invited

Solicited sales letters are those letters that have been invited or requested by the prospect.

4. (b) State price in terms of smaller units

When discussing the price of an expensive product in an unsolicited sales letter, state the price in terms of smaller units and mention price in a complex or compound sentence. If the price is mentioned in the first paragraph, the reader may not feel interested in the product.

5. (b) The attention-getter is not related to the product

The beginning sentence is short and, being a question, emphatic. However, it suggests that the remainder of the letter will be about how to make a million, which it is not.

6. (a) It can alienate the claims adjuster

In modern businesses, any reasonable claim will probably be adjusted to the customer's satisfaction. Therefore, venting strong displeasure in the claim letter is of little value. It can alienate the claims adjuster – the one person from whom cooperation is sought.

7. (b) Inductive

Like sales letters, persuasive claim letters should use an inductive sequence. Unlike routine claims, persuasive claims do not begin by asking for an adjustment.

8. (a) One appeal

By writing, a short letter restricted to one appeal, a collection writer (1) increases the chances that the entire letter will be read; (2) places emphasis on the appeal used; and (3) reserves something new to say if an additional letter is needed.

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9. (a) Inquiry

This kind of statement is made in the inquiry stage. In all letters at the inquiry stage, the assumption must be that something has prevented the debtor from paying. The aim is to get some action from the customer, in the form of either a check or an explanation.

10. (a) Deductively

Sometimes bad news is appropriately placed in the first sentence. Late in the collection series, nothing (including the inductive approach) has worked. At this stage, a deductive letter might “shake” the debtor and achieve the desired result. If the letter shocks a debtor into payment, it is good. If it does not, little is lost by trying the deductive approach.

Unit 12

Communication for Employment – Résumé

Structure

- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Objectives
- 12.3 Formulating Career Plans
- 12.4 Planning your Resume
- 12.5 Structuring the Resume
- 12.6 Content of the Resume
- 12.7 Electronic Resumes
- 12.8 Summary
- 12.9 Glossary
- 12.10 Self-Assessment Test
- 12.11 Suggested Readings/Reference Material
- 12.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

12.1 Introduction

The previous unit focused on writing how to persuade in business, and how to construct persuasive sales messages. It showed how persuasive letters should use an inductive or indirect approach and that the message should not be forced on the reader. This unit is on resume writing.

A resume is a summary of one's academic profile and work history. However, it also reflects one's personality and is often responsible for creating the first impression about the person. A good resume is more likely to receive a call for a personal meeting than a poorly drafted one.

Usually, an employer spends about two to three minutes studying a single resume. Therefore, a resume needs to be visually appealing and must contain all relevant details in a reader-friendly format.

This unit teaches the fundamental techniques of writing a good resume. It shows how one should plan, structure and choose content for one's resume.

12.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain what a resume is to assess one's academic profile and work history.
- Indicate how to formulate career plans for fulfilling one's career aspirations

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

- Show how to plan and structure a good resume for entry to a successful career
- Illustrate what electronic resumes are to understand technological career developments

12.3 Formulating Career Plans

What is a resume?

To appreciate what a resume is, one has to understand that it is a tool to sell oneself seeking for an employment opportunity. As mentioned in the introductory part, it is a summary of one's academic profile and work history. Incidentally, it also reflects one's personality and is often responsible for creating the first impression in the perception of a recruiter about the person. It is quite possible that a good resume is more likely to receive a call for a personal meeting than a poorly drafted one.

Before you set out to look for a job, you will need to plan your career carefully. When you apply for a job, you will be competing with many applicants. To be successful, it is important that you are able to sell yourself well. First, you must analyze yourself to understand what kind of a job you want to take up and how you want to plan your career. Career Planning will require Self Analysis, Career Analysis, and Job Analysis. Example 12.1 presents few questions for self-analysis and career analysis.

Example 12.1: Questions for Self-Analysis

The kind of person I am

1. Do I have a high level of aspiration?
2. Do I communicate well?
3. Am I dependable?
4. Am I energetic?
5. Am I free of personal habits that would interfere with my work?
6. Am I financially independent?
7. Am I a leader?
8. Am I people oriented (or would I like to work alone)?
9. Am I self-confident (without being egotistical)?
10. Do I spend time wisely?

My aptitudes

1. Do I have a high verbal aptitude (written and oral)?
2. Do I have a high aptitude for learning foreign languages?
3. Do I have a high mechanical aptitude?

Contd.

4. Do I have a high aptitude for problem solving?

My achievements

1. What is my overall grade-point average?
2. What is the grade-point average in my subject?
3. In which courses have I excelled?
4. Which courses have been more difficult?
5. Have I done well in problem-solving courses?
6. What have been my achievements in extracurricular activities, in the jobs I have held, or in volunteer work?

My interests

1. What are my academic interests (the courses I liked best, not necessarily the ones in which I made the best grade)?
2. Which professional magazines or journals do I find most appealing?
3. What type of books or magazines do I read for pleasure?
4. To which campus and off-campus organizations do I belong?
5. How do I prefer to spend leisure time?
6. Do I like to travel?

My education

1. What is my area of specialization in college, and when do I expect to graduate?
2. What special training have I received – internships, workshops, and seminars?
3. What special skills do I possess – foreign languages, computer competency?

My experience

1. What part-time jobs have I held?
2. What full-time jobs have I held?

Career-Analysis Questions

Type of career (such as accounting, finance, sales, etc.)

1. Which aptitudes (quantitative, verbal, and mechanical) would be most beneficial?
2. Is the occupation considered a “pressure” occupation?
3. Are there significant health hazards?
4. Is relocation or frequent travel expected?
5. Is the field crowded, or is it short of workers?

Contd.

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Preparation

1. What are the academic requirements (degree, major)?
2. What are the professional requirements (certificates)?
3. Is continuing education or training programs expected and available?
4. What experiences are considered prerequisite?

Rewards

1. What is the standard salary of entry-level workers?
2. Are there significant opportunities for advancement in salary and responsibility?
3. What are the fringe benefits?
4. What are the intangible rewards?

Future of the field

1. Is the field expected to expand or contract?
2. Will the field be strongly influenced by changes in technology?
3. Is competition in the field increasing?
4. Will changes in political administrations or governmental regulation have a significant impact on the field?

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Self Analysis

A resume is a sales letter that seeks to sell you effectively. Therefore, in a resume you need to highlight your strengths, your outstanding performances, and your achievements. For this, an analysis of self is important. The following page contains a list of questions that will help you to analyze yourself. These are also some of the common questions that are asked in interviews. These questions will help you to understand what you are and what it is that you aim to be.

Career Analysis

Before you apply for a job, you also need to do an analysis of your career. What are your aspirations and what is it that you particularly look for in a job? When applying for a job, analyze it to see if you understand the job profile correctly. A list of questions that will help you to analyze the available career option is given above.

Job Analysis

Before taking up a job, understand it thoroughly. Example 12.2 presents few job analysis questions. As a management student, you are likely to be recruited at one of the entry-level positions. Understand the role that the job requires you to play. Sometimes it can be helpful to talk to a person who is working in the same organization in a similar position. The following page contains some questions that can give you a useful insight into the job profile.

Example 12.2: Job-Analysis Questions

1. What are the specific duties and responsibilities?
2. Do the specified duties and responsibilities seem compatible with my personal characteristics aptitudes, interests? Others – dependability, leadership, aspirations, desire to work alone or with others, willingness to relocate or travel?
3. Does my education satisfy requirements for the position (degrees earned or in progress, cooperative education, internships, special training programs, directly related courses)? Would I be willing to continue my education?
4. Are my experiences directly related to the job's specified duties and responsibilities? (List related part-time jobs or full-time jobs. If experience is scant, what aspects of the academic program, school-related activities, volunteer work, or other jobs are related to the job in which you are interested?)

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Matching Personal Needs with Job Profile

Before accepting a job offer, prioritize your needs and requirements and see for yourself whether the job fulfills them or not. It is generally rare to find a job or organization that will satisfy all your needs. Therefore, you must be able to decide what factors matter more to you and what factors you can overlook. Taking up a job in an organization that does not tap your potential or working on a job that needs resources that you do not have will only lead to problems for you and for the concerned company; therefore, be patient, and decide wisely.

Check Your Progress - 1

1. An effective job search begins with careful career planning, a process that includes self-analysis, career analysis, and _____.
 - a. Job analysis
 - b. Future analysis
 - c. Profit analysis
 - d. Remuneration analysis
 - e. Resume analysis
2. The resume is primarily a sales letter, selling a particular commodity _____.
 - a. Your assets

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- b. Your experience
 - c. You
 - d. Your input
 - e. Your personality
3. Which of these is not a suitable self-analysis question?
- a. What part time jobs have I held?
 - b. Is my nose slightly crooked?
 - c. Am I a leader?
 - d. Have I done well in problem-solving courses?
 - e. Am I dependable?
4. Which of the following is not a self analysis question?
- a. Do I communicate well?
 - b. Do I have a high aptitude for problem solving?
 - c. In which courses have I excelled?
 - d. What is the standard salary of entry-level workers?
 - e. Am I dependable?
5. Which of the following is not a career analysis question?
- a. Is the occupation considered a “pressure” occupation?
 - b. What are the academic requirements?
 - c. What are my favorite academic interests?
 - d. Is the field expected to expand or contract?
 - e. Does the job involve frequent transfers?

12.4 Planning your Resume

As discussed, your resume is a reflection of yourself. Plan it carefully. An employer will probably spend only two to three minutes in scanning your resume. Therefore, it must serve to impress him in that short time. Keep the resume concise but include all the important details, make it error-free, and informative. A visually appealing, well-formatted, and easy-to-read resume is always given preference. Depending on the job you are applying for, select the information you want to present in your resume and then structure it accordingly.

Exhibit 12.1 gives tips for preparing resumes.

Exhibit 12.1: Google's Resume Tips

Laszlo Bock, a former Google senior vice president of personnel operations offers resume tips for job aspirants and expectations from companies:

1. Format your resume in a simple way. Make it readable, using black text, uniform font and size, and check typo errors. The resume should not be a descriptive text but to be present in bullet points. Make it in pdf format before you send to recruiters. No cover letter is needed but provide your name, contact number and e-mail address.
2. Customize your resume for each position you apply, preferably in one page. Use second page if necessary for technical qualifications.
3. Use X-Y-Z formula. X focusses on accomplishments, Y is measuring technique and Z denotes doing. Select the best way to present your accomplishments that can be measured quickly.
4. Organize your resume in the way recruiters are used to see. For instance, mention your educational qualifications before experience if you are a student, otherwise experience before education, if you have workforce experience in two or more positions.
5. Technical job holders can add other important information such as programming languages, experience in projects etc.

