Effective Writing Strategies for Business

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Do you want to know the easiest way to improve your writing?

READ READ READ

Books, periodicals, websites, journals, and trade publications, daily. Use a Kindle or iPad correctly and your vocabulary will improve.
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Effective Writing Strategies for Business
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[Images of recommended books]
Today’s Agenda

1.) How to write clear & informative:
   - Emails
   - Memos
   - Letters
   - Reports

2.) Proper format, tone, & style
   - Direct & indirect writing strategies
   - Avoiding common pitfalls
   - Speeding up the writing process
PART ONE

1.) How to write clear & informative:

• Emails
• Memos
• Letters
• Reports
Before you write anything, consider:

1. What is my purpose or goal?
2. What do they already know?
3. How will this impact them?
4. What are the likely attitudes – are they neutral, supportive or hostile?
5. Is this the best medium to do this?
Before you write an email:

Considerations:
- Urgency
- Email use (recipient)
- Feedback
- Complexity
- Length
- Audience size
- Formality

Alternatives:
- Face-to-face
- Phone/voicemail
- Text
- Letter
- Memo
- Intranet
- Group meeting
- Company newsletter
- Blog
Before you *reply* to an email:

**Deliberate as to whether:**

- An alternative to email may be appropriate
- Re:Re:Re:Re & ambiguity
- Forwards & professionalism
- Delete email addresses, signatures, etc.
- Proper use of Bcc & Cc
- Multiple topics (one or two is the norm)
- Tone degeneration 😞
- Times Square billboard test
General Email Guidelines

Formatting:

• Subject (clear & concise)
• Compose in MS Word then copy/paste
• One frame/screen length
• Intro, body & close
• Chunking method
• Frontload dates, times & locations
• Signature block/contact information
• Spellcheck & proofread out loud
• Finally, did I achieve my purpose?
**TONE**

**Positive**
Hopeful, encouraging, enthusiastic, elated, sympathetic, passionate, amused, congratulatory, compassionate, empathizes, sentimental

**Negative**
Angry, disgusted, accusatory, inflammatory, sarcastic, mocking, irritated, flippant, indignant, threatening, personal jabs or quips
Milton-
Its me, nice seein ya. Can you come to a meeting? So hey i personally think am going to have companies talk to the students alot about internships and you know more about the accreditation junk than I do, and I don’t want to make the semester to long plus if you go more people will see you going and they will go to. I think an hour is a good time, but then may be longer than one hour would be good or I think we all can will meetup next week on Friday in the same room. 8:30 should do it. So hey I was thinking that I bet u2 think since lots of other places do this accreditation stuff for students, so we should hit the ball out of the park and do more than they do, and get more students enrolled and later then we have lots of students and lots of students enrolled in internships? And, can u get those doughnut holes again? gimme a call asap
Oh ya...thanks, h
Greetings President Gordon:

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today in regard to the new internship programs that I wish to make available for our Buad students. I have invited representatives from Ernst & Young, Disneyland, and Cox Communications to attend a meeting next month on Thursday, December 10, 2011. In that meeting, each company will be able to outline the details of their internship programs. I am not anticipating the meeting to last more than one hour.

Your contributions to the meeting would be greatly appreciated, as I need your expertise when it comes to possible units earned and any accreditation issues. Specifically, we need to agree on what would be the optimum length of each internship, so as not to conflict with our semester system.

Please consider that for the past two years, CSULB has a similar program with over 45 businesses. We must competitive when it comes to the career development and future employment of our graduates. I will call you in one week to make sure you have a place on the schedule. Once again, thank you for all your work on recent projects and I hope that you will be able to attend the student internship consortium in SGMH 2108 at 8:30 a.m., on Thursday, December, 10, 2011.

Cheers,
Howie

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California State University, Fullerton
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Office hours: MTWR 7:30-8:30 a.m.
GO TITANS!
WHY USE A MEMO?

• To reach an internal audience
• A written record
• Easily read / printable hard copy
• To outline a procedure
• Message requires no feedback
• Announcements
BEFORE YOU WRITE, CONSIDER:

1. What is my purpose or goal?
2. What do they already know?
3. How will this impact them?
4. What are the likely attitudes – are they neutral, supportive or hostile?
5. Is this the best medium to do this?
MEMO GUIDELINES

- Subject line must be informative & engaging
- Use proper tone & grammar
- Avoid slang, clichés, jargon, excessive lead ins
- Use quotes if meaningful, understood & pertinent
- Follow dept. format & guidelines (s/s, 1” margins, l/j)
- Salutation - double space all caps (DATE, FROM, etc.)
- Single space the body, left justify, ragged right margin
- Learn to write in chunks (intro, body, close)
- Use graphics for readability (bullets, numbered lists, etc.)
- Do not sign, initial next to your name/title
MEMORANDUM

10/04/11
To: All Staffs
From: Howie G., VP of Operations
Re: Problems

As the Vice President of operations, it is my job to fix problems. We have a big problem I need to fix everyone must learn how to operate a 10-key without mistakes. Customers are getting billed for the wrong time and their are to many mistakes when it comes to totaling up billed hrs. Many bills don’t have a key or explanation of terms used. Oh ya, it gets worse, customers are getting billed for less than what they owe us and they aren’t going to want to pay more when I tell them you made a mistke they say its in writing and believe me when I say they aren’t paying a cent more. On the flip side, we hit a home run on some bills! Imagine getting a $1,867 bill as opposed to an $18.67 bill. You should take those calls. If this keeps happening some heads are going to roll. You must double and triple check all calculations and on bills over 500 bucks have a manger initial/check your math. Mistakes are costing us costumers and I can’t tell you enuf to quit making mistakes!

