

Title:

9 Tips For Writing Better Business Letters

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Summary:

It's quite amazing how often business people fail to follow basic guidelines when it comes to writing their business correspondence. Just as businesses need to be focused and efficient to thrive and succeed, so too does the primary tool of most businesses – the business letter.

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Article Body:

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It's quite amazing how often business people fail to follow basic guidelines when it comes to writing their business correspondence. That might explain why so many people come to my writing help Web sites looking for help with their business letter writing. Just as businesses need to be focused and efficient to thrive and succeed, so too does the primary tool of most businesses – the business letter.

Following are a number of tips and guidelines that I have compiled while reading and writing many hundreds of business letters over the past 25+ years.

1. Limit Them To One Page

By definition, business letters should be short and to the point, preferably one page in length. Studies have found that busy business people do not like to read beyond the first page, and will actually delay reading longer letters. So, if you don't want your letter to gather dust in an in-basket, keep it as short as possible.

2. Be Reader-Friendly

Always try to focus on the needs of the reader and make an effort to see things from their perspective. Put yourself in their position and imagine what it would be like for you to be receiving your letter. Anyone can do this, since we are

all "customers" of some other business in some part of our lives.

3. Keep The Tone Formal And Factual

Generally speaking, the tone and content of business letters should be formal and factual. Feelings and emotions do not have a place in business letters. So, avoid phrases like "we feel" and use "we believe" or "we think" instead. A cordial, friendly approach is fine. Just keep it businesslike, but avoid overly formal terms like "heretofor", "as per", "herewith", etc.

4. Carefully Plan Your Letter

Before writing the letter, take a few minutes to list all of the specific points you need to cover. Sometimes it may even mean a phone call to the recipient or his/her company to confirm a specific point. Remember, the purpose of the letter is to tie up all of the details on the subject at hand, so that more letters won't have to be written back and forth.

5. Make It Clear, Concise And Logical

Use a clear and direct writing style that uses simple words and straightforward phrases. Make sure that your flow follows a logical progression, first identifying the main subject, elaborating on it, and then drawing the logical conclusion.

6. Accuracy And Timeliness Are Key

By their very nature, business letters need to be accurate and timely. They almost always have financial implications and related impacts on other businesses and/or people. Double-check all of the facts stated in the letter, and make sure that any future dates specified give others enough time to realistically complete what is expected of them.

7. Relegate Technical Details To Attachments

Often it is necessary to include detailed technical information as part of a business letter package. In such cases, use the main letter as a cover letter that lists and briefly explains and references the attached (or enclosed) documents.

8. Use Non-Discriminatory Language

Make sure that you avoid language that is specific to gender, race, or religion in all business letters, either to other businesses, or to customers. For example, use "workforce" instead of "manpower", or "chairperson" rather than "chairman". Most style guides contain detailed lists of the offensive terms and some suggested substitutes.

9. Eliminate Redundant Words And Phrases

There are certain words and phrases that one often sees in business correspondence that tend to make the language more complicated and cumbersome than necessary. For example, instead of the phrase "in spite of the fact that" use "although", or instead of "in the normal course of events" use "normally". There are many such redundant phrases, so review your letter and eliminate them.

If you are running any type of business in which business letters are important communication tools, you would do well to take careful heed of the above tips and advice. Remember, the business correspondence that you issue is a direct reflection of the overall products and/or services offered by your business. Poorly-written, amateurish, and/or shoddy business letters will surely result in lost sales.