Last but not least, watch YouTube videos, 'How to: work at Google-Resume Tips and Create Your Resume for Google: tips and Advice

Source: <https://www.inc.com/bill-murphy-jr/google-recruiters-say-these-5-resume-tips-including-x-y-z-formula-will-improve-your-odds-of-getting-hired-at-google.html>, SEP 13, 2019

12.5 Structuring the Resume

While structuring the resume, always keep the job you are applying for in mind. Highlight those aspects of the resume that are suited for the job. For e.g., if you are applying for a Marketing Executive position, it is more important to highlight your oral communication skills than your writing skills. A resume can be structured in any of the following ways:

Chronological Resume

A chronological resume is the conventional form of a resume. In this, your work experience and your academic profile are presented sequentially in a reverse order. A chronological resume is a good, logical, and easy-to-read form of a resume. It is also the most widely accepted one.

Functional Resume

The functional resume is structured around a set of skills; other details like work experience and educational background are given later. Here, individual areas

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of competence are given importance. This kind of resume is useful for those who are entering the job market.

Combination Chronological and Functional Resume

This resume combines the features of a Chronological and a Functional Resume. Entries such as “Education” and “Work Experience” are listed chronologically while other details are listed under headings that emphasize on skills related to the job in question. Example 12.3 gives an example of a functional resume.

Example 12.3: Functional Resume

Objective: Senior Sales manager, focus on sales of FMCG products.

Marketing Skills:

- Achieved Record sales of ₹ 5 crore for XZ detergents in the Mumbai division.
- Assisted in developing a distributor network in Pune for ABC Chocolates.
- Completed an independent study and project on “Development of sales Channels for FMCG Products in India”.
- Did On-the-Job Training for six months in Marketing Division of XYZ Limited, Nasik
- Good Communicator, can convince people easily.

Managerial Skills:

- Was the team leader of 5 Marketing Executives in WYZ products. Was responsible for their performance and achievement of targets.
- Motivated my team members to achieve the record sales of XZ detergents.
- Was responsible for coordinating and collecting payments from distributors in WYZ Products.
- Was responsible for monthly reporting of the team to senior management in WYZ Products.

Work Experience:

Jan 2015 to Present Sales Manager, WYZ Products, Mumbai

Jan 2008 to 2015 Deputy Sales Manager. Was responsible for marketing and collections of WXZ Detergents in the Mumbai division.

Managed the working of a team of 5 Marketing Executives
Senior Sales Executive for ABC Limited, Pune

June 1998 to Jan 2008 Was individually responsible for sales ABC Chocolates for Pune city. Held different positions in the Sales department.

Contd.

Education:

1996 to 1998 ICFAI Business School with specialization in marketing and sales.

1993 to 1996 B.Com, Pune University, Passed in First Division

Personal Details:

Good Communicator, Willing to relocate, have traveled extensively.

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Activity 12.1

You are presently pursuing your Management Course and will be on the lookout for a job soon. What do you think your needs will be immediately after finishing your management course?

What will your needs be, five years from now?

Answer:

Check Your Progress - 2

6. In a chronological resume information about educational qualifications and employment is presented
 - a. Sequentially in reverse order
 - b. Sequentially in normal order
 - c. Non-sequentially in reverse order
 - d. Non-sequentially in normal order
 - e. Details are listed under headings and subheadings
7. Before you start structuring your resume, it would be a good idea to take _____ of all the information you actually want to include.
 - a. Glossary
 - b. Directory
 - c. Dormitory
 - d. Inventory
 - e. Details

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

8. The _____ resume is organized around a series of skills and accomplishments, and employment and academic experience are put in subordinate sections.
- Biological
 - Chronological
 - Functional
 - Etymological
 - Sequential

12.6 Content of the Resume

Although you are free to include or omit whatever information you want to in your resume, the following sections are generally considered standard:

Heading

Heading includes the applicant's name, address, contact number, email address, and fax number.

Career Goals and Objectives

Career goals must be defined as clearly as possible. It helps an employer to judge whether the job that he has matches your career goals or not. You may write the career goal in one or more complete sentences or in short phrases. However, maintain consistency in whatever format you choose.

Education

Details of education generally appear in reverse chronological order and include the following details:

- Colleges/Universities/Technical schools attended, including location and inclusive dates of attendance.
- Major area of study
- Degree(s) awarded or to be awarded
- Actual or anticipated graduation date
- Marks/grades
- Details of other courses you have done that are relevant to the position for which you are applying.

Make sure all the information you provide is accurate.

Work Experience

This is a description of your employment history and it should include the following:

- The title of the job, including its major responsibilities;
- The inclusive dates of employment for the job;
- The name of the employer and the location of the job;
- Significant accomplishments on the job.

While describing your job responsibilities, stress on details that are unique to that job and will set you apart from other applicants. Use a crisp writing style by beginning your sentences with a verb instead of a pronoun. For e.g. instead of writing “My duties included recording data...”, write “Recorded data for....”

Summary of Job Skills / Key Qualifications

In this section, describe the important skills you have picked up. Tailor this section to emphasize those sets of skills that are important for a particular job. For example, if applying for a marketing job, talk about your communication skills and ability to motivate others, but when applying for a managerial position, emphasize your leadership quality, your ability to work well with others. Example 12.4 presents an example of chronological and functional resume.

Example 12.4: Chronological and Functional Resume

Objective: Senior Sales manager, focus on sales of FMCG products.

Work Experience:

Jan 2015 to Present Sales Manager, WYZ Products, Mumbai

Jan 2008 to 2015 Deputy Sales Manager. Was responsible for marketing and collections of WXZ Detergents in the Mumbai division.

Managed the working of a team of 5 Marketing Executives Senior Sales Executive for ABC Limited, Pune

June 1998 to Jan 2008

Senior Sales Executive for ABC Limited, Pune

Was individually responsible for sales of ABC Chocolates in Pune city.

Contd.

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Education:

1996 to 1998 ICFAI Business School with specialization in marketing and sales.

1993 to 1996 B.Com, Pune University, Passed in First Division

Marketing Skills:

- Achieved Record sales of ₹ 5 crore for XZ detergents in the Mumbai division.
- Assisted in developing a distributor network in Pune for ABC Chocolates.
- Completed an independent study and project on “Development of sales Channels for FMCG Products in India.”
- Did On-the-Job Training for six months in Marketing Division of XYZ Limited, Nasik.
- Good Communicator.
- Willing to relocate.

Managerial Skills

- Was the team leader of 5 Marketing Executives in WYZ Products. Was responsible for their performance and achievement of targets.
- Was responsible for coordinating and collecting payments from distributors in WYZ Products.
- Was responsible for monthly reporting of the team to senior management in WYZ Products.

References

Available on Request.

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Activities, Honors, and Achievements

Include details of any academic achievements or membership of prestigious clubs and organizations or a description of positions held in these clubs and organizations. List these achievements date-wise or title-wise.

Special interests

A list of your special interests and your hobbies throws light on the kind of person you are and what your interests are beyond your profession. Try to list interests that match your career objectives. Pay special attention to this area as many employers question candidates on their hobbies during the interviews.

References

You may mention that references are available on request or you may provide the name and details of your references. If you are providing references, give their full name, address, title, telephone number, and your relationship with the person. You may need to take the permission of the concerned person before providing his details in your resume.

Purpose and contents of a resume:

What is the real purpose of a resume? If your resume passes review, you move on to the interview stage. If it does not, you are eliminated from the start. That tells you that a resume has one primary purpose. To convince an organization to invite you in for an interview. Or at least for a phone interview. If that happens, you have an effective resume. This means your resume is a marketing document. It matches the keywords for the competencies, skills, abilities, relevant knowledge the organization has advertised for. It is nothing more than a marketing document. But it's nothing less. Meaning it's attractive, easy to read, and mistake free. It's your personal marketing representative going out into the world and representing you.

Many people mistakenly think of a resume as a summary of their entire life and career. When they write their resume, they stick in everything they have ever done and every bit of information about themselves. That is an unfortunate mistake. It produces generic resumes that fail to target the hiring company/organization. Do not ever forget that your resume is an advertisement. It needs to target a specific customer, namely, the hiring organization. And often a specific audience, which means at the start, the resume screener. Effective advertisements appeal to a specific target customer.

A winning resume works like an effective advertisement. It mirrors the environment of the hiring company. Objectives, experience, competencies, skills, and accomplishments match the keywords in the job description. An effective resume simply feels right to the hiring company.

So now that you have all these experiences down on the page, it's time to start thinking about the way in which you want to organize them, so we're going to start talking about types of headings that you would find on a resume. This is a challenge for new resume writers, because it's sometimes tough to think about getting outside of the box of just education, and work experience, and that's it. There are actually a whole lot of other options available to you for your resume. This is a great way to see an example of a time when you might find a way to include a really fun student club that you were in or maybe a really rewarding volunteer experience. But you might realize that they're not always related to one job you applied to, but they could be great assets on a different resume. So this is going back to where we said resume is a living document, this is how we would be changing things depending on the type of job that we're applying to.

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So let's look at the sections that form a general resume of a college student or a recent graduate.

Your resume begins with the contact information at the top of the page, followed by an objective statement. Contact information includes your official name, contact number, formal email address, address for correspondence, and LinkedIn profile link if you wish to add.

Objective statements are optional, and might also be called things like professional summary, or maybe summary of skills, or even summary of qualifications. None of these sections are required, but in order for them to be worth the space on your resume, it needs to be targeted towards the position. Industry and ideally the company in which you are applying.

It is very common to have your education as the highest section on your page. For most of you, education is likely a very important part of where you are in your life and career and it will likely fit very well at the top of your resume. You will want to format your school name exactly as it will appear on your degree. Feel free to include your GPA/CGPA, as long as you feel comfortable with it. This rule varies based on the type of degree, and also the grading scale.

The rest of the resume headings such as projects, internships, related experience, leadership activities, honors and awards, etc. An academic project section might make sense for an engineering student who might have created actual things in projects, but for a philosophy student maybe there is a more enhanced leadership section or a stronger role from a student club.

Other headings we frequently see on resumes could include things like certifications, languages, professional affiliations, volunteer experience, study abroad, campus involvement and more.

