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**Writing Business Letters That Get The Job Done**

**By Shaun Fawcett**

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Despite the widespread use of e-mail in commerce today, traditional business letters are still the main way that the majority of businesses officially communicate with their customers and other businesses.

This is especially true when businesses want to formalize an agreement or an understanding. So far, emails are great for all of the preparatory work, but a formal business letter is still most often needed to "seal the deal".

There are two basic categories of business letters: business to business, and business to customer.

**BUSINESS TO BUSINESS LETTERS**

Most business to business letters are written to confirm things that have already been discussed among officials in meetings, on the telephone, or via e-mail.

Can you imagine the letters that would have to go back and forth to cover all of the questions and possibilities that can be covered in a one-hour meeting, a half-hour phone call, or a few quick e-mails?

The main purpose of a typical business letter is to formalize the details that were arrived at in those discussions, and to provide any additional information that was agreed upon.

Over the years, certain general standards have evolved in the business world that the vast majority of businesses use in drafting their business to business correspondence.

### BUSINESS TO CUSTOMER LETTERS

There are many different types of business to customer letters. They include: sales and marketing letters, information letters, order acknowledgement letters, order status letters, collection letters, among others.

As with business to business letters, over the years

certain general standards have evolved in the business world that the vast majority of businesses use in drafting letters to existing and potential customers.

Of course, going in the other direction are customer to business letters. These include: order letters, order status inquiry letters, complaint letters, and others.

Since these are customer-generated letters, there is no particular expectation that they follow any particular letter-writing standard. Typically, they are handled just like any other piece of personal correspondence.

### BUSINESS LETTER WRITING TIPS

Here are a few tips I have picked up while writing literally hundreds of business letters over the past 20+ years. This is a slightly modified version of the tips included in my eBook, "Instant Home Writing Kit".

#### 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.

#### 2. 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 the attached (or enclosed) documents.

### 3. Keep Them 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.

### 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 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. Be Customer Friendly

When writing directly to customers, always focus on their needs and their perspective. Put yourself in their position and imagine what it would be like receiving your letter. Everyone can do this, since we are all customers of some other business in some part of our lives.

### 6. 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.

To see a fully-formatted "real-life template" of a business letter, click on the following link:

<http://www.writinghelp-central.com/business-letter.html>

Shaun Fawcett is webmaster of [writinghelp-central.com](http://www.writinghelp-central.com) and author of the new eBook "Instant Home Writing Kit". His FREE e-mail COURSE "Tips and Tricks For Writing Success", offers valuable tips on home/business writing. Sign-up for FREE at: <http://www.instanthomewritingkit.com/free-course.html>

**If Your Resume Is The Cake, Your Cover Letter Is The Icing.**

**By Heather Eagar**

Cover letter writing is almost as important a skill for a job seeker to learn as resume writing. The cover letter accompanies the resume at all times as the primary support document. Whether you use traditional mail, email, faxing, or another type of electronic submission, this should always be sent with the resume. There are, of course, other tools you'll use when job seeking. Your cover letter and resume come first of course, followed by follow-up letters, thank-you letters for after the interview, reference sheets, salary histories, and job acceptance letters. If you have good cover letter writing skills, and good resume writing skills, the other written tools should be a snap to compose.

Your goal in this is to get the attention of the hiring manager, just as it is with resume writing. The method and format are a little different however. Your resume will cover all, or most of your professional career, and will be from one to two pages. Your cover letter will be a very brief page serving as an introduction to the resume. Cover letter writing style must be direct, to the point, and able to grab the attention of the reader quickly, with a goal of making the reader want to read the attached resume.

Many people, when engaged in this type of writing, have a tendency to say too much. Good cover letter writing is short and punchy, and will take two or three key points from the resume and emphasize them. The old adage "tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them, and then tell them what you told them" holds true in both resume writing and cover letter writing.

As an example, let's assume that you are a materials handling manager for a defense contractor, seeking another position. In your line of work the buzz words are MRP, lean manufacturing, ISO 9000, and cost savings. Your writing efforts should reflect these buzz words to show your value to your current employer and any future employers. Your resume will go into more detail about how you accomplished these goals. The cover letter will simply point out to the hiring manager that you accomplished them. An example of this would be two bulleted paragraphs in the body of the letter that say....

- Experienced in quality assurance and quality control, MRP, ISO 9000, QS 9000, and Lean Manufacturing.
- Demonstrated results in saving significant money for employers through cost savings, inventory level reductions, and on-time supplier delivery.

The hiring manager, according to many surveys, devotes only about fifteen seconds to each resume and cover letter he or she reviews. With that in mind your writing skills need to be top notch to get this person to look at your resume. Your resume writing skills need to be just as good to get the reader to want to grant you an interview. In turn, your interviewing skills need to be excellent to get the hiring manager to offer you the position. This long, and hopefully positive chain of events begins with good cover letter writing skills and ends with job satisfaction and a nice paycheck.

Are you guilty of sabotaging your own job search along with the opportunity to earn more money? Heather Eagar, a former professional resume writer and creator of ResumeLines.com, provides reviews of the top resume writing services that put you in charge of your career so you can get the job

you deserve. Sign-up for your free Job Search Tips E-Course.



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