

Success on the Job

Communicating Clearly

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WALCH
PUBLISHER
Portland, Maine

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UNIT 2

Written Communications

Almost all occupations require some form of writing skill. Salespeople create letters for customers and suppliers; financial consultants create reports and summaries for investors; builders prepare written specifications for building designs and terms of agreement.

Written communication can be as simple as a telephone message or as complicated as an analytical report. One small detail missed on a telephone message can create major confusion. The analytical report must be written in a manner to hold the reader's interest while eliciting a desired action.

The activities in this chapter focus on written communication. Topics include writing routine good-news, negative, and persuasive letters; writing an effective business memorandum; researching and writing a business report; designing and writing a news release; creating an E-mail message; and writing the minutes of a meeting from notes.

Routine Promotional Letter (*page 33*)

Objectives

Students will write a persuasive letter (a goodwill letter) to credit card customers.

Background

Writing letters is a daily occurrence for most businesspeople. Routine correspondence may be sent to stockholders, credit card customers, bank customers, etc. Students will play the role of marketing director of a major department store and send a routine promotional letter to their best credit card customers. Students will need to include all details about a special sale. This letter is intended to maintain a favorable impression with good credit card customers.

Procedure

1. Students read the scenario on the handout.
2. Students design a “10 percent off any one purchase” coupon for Younkers credit card customers.
3. Students write an appropriate routine letter to Younkers credit card customers thanking them for their patronage and informing them of the special holiday sale.

Assessment

Was the proper format for routine positive letters followed (i.e., first paragraph—good news; second paragraph—details; third paragraph—goodwill enclosure)? Was the enclosure of the special coupon mentioned in the body of the letter? Was the letter addressed properly? The coupon should contain at least the following: amount of discount (additional 10 percent off any purchase), name of store, date(s) valid.

Good-News Letter (page 34)

Objectives

Students will write an effective good-news business letter.

Students will write complete sentences and concrete paragraphs.

Background

Good-news letters relay positive information. Examples of good-news letters can include a person being approved for a credit card or an insurance policy. Students will write a good-news letter about an event to a customer. The good-news letter will require an appropriate introduction, details, and a pleasant ending. All details must be clearly indicated in the letter to avoid confusion.

Procedure

1. Students read the scenario on the handout.
2. Students write an appropriate good-news letter to the name and address given. The letter should consist of three paragraphs, and all details about the credit card should be covered.

Assessment

Was the proper format for routine positive letters followed (i.e., first paragraph—good news; second paragraph—details; third paragraph—goodwill ending)? Were the enclosures of the credit card, terms of credit agreement, and special coupon mentioned in the body of the letter? Was the letter addressed properly?

Negative Letter (page 35)

Objectives

Students will write a bad-news letter.

Students will analyze a situation and determine the best solution to a problem.

Students will format a negative letter correctly.

Background

Most business situations require that some negative letters be written. Writing a good-news letter is easy compared to writing a negative letter. Students will be required to write a letter for a negative situation. This activity will test the students' diplomacy skills when dealing with delicate matters.

Procedure

1. Students read the scenario on the handout.
2. Students write a letter explaining the procedure for determining the claim amount to be reimbursed. They should thank Sherone Wilson for her customer loyalty and suggest that a revised insurance policy for a small additional cost will cover the value of the tile roof in the future. They should enclose a check for the value to replace wooden shingles. The letter should be addressed to the name and address on the handout.

Assessment

Was the proper format for negative letters followed (i.e., first paragraph—buffer opening; second paragraph—details; third paragraph—refusal and counteroffer; fourth paragraph—goodwill ending)? Was the enclosure of the check mentioned in the body of the letter? Was the letter addressed properly?

Negative Credit Letter (page 36)

Objectives

Students will write a bad-news letter.

Students will analyze a situation and determine the best solution to a problem.

Students will format a negative credit letter correctly.

Background

Businesses that extend credit to customers are often faced with writing negative letters. These letters inform customers that their application for credit has been denied. The goal of the bad-news letter is to keep the customer's goodwill so that he or she will continue to patronize the store. This activity requires students to determine which type of letter should be written when credit is denied and then to write the letter, making sure to include a counteroffer.

Procedure

1. Students read the scenario on the handout.
2. Students write an appropriate letter declining Sue Meara's request for credit privileges.

Assessment

Was the proper format for negative letters followed (i.e., first paragraph—buffer opening; second paragraph—details; third paragraph—refusal and counteroffer; fourth paragraph—goodwill ending)? Was the 90-day layaway plan mentioned? Was the letter addressed properly?

Persuasive Letter (page 37)

Objectives

Students will rank the top five campaign issues for an election.

Students will write a persuasive letter soliciting funds for a political campaign.



Letters denying credit are among the most difficult to write. Even though the customer is receiving negative news, the company would like that person to continue shopping at its establishment. An effective negative letter makes a counteroffer that, at the least, will make the bad news a little easier to take.

Read the following scenario:

You are the manager of the credit department of Green's Furniture Store, Gateway Mall, Boston, MA 02205. Your store offers a 90-day layaway plan. You review credit applications and decide whether credit will be extended to applicants.

Sue Meara of 21 Shaker St., New Ipswich, MA, 01538, applied for a credit card on November 30. You have decided not to grant Sue credit because, according to her credit report, she has too many other obligations, not enough income, and has defaulted on other accounts. All credit information was obtained from TransWorld Credit Bureau.



Now write a letter declining Ms. Meara's request for credit privileges. Be sure to follow the proper format for negative letters: first paragraph—buffer opening; second—details; third—refusal and counteroffer; fourth—goodwill ending.

What is the counteroffer in this situation? _____

Which of the following words and phrases would be appropriate to use in your letter to Ms. Meara? Circle them.

regret

too bad

irresponsible

we are sorry

deadbeat

however

unfortunately

thank you





The most successful businesspeople and politicians gain support or needed resources through polite persuasion. A persuasive letter, when written in the proper format, is an effective and profitable means of communication.

Read the following scenario:

You are a politician running for the office of United States senator from your state. You must decide on the top five themes for your campaign platform. Some general examples are: lower taxes, better education, more international trade, a strong defense, a better health care system. After you decide on your platform, you must write a persuasive letter to solicit funds for your campaign.

Your campaign platform specifics:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____



Now write your letter to Thurston Witherspoon III (a wealthy entrepreneur in your state) introducing yourself, your political ambitions, and your wish to have Mr. Witherspoon contribute to your campaign. Remember: you want to emphasize the issues of interest to a wealthy entrepreneur.

Be sure to follow the proper format for persuasive letters: first paragraph—buffer opening; second—details; third—request; fourth—goodwill ending.