Transferable skills is a word many of you have probably heard before but you might not know the exact meaning of it. Essentially, it just indicates a skill that you might have started to develop at a certain job or work experience, and that you could certainly apply in a different work experience as well. Employers really like to see your transferable skills highlighted on your resume. So think about things like communication or leadership or advocacy. Things that you've done in one place that you could do in another very easily. So transferable skills are something that most of you have already developed in some sort of a work experience, or some sort of classroom project.

Assignment:

Draft your resume and rate yourself referring to the following Resume Rubric (Exhibit 12.2)

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Exhibit 12.2: Resume Rubric

Categories	Excellent	Average	Needs Improvement	Unacceptable		
	4	3	2	1		
Overall Appearance, Format, & Style	-One page		-Runs onto second page or fails to fill one page		-Runs onto second page or fails to fill one page	-Multiple pages
	-Font style and type size are consistent		-Font style and type size are consistent		-Contains uneven white space	- Unattractive, sloppy, unprofessional
Goal: <i>The resume is neat and easy to read; conveys a good first impression</i>	-Spacing is appropriate and consistent		-Spacing is appropriate and consistent		- Inconsistent use of bold/italics, bullet points, font, type size, and/or spacing	-Too much or too little white space
	-Margins are acceptable		-Contains uneven white space		- Margins are less than ½ inch or more than 1 inch	- Margins are less than ½ inch or more than 1 inch <i>Contd. ...</i>
	-Information is aligned on the page		-Contains one error or inconsistency		-Lacks structure, clarity, visual appeal	- Completely lacking in structure, clarity, visual appeal
	-Appears attractive and professional		-Has some structure, clarity, visual appeal			- Hard to read
	-Has structure, clarity, visual appeal					

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

Grammar, Spelling, Punctuation, & Vocabulary	Contains all of the following: error-free capitalization spelling and punctuation; No typos; appropriate use of grammar; concise and readable	Contains three of the following: error-free capitalization spelling and punctuation; No typos; appropriate use of grammar; concise and readable	Contains 2 of the following: error-free capitalization spelling and punctuation; No typos; appropriate use of grammar; concise and readable	Contains 1 of the following: error-free capitalization spelling and punctuation; No typos; appropriate use of grammar; concise and readable
Goal: <i>The resume is polished, clear, and error-free</i>				
Contact Information/ Header	-Displays accurate name, address (optional), phone number, and professional email	-Displays accurate name, postal address (optional), phone number, and professional email	- Displays accurate name, postal address (optional), and phone number	-Missing accurate name, postal address (optional), phone number, or professional email
	-Easy to read	-Free of any typos or other errors	-Does not provide a professional email	- Excessive typos or other errors, appears sloppy and unprofessional
Goal: <i>The reviewer of the resume can easily reach you</i>	-Free of any typos or other errors	-Does not stand out	- Contains typos or other errors	
	-Stands out to reader		-Does not stand out	
Content, Structure & Order	-Excellent choice of subject headers	-Good choice of subject headers	-Lacks appropriate subject headers	-Lacks appropriate subject headers and/or
				<i>Contd. ...</i>

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				category selection
	-Categories include enough information to substantiate the need for a heading	-Categories include enough information to substantiate the need for a heading	- Category selection may be unclear	-Lacks structure and order
Goal: <i>The resume is separated into relevant, readable sections</i>	-Structure and order of sections is easy to follow	-Most important information does not stand out to the reader	- Structure and order is difficult to follow	-Most important information does not stand out
	-Most important information is listed on the top half of the page		- Categories do not include enough information to substantiate the need for a heading	-Provides irrelevant information (e.g. marital status, photo, age, or other personal information)
			-Most important information may not stand out	
				-Contains missing or inaccurate degree, major, graduation, or school information
				-Entries are not in reverse chronological order
				<i>Contd. ...</i>

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

				-GPA is not listed, is lower than a 3.0, or is otherwise listed inappropriately
				-Lacks mention of relevant honors, activities, etc.
				- Important information is not included
Experience Sections	-Relevant experience listed with organization name, title, dates, and location	-Relevant experience listed with organization name, title, dates, and location	-Lacks detail, offers little or no illustration of what was done	-No type of experience listed
	-Uses chronological order	-Uses chronological order	-Contains irrelevant experiences	- Information is in paragraph format
Goal: <i>The resume conveys relevant skills and past work/volunteer experience</i>	-Uses concise, direct, accomplishment/result /impact oriented language	-Uses bullet points and sentence fragments (not paragraphs) listed in order of importance	- Language is vague, wordy, or weak	-Contains irrelevant experiences
	-Uses industry specific language	-Language may be vague, wordy, or weak	-May lack quantifiable results or industry specific language	- Language is vague, wordy, or weak
	-Contains quantifiable results	-May lack quantifiable results or industry specific language	-May not be in bullet point format	-May lack quantifiable results or industry specific language
				<i>Contd. ...</i>

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	-Uses bullet points and sentence fragments (not paragraphs) listed in order of importance		- Important information does not stand out to reader	-Not in bullet point format
				- Information does not stand out to reader
Additional Sections (e.g. Activities, Achievements, Honors, Interests)	-Section is relevant, well-organized	-Section is relevant, but is missing key information	-Section includes information that is weak, incomplete, and/or irrelevant	- Additional section(s) are appropriate and/or necessary, but missing entirely
	-Contains organization name, title, dates, and location as appropriate	-Contains organization name, title, dates, and location as appropriate	-Language is vague, indirect, or weak	
Goal: <i>The resume conveys relevant and/or interesting information that does not appear elsewhere on the resume</i>	-Leadership roles and related accomplishments or activities are included	-Leadership roles and related accomplishments or activities are included		
	-Important information stands out to reader	-Language is concise, direct, and skill-oriented		
	-Language is concise/direct	-Important information may not stand out		

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

Exhibit 12.3 discusses the relevance of resumes in the present day context.

Exhibit 12.3: Are Resumes becoming Redundant?

According to Khyati Sundaram, Head of the recruitment software start-up resumes have become increasingly redundant as recruiters pay little attention and are almost dead. However Daniel Chait, the CEO of recruitment software company Greenhouse, feels the demise of resume has been exaggerated, but its role and functions are changing. He says that resume is almost like a business card for a jobseeker and companies are experimenting by stripping information like candidate's name, gender and ethnicity and concentrating only on qualifications to avoid biases. Chait feels there is a need to add diverse teams

Source: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/08/23/the-resume-may-no-longer-be-the-tool-for-hiring-a-more-diverse-team.html>, Aug 23, 2021.

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9. Generally, a resume has the following sections:
- Heading, career goals or objectives, education, lifestyle, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements
 - Heading, career questions, education, lifestyle, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements
 - Heading, career goals or objectives, education, work experience, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements
 - Heading, career goals or objectives, educational aspirations, lifestyle, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements
 - Headings. subheadings on educational qualifications

12.7 Electronic Resume

With the development in email and Internet facilities, electronic resumes are widely in use now. There are three major differences between an electronic resume and a traditional one. You must keep the following in mind when filling in an electronic resume:

- While traditional résumés use action verbs, electronic résumés use nouns.
- Generally, companies scan electronic resumes for input into a database. Therefore, avoid using Italics, as also shadow lettering, underlining, horizontal or vertical lines and bullets as this may hamper scanning. A sans serif font like Helvetica in the size 10 to 14 points is most compatible for electronic resumes.
- Key words related to your resume should be defined in a separate section immediately after the heading. This is done because some résumé scanning software identify only a limited number of keywords, so it is best that you

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predefine important keywords rather than let the software do it as it may miss out some crucial keywords that may be interspersed with other information. When defining keywords, include words related to jobs held, tasks performed, special skills, degrees, class/ university ranks, awards and honors and interpersonal skills.

Unlike traditional résumés, an electronic résumé is presented in a different format. It is presented in ASCII, PDF or HTML doc and an employer can have access to all the details of the profile of the candidate. A computer program is used to read an electronic résumé.

Many organizations process their candidates' résumés electronically by using an automated applicant tracking system (ATS) or they also subscribe to a résumé scanning service. It scans résumés as an image and the data is entered into the relational database. The company uses this data while recruiting new hires.

The electronic résumé has a separate keyword section or sometimes they are included into the text. The font used is simple and the text is aligned to the left. In electronic résumés, nouns are used instead of action words. Recruiters ask job seekers to prepare two versions of their résumé. One version; as a common template and the second version, an electronic one. These are printed on quality paper and presented during the interview or are sent to the organization.

Simple steps to Convert a Traditional Résumé to an Electronic résumé

To create a résumé that will give a professional look when sent through email, scanned, or viewed within a simple text editor, use of simple formatting is recommended. It is always better to have two versions of résumé. The electronic résumé should be used for online and internet postings. The résumé in the MS word may be used to send to the employers who have shown interest in your profile.

Quick steps to convert a traditional résumé into an electronic résumé

1. Open the résumé through a word processor.
2. Save the résumé as text only through SAVE AS option from the file menu.
3. Close the résumé
4. Reopen the new text-only version through Notepad or plain text editor.
5. Edit your résumé if required.
6. Save the document.
7. Email your résumé
8. Maximum characters allowed are 50,000

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Exhibit 12.4 gives a sample resume format.

<p style="text-align: center;">Exhibit 12.4: Sample Online Résumé Format</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nancy Student 1234 South College Street, Salt Lake City, Utah 83705 Cell: (208) 555-0829 Work: (208) 555-7201 nancystudent@hotmail.com</p> <p>Job Objective: Entry-level position in healthcare utilizing my education and skills to contribute to the success of [company name].</p> <p>Summary of Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• B.S. in Healthcare Administration• Over 5 years providing outstanding customer service• Proficient in Windows, Word, Excel and PowerPoint• Self-motivated to succeed in any workplace environment <p>Education and Certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stevens-Henager College, Salt Lake City, Utah Bachelor of Science Degree in Healthcare Administration, May 2008• CPR and BLS certified <p>Relevant Experience:</p> <p>Administrative Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assisting managers/staff, develop/monitor projects and track results• Scheduling meetings/events and data entry• Point of contact calls, emails, calendars etc.• Microsoft office and internet explorer <p>Customer Service/Technical Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide customer service and website support for lenders, escrow companies and other real estate professionals in need of assistance with their online account• Handle complaints and problem solving in the best interest of both customer and company• Complete research and projects in a timely manner• Recommend improvements to the various communications by the company (i.e. website, FAQ, etc.)• Communicate clearly, both written and in speech <p>Employment History:</p> <table><tr><td>Customer Service II</td><td>EOI Direct LLC</td><td>Boise, Idaho</td><td>2007-Present</td></tr><tr><td>Administrative Assistant</td><td>Allied Barton Security</td><td>Boise, Idaho</td><td>2007</td></tr><tr><td>Cashier/Customer Service</td><td>J's Hand Carwash</td><td>Boise, Idaho</td><td>2005-2006</td></tr><tr><td>Cashier/Customer Service</td><td>Good Samaritan League</td><td>Boise, Idaho</td><td>2004-2005</td></tr><tr><td>Purchasing Officer</td><td>Gold Ridge Mining Ltd.</td><td>Overseas</td><td>1998-2000</td></tr><tr><td>Purchasing Officer</td><td>Earthmovers Logging Co.</td><td>Overseas</td><td>1994-1998</td></tr></table>	Customer Service II	EOI Direct LLC	Boise, Idaho	2007-Present	Administrative Assistant	Allied Barton Security	Boise, Idaho	2007	Cashier/Customer Service	J's Hand Carwash	Boise, Idaho	2005-2006	Cashier/Customer Service	Good Samaritan League	Boise, Idaho	2004-2005	Purchasing Officer	Gold Ridge Mining Ltd.	Overseas	1998-2000	Purchasing Officer	Earthmovers Logging Co.	Overseas	1994-1998
Customer Service II	EOI Direct LLC	Boise, Idaho	2007-Present																					
Administrative Assistant	Allied Barton Security	Boise, Idaho	2007																					
Cashier/Customer Service	J's Hand Carwash	Boise, Idaho	2005-2006																					
Cashier/Customer Service	Good Samaritan League	Boise, Idaho	2004-2005																					
Purchasing Officer	Gold Ridge Mining Ltd.	Overseas	1998-2000																					
Purchasing Officer	Earthmovers Logging Co.	Overseas	1994-1998																					

Source URL: <http://bzdirectory.com/perfect-résumé-example-template.html>

12.7.1 Keywords and Phrases

Sample keywords that act as key words that help the employer to understand the profile of the jobseeker, his role and contribution to the organizations he worked for:

Improved, Trained, Mentored, Managed, Achieved, Created, Volunteered, Influenced, Resolved, Negotiated, Launched, Business Development, Contract Negotiation, Customer Relations, Financial Strategies, Resources Management, Risk Management, Forecasting, Judgment, Decision Making, Market Positioning, Merger and Acquisition, Budgeting, Goal Setting, Growth Expansion, Human Resources Management.

12.7.2 Job Search

Searching for jobs online is altogether a different experience. One needs to know the techniques of using information on the net.

Information on Online Job search:

- Job Search Engines expedite online job search through top job sites and company sites.
- Job Listings show available jobs based on location and category of employment.
- Online Networking – Professional and social networking help to find suitable employment opportunities, increase online visibility and ensure that employers can locate you online.
- Online Search Tools – Familiarity with online tools that helps in expanding the internet job search, key words to search jobs, key words to find job listings.
- Online Job applications – Jibber Jobber, LinkedIn and Instant Messenger (IM) are tools that help job seekers to track their résumés and the jobs applied for. They can also track their online or networking contacts and the status of the jobs they have applied for. Instant message account also strengthens the use of online networking and buddy lists.
- Visual CV is an online résumé that has all the features of a traditional résumé with additional advanced add-ons like images, video, and links to information about your achievements.

12.7.3 Résumé Worksheet

Activity 12.2

Complete the following worksheet with suitable information and update it as and when required, use it to build a sample résumé:

Name: _____

Date (updated) _____

Contd....

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I. Personal Information

Temporary

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) _____ E-Mail: _____

Permanent Address _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zipcode: _____

Phone/mobile: (_____) _____ E-Mail: _____

II. Education Qualifications

College/s or University: _____

Location: _____ State/country: _____

Last Degree and Specialization _____

Optional Subjects

Date of the Degree obtained _____ GPA: _____

Other College or University: _____

Location: _____ State: _____

Degree: _____

Date obtained: _____ Overall GPA: _____

Certifications _____

Contd.

III. Experience

Position:

Organization name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Dates employed (months & years only) From: _____ To: _____

Duties and responsibilities: _____

Personal Attributes and Skills _____

Accomplishments or Contributions

IV. Competencies

Highlight your talents, skills, training, languages (spoken and written) etc.: _____

V. Activities

1. Professional Memberships _____

2. Achievements and Honors _____

3. Professional activities (projects, paper presentation, etc.): _____

VI. Personal References

4. Name: _____ Phone/mobile: _____
()

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Position: _____

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

12.7.4 Infographic Résumé

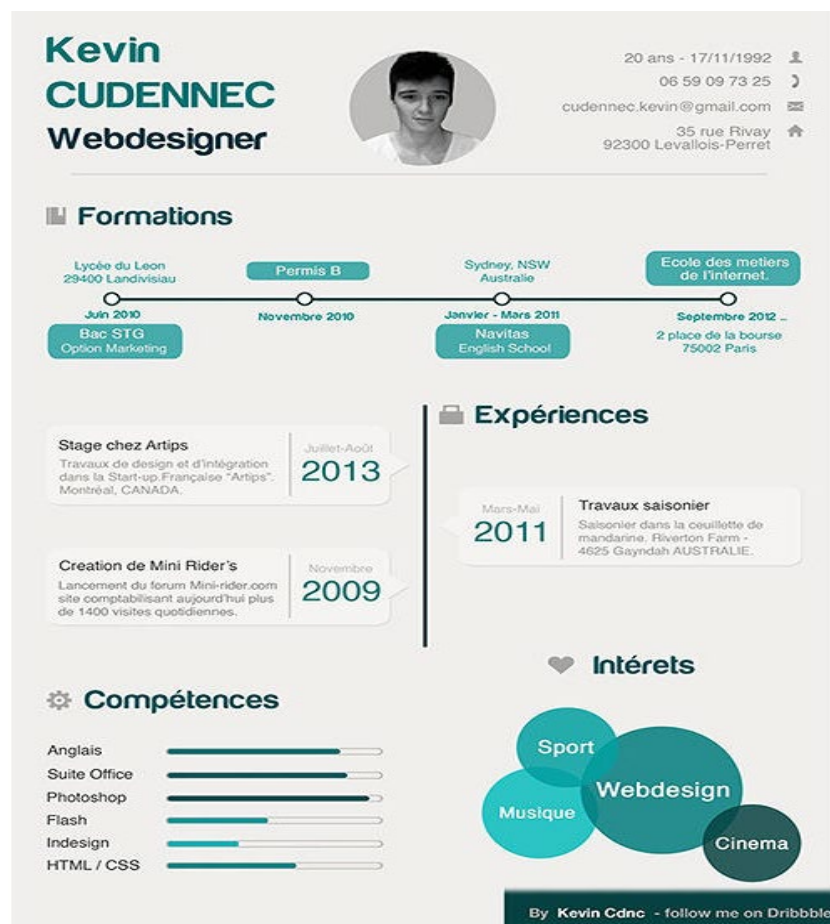
Visibility is important in a competitive job market. Visuals catch attention faster than words. This trend has turned résumés into infographics.

Only a few companies prefer Infographic résumés but still many prefer the traditional ones. Infographic résumés act as a supplement to a traditional résumé. Infographic résumé certainly adds value to your candidature but traditional résumés gives more information. Infographic résumés are generally meant for creative disciplines. Job seekers can highlight their results and outcomes easily with clarity. The tips to prepare an Infographic résumé are:

- To identify appropriate charts for the type of data that has to be visualized.
- Not to use ornate templates as they confuse the employers.
- To keep the designs simple
- To choose a sensible color scheme; preferably the color scheme of the company you are applying for.

Exhibit 12.5 captures inputs on infographic resume.

Exhibit 12.5: Infographic Resume



Source: <http://pixel2pixeldesign.com/freebie-infographic-résumé-psd-template/>

LinkedIn Profile

A LinkedIn profile connects a candidate with the potential employers and increases his online visibility. In other words, it is an online résumé that contains the same information of a traditional résumé. A LinkedIn profile can act as a job search tool if it has the following characteristics:

- Interesting profile that attracts the employers
 - A Photo of 80 x 80 pixels.
 - Professional Summary
 - Keywords and unique skills
 - Professional Links.
 - Profile URL.
 - Update after the completion of a project or after acquiring a new skill, etc.
 - Recommendations and endorsements from professionals who recognize your work can add value to your profile.
-

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10. In an electronic resume, italics, underlining, and bullets should be _____.
- a. Used sparingly
 - b. Used liberally
 - c. Avoided
 - d. Used occasionally
 - e. Used when required
-

12.8 Summary

- A resume is a concise summary of one's academic and work profile. It is a reflection of one's personality.
- Generally, an employer spends only two to three minutes on each resume. Therefore, a resume must be visually appealing and must contain all relevant details about the person in an easy-to-read format.
- Before applying for a job, it is very important that you analyze your own aspirations, your career objectives, and the job that is being offered to you based on the questions mentioned.
- A resume can be structured chronologically, functionally, or as a combination of chronological and functional formats.

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- When drafting your resume, highlight details that are relevant to the particular job and use crisp direct language.
- Electronic resumes are becoming increasingly popular now. In an electronic resume, remember to highlight all keywords in a separate list.

12.9 Glossary

Career Analysis: This means analyzing what one wants from his/her career, and what are the person's aspirations for his/her career.

Chronological Resume: It is the conventional form of a resume, and in this work experience and academic profile are presented sequentially in a reverse order.

Functional Resume: This kind of resume is structured around skills, other details like work experience and education are given later.

Job Analysis: This is analyzing what the job will require you to do, and to give an insight into the job profile.

Self-Analysis Questions: These questions help one to understand what one is and what it is that one aims to be.

12.10 Self-Assessment Test

1. Based on questions given in the unit, analyze yourself and your career aspirations.
2. As a management student, you will be applying for jobs soon. Draft your resume chronologically and functionally, keeping in mind all the details you have just studied.
3. Suppose you are applying electronically to an organization, make a list of all the relevant keywords in your resume.

12.11 Suggested Readings / Reference Material

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12.12 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (a) Job analysis

Job analysis is an essential part of career planning. It helps one decide if a job fits one's personality and training.

2. (c) You

A resume sells "you." Work experience helps one market oneself, and one's input helps the company.

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3. (b) Is my nose slightly crooked?

Self-analysis questions help one analyze one's skills, aptitudes and qualifications so that one can determine how best to market oneself to a potential employer. "Is my nose crooked" is thus not a self-analysis question.

4. (d) What is the standard salary of entry-level workers?

"What is the standard salary of entry-level workers?" is a career analysis question, not a self-analysis question.

5. (c) What are my favorite academic interests?

"What are my favorite academic interests?" is a self-analysis question, not a career analysis question.

6. (a) Sequentially in reverse order

In a Chronological Resume, information is always provided sequentially in reverse order. Though it is placed under different headings, the organization does not change.

7. (d) Inventory

Before you actually start structuring your résumé, it would be a good idea to take inventory of all the information you actually want to include. The format, content and style of your résumé will depend on your specific qualifications, the job profile and the individual personality you wish to portray.

8. (c) Functional

In the functional approach, the résumé is organized around a series of skills and accomplishments, and employment and academic experience are put in subordinate sections. Here the focus is on individual areas of competence, and it is useful for people who are just entering the job market. The traditional and the most common kind of résumé is the chronological résumé. Here you provide relevant information about your educational qualifications and employment history (if any) sequentially in reverse order. There is no such thing as the biological or etymological resume.

9. (c) Heading, career goals or objectives, education, work experience, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements

"Heading, career goals or objectives, education, work experience, job skills/qualifications, and activities, honors and achievements" are the sections of a resume. Lifestyle, career questions, and educational aspirations are not included in resumes.

10. (c) Avoided

These should be avoided because they do not convert properly during electronic transmission. Moreover, resumes that use these highlighting techniques cannot be scanned effectively by recruiters.

Unit 13

Communication for Employment – Application Letter

Structure

- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Objectives
- 13.3 Qualities of Well-written Application Letters
- 13.4 Cover Letter
- 13.5 Letter Plan
- 13.6 Summary
- 13.7 Glossary
- 13.8 Self-Assessment Test
- 13.9 Suggested Readings/Reference Material
- 13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

13.1 Introduction

The previous unit showed the fundamental techniques of writing a good resume. It showed how one should plan, structure and choose content for one's resume. This unit is on writing an application letter.

An application letter, like a resume, is also a tool to sell oneself. It must be written in such a manner that it arouses the prospective employer's interest and improves the chances of getting a personal interview with the employer. An application letter usually acts as a covering note for the resume. Therefore, it need not be very detailed, but it must highlight the important aspects of one's resume. The employer's perspective must be kept in mind while writing an application letter and should highlight the qualities that the employer would consider important for the job in question.

An application letter can also be called a solicited letter of the application when one is applying in response to an advertisement for a vacancy. It is an unsolicited application if one applies without being sure, if the company has a vacancy or not.

This unit lists the qualities of a well-written application letter and the way that one should plan an application letter.

13.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of an effective application letter for improving the chances of getting an interview,

- Identify the qualities of a well-written application letter to arouse interest in prospective employer
- Explain how an application letter should be planned for creating interest in the reader to go through the entire application.

13.3 Qualities of Well-Written Application Letters

The importance of an application letter has been discussed in the introduction paragraph. As it is a tool to sell oneself, particularly when one applies for a job, the applicant needs to understand its important features; these are discussed in detail below.

When writing an application letter, tailor the letter to the unique requirements of the position and the company to which you are applying for. While drafting the letter, keep the following in mind:

The ‘You’ Attitude

While writing, focus on the reader and his needs rather than on yourself. For e.g., instead of writing, “I wish to apply for the post of Sales Representative as I am enthusiastic and hard-working...”, write, “A degree in Marketing and my interpersonal skills will enable me to be the enthusiastic, hard-working salesman, you advertised for.”

Length of Letter

An application letter must be restricted to one page. It must contain enough relevant information to arouse the reader’s interest in your resume, but should not divulge all the details of the resume itself. Limit the letter to four to five paragraphs, unless it is essential to write a longer one.

Addressed to a person, not to a title

Always try to find out the name of the person to whom the letter should be addressed. A letter addressed to a person by the name always creates a more favorable impression. Also, take extreme care to spell the name correctly.

Knowledge of Employer’s Activities

Find out the latest information about the company you are applying to. What is the new product they have introduced or the new business into which they have ventured? Mention these tactfully in the letter. This shows that you are really interested in the company and have taken care to collect information on it before applying.

Knowledge of Job requirements

Get to know what the job requirements are and make an indirect reference to an associated skill that you have. For example, if a marketing job requires extensive traveling, in your letter, instead of writing, “I understand that the job requires frequent traveling and am willing to do so”, refer to some other earlier

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work experience that also required frequent traveling. That will show that you have the necessary aptitude for the job without you directly stating it.

Reader-Benefit Information

A well-written letter should convey what you can do for the reader. You may have the necessary education, skills, and traits that the employer needs, but instead of presenting this information in a factual manner, take care to present it such a way that the reader will feel that you can be of benefit to him.

Organization

An application letter is like a sales letter that focuses on a central selling point – your skills. Introduce the central selling point in the first or second paragraph and stress about it in the paragraphs that follow. Refer to your resume only towards the end of the middle part of the letter. Referring to it earlier may make the reader put aside the letter and look at the resume alone.

Style

Your letter must convey confidence. The style you use must be crisp and professional, but should not make you sound like an egotist. Use terminology related to the job profile, so that it reflects your familiarity with the job. Avoid using redundant statements like, “Consider me an applicant for the post...” or “This is an application for the post of...” Most importantly, take extreme care to avoid all spelling, grammatical, and typographical errors in your letter. Such errors reflect poorly on you and put the reader off completely.

Presentation

A visually appealing letter is always welcome. The size, color and quality of paper used, the formatting, and the adjustment of the text communicate a lot about you, so be particular about the presentation of your letter.

Exhibit 13.1 provides tips for writing cover letters.

Exhibit 13.1: Writing A Cover Letter in 2021

Your cover letter should be visually organized, and orderly in its presentation of information.

Top must three points in a Cover letter:

1. Impressive introduction
2. Examples of relevant work done and problems solved
3. A good conclusion that leads to action

What to include in a cover letter?

1. Work experience that relates to the job requirements.

Contd.

Unit 13: Communication for Employment – Application Letter

2. Relating how skills meet job requirements.
3. Explain why you want to work for the organization .

Best practices for writing a cover letter

1. Demonstrate problem-solving skills
2. Showcase that you are familiar with the company
3. Provide insights into your personality and work style
4. Be honest about your experience and skills
5. Be unique and stand out from other applicants.
6. End your letter with a reason for them to contact you
7. Use eye-catching cover letter format

You can address the hiring manager by name if the culture accepts. Before you dispatch proof read thoroughly.

Source: <https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/how-to-write-a-cover-letter>

Check Your Progress - 1

1. An application letter sent to a company in response to an advertisement of an opening is a _____ letter of application.
 - a. Solvent
 - b. Solicited
 - c. Solicitous
 - d. Solemn
 - e. Unsolicited
2. An application letter began with the following sentence, “*Please consider me an applicant for the position that I recently learned was available in your company.*” What is the main drawback of this opening?
 - a. It lacks specificity
 - b. It is too polite
 - c. It is curt
 - d. It is too short
 - e. It is irrelevant
3. What is the ideal length of a job application letter?
 - a. One page
 - b. Half page
 - c. Two pages
 - d. Two paragraphs
 - e. More than two pages

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4. Which of these is not a characteristic of a well-written application letter?
 - a. Is of appropriate length
 - b. Is addressed to a person, not to a title
 - c. Reproduces the resume
 - d. Contains reader-benefit information
 - e. Focused on selling point
5. Ideally, whom should the cover letter be addressed to?
 - a. Title
 - b. A person
 - c. The CEO
 - d. To whom it may concern
 - e. The Head
6. A well-written application letter contains _____ material.
 - a. Reader-benefit
 - b. Colorful
 - c. Unoriginal
 - d. Writer-oriented
 - e. Redundant

13.4 Cover Letter

Most of the companies would ask the candidates to post their résumé through email. It is understood that you cannot just send your résumé, it should be accompanied by a cover letter.

Some tips to write an effective email cover letter:

- Provide a clear subject line so that the recruiter does not miss reading your mail – “Application for the position of Sales Manager – Personal Care division of P&G”
- Apply standard cover letter protocol – salutation, introductory paragraph, body of the letter, closure, and closing statements along with contact details. Enclose your résumé.
- Make a crisp, short and specific cover letter with strong keywords so that the software can track your application.

Mistakes to avoid while applying by email:

- Do not enclose the cover letter and résumé. The cover letter should be copied and pasted in the body of the email.
- Add only the most relevant experience in the cover letter that adds value to the position you are applying to gain the attention of the recruiter.

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- Submit all necessary details the employer wants to know like your experience in the particular field, hours of availability, salary requirements, and recently attained skills.
- Do not just send the résumé and write, “Please find enclosed my résumé”. Write at least three small paragraphs following the rules of preparing the cover letter.

Exhibit 13.2 captures additional inputs on cover letters.

Exhibit 13.2: General Types of Cover

Letters The following are types of cover letters:

- The **application letter**: when you seek for a job.
- The **prospecting letter**: When you enquire about possible employment opportunity
- The **networking letter**: When seek help from others while search for jobs.

Add-on information about cover letter:

1. A cover letter should be a counterpart, to your resume. It is meant to construe the data-oriented, factual information of your profile.
2. It is the first written contact with a potential employer essential for creating a good first impression.
3. It explains why you are interested in a particular company and a profile.

A covering letter needs to be customized:

- The job title you are applying for, in the opening paragraph
- How did you know about the vacancy
- Specific reason why you qualify for the job
- Why you are keen to work with the company you are applying for, align your justification with the mission and vision statement of the organization

Thank the company for considering you for the job.

Source:

Activity 13.1

You want to apply for a business analyst post in Amazon India Pvt. Ltd. through email. Apart from sending your resume, you need to send a cover letter. Draft a proper cover letter to Amazon.

13.5 Letter Plan

Generally, a letter of application is drafted along the following lines:

Opening Section

The opening of your application letter is of crucial importance. It must arouse the reader's interest and make him want to read your resume. There is no standard format of opening that can be followed. The information you include in the opening paragraph will vary from situation to situation. It is important to mention the title of the position you have applied for in the opening paragraph itself. Other information could include your source of information about the vacancy, your qualifications, job requirements, or a mention of a recent achievement of the company.

In case of a solicited letter of application, clearly and specifically mention the source of information – be it an advertisement in one of the newspapers or a person known to you. Example 13.1 gives examples of opening letters.

Example 13.1: Opening Section in a Solicited Letter of Application		
Poor opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please consider me an applicant for the position that I recently learned was available in your company.	This opening lacks specificity and seems to be written without applying any effort
Good opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Ashok Ahuja, an HR Manager, informed me about an opening for an editor in your publishing department. I request you to consider me for the post as my diploma and experience in journalism qualify me for this position.• Your advertisement in The Hindu dated October 31, for an ambitious, hard-working sales representative lists requirements similar to my qualifications. A degree in marketing and four years of sales experience make me confident of my ability to be the type of employee you would like to have in your organization.	These openings are more effective, more specific and are written from the reader's viewpoint. They also mention the post applied for clearly.

Contd.

Unit 13: Communication for Employment – Application Letter

While mentioning Qualifications for the job in the Opening paragraph		
Poor Opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to have the opportunity to put my educational and work experience to use as an employee in your company 	This reflects an I-attitude and lacks specificity.
Good opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My degree and experience in the field of international marketing gives me an edge to perform effectively as a business head for the export division of your organization. My degree in BA with PGDCA and 6 months hands-on experience with a live project in an engineering company perfectly fit your requirement of a systems analyst for your company 	The 'You' attitude of these openings makes them more effective and more appealing to the reader. Clearly mentions the vacancy applied for.
Referring to a Significant Accomplishment of the Company in the Opening Paragraph		
Poor opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The article that I recently read about your company has convinced me that your company would be an excellent place for me to begin my career. Please consider me an applicant for any opening in your company. 	The opening mentions an article vaguely. There are no details of the article or of the vacancy applied for. Shows lack of clarity.
Good opening	The recent article about Ispat Steel, which appeared in Business Standard, convinces me that the foresight of your managers will allow the company's expansion plans to succeed. Please consider me for the area manager's post advertised in the September 23 issue of The Economic Times.	Both these openings show the writer's interest in the company. They have been written with a You-attitude and clearly and specifically state the vacancy applied for. <i>Contd.</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When you begin hiring the accounting staff for your plant in Kandivali that will open in February next year, please consider me for an auditor's position if an opening should come up for a person with my educational and work background. An article I recently read about the state-of-the-art equipment that will be installed in your new plant was fascinating. This equipment should enable Mahindra and Mahindra to continue as the leading manufacturer of tractors in the country.	
Opening in an Unsolicited Letter of Application		
Poor opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I am a fresh MBA with excellent communication skills, wanting to be a part of your company. Please let me know of any vacancy.	Lacks specificity.
Good opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">If you have an opening for a systems analyst who has done a six-month live project for a software engineering company, has a degree in business administration and a PGDCA, please consider me for the post.	All qualifications have been specified. The post has been clearly mentioned. Notice the You-attitude.

Source: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/7700068/>

Middle Section

The middle section of the letter is where all the details will be discussed; so, it is the longest part of the letter. In this section, you discuss your qualifications for the job, and it will be the longest part of the letter. This is the section of the letter, which must convince the reader that you are indeed the right candidate for the vacancy. Carefully consider what information you should include in the description. Focus on your key selling points – something that will be to the advantage of the reader. Generally, the following elements make up the middle section.

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- *Job requirements* – Do not list out the job requirements, as the reader already knows them. Convince the reader that you understand the job requirements and that your qualifications match them. For e.g., avoid a direct sentence such as, “I understand that you are looking for a hard-working sales representative with a degree in marketing.” It is better to write, “A background in marketing qualifies me as the sales representative you are seeking, who is required to possess a degree in marketing and a familiarity with the territory.”
- *Educational achievements that match the job requirement* – While specifying your qualifications focus on areas that are of use to the reader. Do not clutter your letter with excessive information; present the information in the manner in which their significance in relation to the job is immediately understood. One method to write about your educational achievements will be to simply state them, “In my MBA Finance course, I have thoroughly studied and understood all accounting principles and concepts.” But a better way to write the statement would be by using the You-attitude, “The accounting and data processing courses I studied in my MBA Finance Course at the Bangalore University have made me familiar with accounting theory, procedures and practices, as well as with computerized accounting processes. My understanding of the role of data processing in accounting will enable me to work effectively with your clients who have installed computerized accounting systems.”
- *Work Experience* – While writing about your work experience, link your experience to the job you are applying for. Show how your experience has helped you to develop skills and has made you enthusiastic about your work.
- *Any special qualifications that set you apart from other candidates* – Make sure that you mention any special skills that may be an added advantage for the job. For example, if you know a foreign language, it will be an added advantage for the exports division of an MNC, so let the reader know that. However, present the information in the You-manner, so that you do not appear to be an egotist.
- *Personal information* – Include any important detail such as outstanding marks or grades, any activities in which you have participated, honors and awards, or any evidence of your outstanding performance. If the job advertisement requires you to mention any specific details, give those in the letter. Many companies ask you to enclose your salary expectations. You can either quote an amount or write, “I would expect a salary commensurate with the requirements of the position and with my qualifications.” If you want to quote a specific amount, find out what the norms in that company and that industry are. You can then write, “Given my background, training,

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the going rates for this position, and the cost of living in Hyderabad, a starting salary of ₹ 18,000 per month would be acceptable.”

- *End of the middle section* – Do not write a redundant statement like, “Enclosed is my resume for further details” instead write creatively, “My work experience, outlined in the enclosed resume has taught me valuable lessons about working with others.”

Closing Section

In the closing section, you specifically ask for an interview or a personal meeting with the reader. However, directly asking for an interview will rarely get you one. Frame the sentence with an offer to provide additional information that the reader may require or mention the dates on which you might be available for the interview.

The following are good closing techniques:

- Additional information about my qualifications for this position can be discussed during an interview, although this letter and the attached résumé do outline several. You can reach me at (040) 8823404 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day of the week to let me know a time that is convenient for you to talk to me about the auditing position.
- After you have read my résumé, please call or write to let me know a time that is convenient for you to discuss the chief editor’s position with me. Should you need additional information, please let me know.

Checklist for Application Letters

A. Attention (Opening Paragraph)

1. The opening of the letter should be professional to grab the attention of the reader. To do so, keep the following in mind:
 - **Summary opening** – Start the letter with your strongest and relevant qualification and why its beneficial for the company.
 - **Name opening** – Acknowledge the person who has referred you to this job
 - **Source opening** – Mention the date of the vacancy advertised and how you can meet the requirements of the job description
 - **Question opening** – Ask questions to show that you are interested to understand the company’s goal and you desire to fulfill it.
 - **News opening** – Quote the latest developments related to the job requirement and how you could help the organization implement those developments

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- **Personalized opening** – Mention how your present profile could facilitate for the requirements for the company you are working for, and emphasize that as the reason for your interest in the current vacancy.

2. State the job you are applying for or the type of work you seek.

B. Middle Paragraphs

1. Present your key qualifications for the job, job-related education and training; relevant work experience, related activities, interests, and qualities.
2. Adopt a mature and businesslike tone. Highlight your educational and work related achievements
3. Express your familiarity with the operations of the current company you are seeking employment with.
4. Customize your profile to the current job specifications.
5. Project yourself with evidence as a quick learner, smart worker, and a team player.
6. If asked to state salary requirements, provide current salary or a desired salary range, and link it to the benefits of hiring you.
7. Refer the reader to the enclosed résumé.

C. Action (Closing Paragraph)

1. Request an interview at the reader's convenience.
2. Request a screening interview with the nearest regional representative, if company headquarters are far.
3. State your phone number (with area code) and the best time to reach you, to make the interview request easy to comply with, or mention a time when you will be calling to set up an interview.
4. Express appreciation for an opportunity to have an interview.
5. Repeat your strongest qualification, to help reinforce the claim that you have something to offer the organization.

The previous page contains a detailed checklist of all the important aspects that you must keep in mind, before drafting a letter of application.

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Activity 13.2

Imagine you have finished your MBA Marketing Course and are applying for the post of a Customer Care Executive in a multinational bank, which is not strictly a marketing position. You are required to coordinate with clients and sort out any problems that they may have. The advertisement for the post in the Times of India did not specifically mention any educational qualifications but asked for work experience in a similar field. Write the middle section of your application letter, convincing the reader that you are indeed the appropriate candidate for the post.

Answer:

Check Your Progress - 2

7. Which one of the following elements is generally not included in an application letter?
 - a. An opening that arouses the reader's interest and makes him want to read the résumé
 - b. A middle section touching upon your key qualifications and skills
 - c. A middle section discussing your need to relocate
 - d. A closing section requesting an interview
 - e. Mentioning the specialized skills
8. In an application letter, the section in which you discuss your qualifications for the job will be _____.
 - a. The shortest one
 - b. The longest one
 - c. The most flowery one
 - d. The most irrelevant one
 - e. On your hobbies

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9. Which of these would you say is an effective opening for a job application letter?
- Please consider me an applicant for the position that I recently learned was available in your company
 - I would like to have the opportunity to put my education and work experience to use as an employee in your company
 - Your advertisement in The Economic Times, dated October 21, 2001, for an ambitious, hard-working sales representative, lists requirements similar to my qualifications. A degree in marketing and three years of sales experience make me confident in my ability to be the type of employee you would like to have in your company
 - The article that I recently read about your company convinces me that your company would be an excellent place for me to begin my career. Please consider me for any opening in your company
 - I am a fresh graduate wanting to join in your esteemed organization
10. In the middle section of the application letter, you may include any of these EXCEPT _____.
- Your understanding of the job requirements
 - Your understanding of the political climate in the country
 - Your educational achievements that qualify you for the job
 - Your work experience that helps qualify you for the position
 - Your knowledge about the organization

13.6 Summary

- A letter of application is a cover letter for your resume. It is a tool to sell you.
- Your letter must arouse the employer's interest in your resume and improve your chances of being granted a personal interview.
- While writing a letter of application, write from the reader's point of view. Use a You-attitude to convince the reader how you will fit into the available vacancy.
- Try to gather information about the person to whom the letter is going to be addressed to; also gather information about the organization and the industry before writing a letter.
- A letter generally consists of an opening, middle, and a closing section.
- The opening section of a letter must be interesting enough for the reader to read the entire letter and to rouse his interest in your resume.

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- The middle section must discuss your key qualifications and skills.
- A closing section must request for an interview.
- Keep the letter short and do not divulge all the details of the resume, allow the reader to go through the resume itself.

13.7 Glossary

Application Letter: An application letter, like a resume, is also a tool to sell oneself.

Middle Section: This is the longest part of the letter, and all the details are discussed here.

Unsolicited Application Letter: It is an unsolicited application if you are applying without being sure whether the company has a vacancy or not.

13.8 Self-Assessment Test

1. What is the importance of an application letter?
2. Discuss the qualities of a well-written application letter.
3. Discuss the key requirements of the opening and the middle section of a Letter of Application.

13.9 Suggested Readings / Reference Material

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13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (b) Solicited

When you send an application letter to a company in response to an advertisement of an opening, or upon learning about an opening from some other source, such an application is a solicited letter of application. When you send a letter without knowing whether an opening actually exists, you are sending an unsolicited application letter. This must have more powerful attention-getters than the solicited letter.

2. (a) It lacks specificity

It lacks specificity. The writer does not clearly identify the job and the position that is being referred to.

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

3. (a) One page

The ideal length is one page. Half page suggests that the writer has little to say about himself. A two-page letter would be too unfocused and would try the reader's patience. Minimum three paragraphs are required to have an effective introduction, body and conclusion.

4. (c) Reproduces the resume

A well-written application letter does not reproduce the resume. Instead, it interprets the content of the resume to show how the organization could benefit from them.

5. (b) A person

The cover letter should be addressed to a person. Addressing it to a title or 'to whom it may concern' sounds very impersonal. The CEO is not involved in recruitment, so the cover letter should not be addressed to that person.

6. (a) Reader-benefit

A well-written application letter usually contains reader-benefit material, explaining what you can do for the reader. Your education and training and/or personal traits usually constitute the main reasons the employer will recruit you. It is for you to ensure that you convert factual information of this nature into material that the reader can use to his advantage. Highly colorful material may not appeal to the reader. Unoriginal material and writer-oriented material will bore the reader.

7. (c) A middle section discussing your need to relocate

The need to relocate is writer-oriented. It will not influence your likelihood of getting the job. In fact, it may prejudice the recruiter against you.

8. (b) The longest one

The section in which you discuss your qualifications for the job will be the longest one. This section should assure the reader that you are indeed qualified for the job. Such assurance will naturally take up more place than the other sections. One's qualifications should never be discussed in a flowery manner.

9. (c) Your advertisement in The Economic Times, dated October 21, 2001, for an ambitious, hard-working sales representative, lists requirements similar to my qualifications. A degree in marketing and three years of sales experience make me confident of my

ability to be the type of employee you would like to have in your company

This is an effective opening since it is specific, written from a ‘you’ viewpoint, and mentions the position for which the writer is applying. The other openings are vague and have an ‘I’ attitude.

10. (b) Your understanding of the political climate in the country

Option ‘b’ will not show your suitability for the job. It should therefore not be discussed in your application letter.

Unit 14

Writing Effective Memos

Structure

- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Objectives
- 14.3 Fundamentals of Effective Memos
- 14.4 Types of Memos
- 14.5 Memos about the Unpleasant
- 14.6 Persuasive Memos
- 14.7 Summary
- 14.8 Glossary
- 14.9 Self-Assessment Test
- 14.10 Suggested Readings / Reference Material
- 14.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

14.1 Introduction

The previous unit listed the qualities of a well-written application letter and the way in which one should plan an application letter for maximum impact. It highlighted how an application letter is also a tool to sell oneself. This unit is on writing effective memos.

Memos are short notes that are supposed to convey information in a direct, efficient manner. Depending on the situation in which the memo is written and the target audience, it could be informal or businesslike, short or detailed. Some memos require that the writer uses a deductive approach. However, some delicate or unpleasant situations may require the writer to use the inductive approach.

A memo is a written message to provide personnel in an organization with a quick and effective way of communicating with each other. Day to day memos about reminders for an upcoming event or response to inquiries can be informal, special information memos such as new cost-cutting measures or bringing a disciplinary problem to the notice of the staff are usually formal. Good memos are well organized and have clarity.

This unit showcases the skills required for writing good memos. It explains the types of memos, the fundamentals of a good memo, persuasive memos and the ways to write memos for unpleasant news.

14.2 Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the need and objectives of a memo for communicating effectively

- Illustrate how to draft a good memo for providing information and clarity
- Identify the types of memos generally in use for getting favorable response and tackling the problems
- Show how to write a memo about something unpleasant to avoid displeasure
- Demonstrate how to write persuasive memos to retain the customers

14.3 Fundamentals of Effective Memos

A memo is a written message designed to provide personnel in an organization with a quick and effective way of communicating with each other. They are generally short and do not require much time to read and write. Memos can be informal, if they are used for day-to-day activities like reminding the staff about a coming event or responding to an inquiry, or they are formal memos if they convey special information such as new cost-cutting measures in the company or bringing a disciplinary problem to the notice of the staff. Two fundamentals of good memos are:

Organization

Memos are generally written to provide quick information; therefore, they need to be very well organized so that they can be easily understood. For easy organization, the information in a memo can be written down point wise.

Clarity

A memo must be direct, concise and simple so that everyone can understand it. If it lacks clarity, it can lead to confusion.

Consider the example of a memo, given in Example 14.1, sent by Mr. Ghosh to Mr. Kishore. The memo refers to a conversation that the two had at the annual meeting held a month earlier. However, it is very likely that Mr. Kishore will be unable to recall what they talked about, and so, will not be able to send the material Mr. Ghosh wants. Therefore, this memo has failed in its purpose.

Example 14.1: A Vague and Unclear Memo

Date: Nov. 1, 2018

To: K. Kishore

From: G. Ghosh

Subject: Discussion on last meeting

I request you to send me copies of the material you and I talked about at the Annual meeting last month. Kindly do so at the earliest.

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

Exhibit 14.1 deals with the views of Jeff Bezos on crafting effective memos.

Exhibit 14.1: JEFF BEZOS' VIEWS ON CRAFTING MEMOS

Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos shares his views on crafting effective memos in his annual letter to shareholders. He says that memos must be narrative in structure and should be of six pages in length. It should have "clarity of angels singing" that are brilliant and thoughtful. Managers have to take some time to craft such memos and not send in just one day. Another important point is only a name should appear on the memo, but not addressed to any particular individual.

Source: <https://www.businessinsider.in/strategy/jeff-bezos-shared-his-strategy-for-crafting-the-perfect-memo-and-he-said-they-should-take-days-to-write/articleshow/63822875.cms>, 2018

Mr. Kishore would understand the memo if it were more precise and clear as in the second example. He would know exactly what Mr. Ghosh is referring to.

Mr. Ghosh has also set a deadline by which the information should be sent to him. This memo serves its purpose precisely. Refer Example 14.2.

Example 14.2: A Precise, Clear Memo

Date: Nov. 1, 2018

To: K. Kishore

From: G. Ghosh

Subject: Discussion on last meeting

At the Annual meeting last month, you had mentioned that you had collected some useful data on Employee Turnover. I would like to take a look at it; could you send me a copy by this Friday? Thanks.

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Sometimes, a memo may need a graphic representation of the information to make it more effective. This is especially important for financial and quantitative data. For example, an administrative officer who wants to inform the staff about rising costs can write two kinds of memos.

The second memo gives more details, is easier to understand manner and so is bound to be more effective.

Exhibit 14.2 captures some tips for writing good memos.

Exhibit 14.2: Tips to Write Effective Memoranda

Writing good memos is an art. Some tips to write better memos are given below.

- Check your job for stylistic requirements. Does the company for which you are working have a standard form when writing notes? If so, download it.
- Ensure text body is written in a plain, and grammatically correct and concise language.
- Start with the theme of the memo.
- Conclude the memo with statements that inspire the recipient to take act.
- Mention all attachments at the end of the memo using the single word "Attachment."

Memos can be the easiest letter written by an administrative professional. It keeps the standard of formatting and grammatical errors at the forefront. Always edit your memo twice before you send.

Have a draft version to pass on to someone who has excellent skills for proof reading.

Source: <https://grammar.yourdictionary.com/grammar-rules-and-tips/tips-for-writing-memorandums.html>

Check Your Progress - 1

1. Which one of the following is not a reason for using memos?
 - a. They are convenient
 - b. They are usually long
 - c. They usually take little time to read or write
 - d. They provide a written record for future reference
 - e. They are short
2. Read the following memo: The intercultural concepts that were discussed at the most recent managerial convocation lead me to believe that it would behoove you to investigate the causal factors that account for these differences and to determine how we might capitalize on these findings through a detailed analysis of our international management agreements with our overseas suppliers and concessionaires.

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

What is wrong with this memo?

- a. It is too lengthy
 - b. The meaning is not clear and ambiguous
 - c. It is irrelevant
 - d. It is in italics
 - e. It is simple
3. Read the following memo: I would be interested in receiving copies of that material that you and I talked about at the annual meeting last December.

What is the problem with the above memo?

- a. It is too short
- b. It is too vague
- c. It is clear
- d. It is too long
- e. It is complex

14.4 Types of Memos

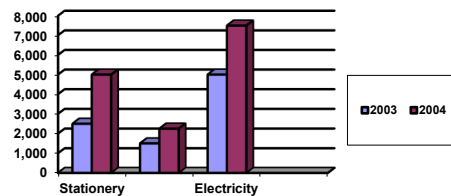
Types of memos are discussed here.

Request Memo

The purpose of the request memo is to get a favorable response from the person to whom the memo is addressed. The request memo is like a sales message, where the reader has to be convinced to take the desired action. The message must use an inductive approach and must convince the reader of the reasons that are stated in the request. In a request memo, take care of the following:

1. State the request clearly.
2. Present logical reasons as to why the request must be granted.
3. State all financial expenses pertaining to the request clearly.
4. Justify all expenses.
5. Present the action that has to be taken after reading the memo.
6. Use tact and diplomacy while writing the memo.

A request memo model with two variants is given below.

Type I	Type II									
Date: Nov. 2, 2018	Date: Nov. 2, 2018									
To: All Staff members	To: All Staff members									
From: G. Ghosh	From: G. Ghosh									
Subject: Rising Office Expenses	Subject: Rising Office Expenses									
<p>Our office expenses have risen exorbitantly over the last one year. Stationery has risen by 100%, telephone Bills by 50%, electricity bills by 50%. This reflects poorly on all of us. Kindly use the facilities that are provided carefully, before the management is moved to take stricter actions.</p>	<p>Notice our rising office expenses, in the graph below! Stationery expenses have doubled, while phone and electricity bills have risen by 50%. This reflects poorly on all of us. Let us take care to use the facilities that we have more carefully, before the management is moved to take stricter action.</p>									
	 <table><caption>Office Expenses (2003 vs 2004)</caption><tr><th>Category</th><th>2003</th><th>2004</th></tr><tr><td>Stationery</td><td>2,000</td><td>4,000</td></tr><tr><td>Electricity</td><td>5,000</td><td>7,500</td></tr></table>	Category	2003	2004	Stationery	2,000	4,000	Electricity	5,000	7,500
Category	2003	2004								
Stationery	2,000	4,000								
Electricity	5,000	7,500								

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Confirmation Memo

A confirmation memo is generally written to confirm some agreement that was reached verbally. The guidelines for writing a confirmation memo are:

1. Clearly state the major points that were discussed and agreed to.
2. Enumerate the major points for easy reference in the future.
3. Discuss the points of the agreement that are not clearly understood.

Example 14.3: Example of a Poor Request Memo

Date: Nov. 2, 2018

To: K. Ravi

From: G. Ghosh

Subject: Attendance of Time-Management Seminar

May I attend the time management seminar that is being offered by FICCI on Nov.30 at the University Campus? Thanks.

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

Periodic Report Memo

These memos are written to inform the concerned person about some periodic reporting, for e.g., an annual sales report memo will be written once a year to inform the concerned person of the status of annual sales. Since such memos are written regularly, one can save time by using pre-printed formats for them. Keep the following points in mind while drafting a periodic report memo:

1. The memo can be printed as a fill-in form, so that data can be quickly entered, without too much time being wasted.
2. The form should be such that it can be easily duplicated for future use.
3. On the pre-printed form, some space must be left for notes or descriptive comments.

Example 14.4 presents a good example of a periodic report memo.

Example 14.4: A Good Example of a Periodic Report Memo					
Date:	Nov. 2, 2018				
To:	All Staff members				
From:	G. Aparna				
Subject:	Quarterly Sales Report for Team A				
	2nd Quarter 2004 (Amt. in ₹)	Ist Quarter 2004 (Amt. in ₹)	Increase (Amt. in ₹)	Decrease (Amt. in ₹)	Comments
Pawan	51,400.00	50,000.00	1,400.00		% Inc. 2.8%
Bharat	43,000.00	48,000.00		3,000.00	On 2 week leave
Singh	65,000.00	60,000.00	5,000.00		% Inc. 7.1%
Chopra	48,000.00	45,000.00	3,000.00		% Inc. 6.6%
Comments- the Industry growth rate has been predicted at 15% for the year 2004-2005. To remain competitive, we must manage at least a 10% growth rate for the next quarter. Our targets for the 3 rd quarter must be set at a 10% growth rate on this quarter.					

Source: ICFAI Research Center

Ideas and Suggestions Memo

In companies, employees are sometimes asked to make suggestions or contribute ideas to tackle certain problems or for a coming event. Ideas and suggestions can be made on an 'ideas and suggestions' memo. While writing such a memo:

1. Write in clear terms to express whatever suggestions and ideas you have.
2. Start on a positive note and then tactfully mention the present situation.
3. Group ideas into proper paragraphs, using headings and subheadings to demarcate different suggestions.
4. Be specific and stick to the point.

Informal Study Results Memo

Sometimes people in an organization may be asked to conduct informal studies on different aspects of the organization. The information that they gather is presented in an informal study memo. In writing such a memo:

1. State the purpose of the memo at the beginning itself.
2. Segregate the data into "Findings" and "Conclusion". Group information into paragraphs, using headings and subheadings for easy readability.
3. Be specific. Talk about one issue at a time.
4. Write the memo in informal language, using personal pronouns, unless it is necessary to do otherwise.

Check Your Progress - 2

4. The objective of a request memo is to gain a _____ response to a request.
 - a. Prompt
 - b. Favorable
 - c. Unfavorable
 - d. Harsh
 - e. Delayed
5. A suggestions and ideas memo should be written _____.
 - a. Deductively
 - b. Inductively
 - c. Vaguely
 - d. Aggressively
 - e. Critically

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

6. Read the following ideas and suggestions memo: Thank you for asking me for suggestions regarding how we can reduce absenteeism and turnover. I think some of the areas we should examine include competitive salaries, the benefits package, job redesign, and union relations. I am sure that there are many other areas that warrant attention, and you know them a lot better than I do. I simply throw these out like some that should be considered. I will be more than happy to go along with whatever you decide to do.

What is wrong with this memo?

- a. Vague and unhelpful. The writer is too general. She has not pointed out what the company should do to tackle its problems.
 - b. She is more concerned with keeping her boss happy than with presenting useful suggestions.
 - c. The writer gives too much advice and sounds arrogant
 - d. It is useful;
 - e. The writer has different connotations.
7. Monthly cost control reports and quarterly sales reports are examples of_____.
- a. Request memos
 - b. Periodic report memos
 - c. Confirmation memos
 - d. Informal study results memos
 - e. Formal memos

14.5 Memos about the Unpleasant

Memos that convey unpleasant or bad news have to be written carefully. The memo must manage to convey the bad news inductively and end on a positive note. If you are writing such a memo, use concise and positive language. In case you have to criticize someone else's work, do so tactfully without ridiculing or demoralizing them.

14.6 Persuasive Memos

A persuasive memo needs to be written when the reader is not expected to be receptive to the information being conveyed to him. To make such a memo effective, it is important that you are able to persuade the person to read the memo and agree with what is written. Take special care of what is written as the "subject" of the memo, since if that is not worded properly; it may make the

reader hostile even before reading the memo. Write clearly and lead the reader logically to the unpleasant information.

Check Your Progress - 3

8. Memos that convey bad news need to be written
- Inductively
 - With a negative tone
 - Ambiguously
 - Vaguely
 - Deductively
9. A memo about poor job performance began in the following manner:
- SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE*
- Your presentation to Josh Company representatives this morning was below our standards.*
- This is not a good beginning because
- It puts the reader on the defensive
 - It emphasizes positive aspects
 - It uses derogatory language
 - It is out of context
 - It is irrelevant
10. In a memo or letter, the bad news should be expressed
- In a strong language
 - In a vague, polite manner
 - In clear, courteous language
 - In a harsh tone
 - In a negative tone
-

Block 2: Writing Business Letters, Resumes And Memos

Activity 14.1

Imagine you are the Team Leader of a research team. Lately, you have been observing that the team has been falling behind in meeting deadlines. You have noticed that two team members, in particular, are consistently late and laid back about the performance. You are proud of your team, but feel that it is necessary that they be pulled up for the tardiness. Without mentioning the two team members by name, write a memo addressed to your entire team, telling them of their failure in meeting deadlines, and asking them to be more disciplined in their work, and to pay more attention to deadlines.

Answer:

Activity 14.2

Imagine you are the Customer Care Manager of ABC, a popular cosmetic manufacturing company. ABC has observed that there has been a drop in sales for its new line of A to Z Deodorants. While the sales and marketing department is analyzing the issue, you have also been asked to study the complaints regarding the product. You find that 20% of the customers complained about the packing not being user-friendly. Another 10% said they did not find the fragrance as “flowery” as it was supposed to be. However, the majority of the complaints pertained to the development of a skin allergy on using the deodorant. In a memo, inform the management of your findings.

Answer:

14.7 Summary

- Memos are written messages to communicate with one another in an organization.
- They can be either formal or informal and can be about routine activities or can be issued on special occasions.

- A memo must be well organized and must clearly state what is being conveyed.
- Depending on the purpose of the memo, it can be of various types.
- Unpleasant memos need to be written very tactfully, using the inductive style.
- Persuasive memos must also maintain the inductive style in order to persuade the reader to agree with what is written.

14.8 Glossary

Confirmation Memo: A confirmation memo is generally written to confirm some agreement that was reached verbally.

Idea and Suggestions Memo: Employees are sometimes asked to make suggestions or contribute ideas to tackle certain problems, or on coming events. The idea and suggestions memo is used here.

Periodic Report Memo: These memos are written to inform the concerned person about some periodic reporting, for e.g., an annual sales report memo will be written once a year to inform the concerned person of the status of annual sales.

Persuasive Memo: A persuasive memo is written when the reader is not expected to be receptive to the information being conveyed to him/her.

Request Memo: The purpose of the request memo is to get a favorable response from the person to whom the memo is addressed. The request memo is like a sales message, where the reader has to be convinced to take the desired action.

14.9 Self-Assessment Test

1. Why are memos written; what purpose do they serve?
2. What are the different types of memos?
3. What features must you pay attention to while writing a memo?

14.10 Suggested Readings/Reference Material

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14.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Questions

1. (b) They are usually long

One does not use memos because they are long. In fact, one uses them because they are generally short and convenient.

2. (d) The meaning is not clear and ambiguous

It is wordy and ambiguous. The word choice, sentences structure and length make it difficult to understand.

3. (d) It is too vague

The memo is vague and unclear. The writer cannot be expected to remember *that* material at *that* discussion. Memos should be short, but clear.

4. (b) Favorable

The objective of a request memo is to gain a favorable response to a request. Therefore, the memo must be written in a convincing way.

5. (a) Deductively

Such a memo should be written deductively because the reader has asked for the ideas and suggestions. However, it should not be written aggressively. An aggressive, critical tone would offend the reader (manager, in this case).

6. (a) Vague and unhelpful

For an ideas and suggestions memo, this one is too vague and unhelpful. The writer does not provide any useful advice.

7. (b) Periodic report memos

Periodic report memos – monthly cost control reports, quarterly sales reports – are submitted at regular intervals. Since these memos are written frequently, they are designed and preprinted so that the writer can complete them quickly.

8. (a) Inductively

Memos that convey bad news need to be written inductively, with a positive tone. Being inductive is not synonymous with being ambiguous. The writer has to convey the bad news inductively and clearly.

9. (a) It puts the reader on the defensive

The subject line would immediately put the reader on the defensive. The sentence that follows mentions only the negative aspect of the presentation and uses negative language like “below our standards.”

10. (c) In a clear, courteous language

Bad news should always be stated in a clear, courteous language. If it were worded strongly or harshly, it would make the reader angry and resentful. Moreover, if it is stated in a vague manner, the reader may think it is good news.

**Business Communication & Soft Skills
Course Structure**

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