Yours Truly,
Howie G
CSUF Operations, 600 State College Blvd,
Fullerton, CA  92815
MEMO

DATE: October 4, 2011
TO: All 10-key users
FROM: Howard P. Gordon, Vice President of Operations
SUBJECT: $5,000 bonus & monthly bonuses

Thank you everyone for making me feel welcome. Being the new employee here has not been an issue as everyone has been very accommodating and consequently, I feel like I am part of a large family.

Operations is an integral part of our company and all of our work must be done quickly and accurately. I am sure we all would agree that we can never be completely satisfied with our work, and in all we do there is always room for improvement. After tracking efficiency in all departments, the division that needs improvement is the 10-key operators.

Here are the findings based on last quarter:
- Transposed numbers are resulting in over- and undercharging clients
- 38 percent of billed hour totals are erroneous
- 40 percent of wrongly-billed clients have not returned

Transposing numbers can result in mistakes that damage the good relationship we have with our customers. Asking for more money, or worse, asking for money back from a client is not an easy or professional thing to do. Thirty-eight percent is a high number of mistakes; the acceptable range is single-digit percentages, typically, under three percent. No one wishes to lose a single client (certainly not 40 percent), as without clients, we cannot survive.

Many of these issues can be resolved by double and triple checking your calculations. In an effort to strive for excellence, all 10-key operators that have 100 percent accuracy in their billings for the month will receive a bonus of 10 percent of their total pay. Additionally, the first 10-key operator that has perfect billing for six months will receive a $5,000 bonus!

Keep watching our company newsletter as each month we will list the inductees to our “100% Accuracy Club,” and also the employee who gets the $5,000 bonus for six months of exemplary work. Good luck to everyone and let us strive for 100 percent accuracy when it comes to billing our clients. Thank you everyone for your diligence and hard work.
LETTER GUIDELINES

• Single space, left justify, ragged right
• Include all addresses and contact information of both parties
• Intro, body, close – use the chunking method
• Dear/Sincerely/signature block
• Dates, names and titles must be accurate
• Important dates, times, amounts always are in the conclusion
• Stay positive no matter the circumstance
• Use the Times Square test
• Proofread, proofread, and proofread again – out loud
10/14/11

Csuf Dean
Cal State
Fullerton, California

Dear Rick,

I’m writing this to inform you that I am the person for this job. I have experience and am a self-starter and hard worker. I worked at TRC, RTC, and lots of other jobs on campus. My current part-time job sucks and isn’t what I want and I really want this job. I have had a ton of jobs. People say I should go into politics because I’m good at speaking, and always win arguments. My mother always says I am the smartest in our family. I like cats. I have had a ton of jobs and worked lotsa places, check out my resume. I really want this job, I could quit my job today if you want. I really want on of those nice offices the PHDS have and I really need this job. You guys have good benefits. I think my kids would like to go there free too – this is why I really want/need this job. If you have any questions don’t hesitate to call me in the afternoons as I am not a morning person. Oh ya, when do I know if I got the job? I was looking all over your thingy on the job and there is no pay, how much is it? I need Oct. 5th off to go to Disneyland. I don’t answer my cell if I don’t know the #, so u better shoot me an email at vegaslover@stopwallstreet.com

Ciao, Howie G.

Howie G 😊
Howard P. Gordon  
68 Pacific Coast Highway  
Laguna Beach, CA  92688  

September 2, 2011  

Dr. Richard Simao  
Senior Director of Development  
Mihaylo College of Business & Economics  
600 State College Blvd.  
Fullerton, CA  90812  

Re: Senior Director of Development Mihaylo College of Business & Economics (Administrator) Classification  
ADMINISTRATOR II-RANGE  
AAutoReqId  50788R  

Dear Dr. Simao:  

As a Business Communication Lecturer for Mihaylo College of Business, I am acutely aware of our diverse university culture, and as a recent graduate and undergraduate alumnus of CSUF, I am also cognizant of our students’ needs. Additionally, working at the CSUF Irvine Campus makes it easy for me to empathize with, and relate well to, staff, faculty, and students in any situation.  

I believe that ability to establish rapport and strong closing abilities are things that a Senior Director must have. Years of consistently being a top sales manager in a high-volume and high-pressure sales environment are a testament of that. I am not afraid to ask for money. Raising money for something you believe in is necessary to be able to close deals. My consistently high SOQ scores reflect my genuine commitment to our students and demonstrate my affinity to MCBE.  

Years of sales, public speaking (some televised), and IT experience have made presentations in any environment well within my comfort zone. My three citizenships have given me a strong awareness of cultural differences that help me communicate well with a myriad of cultures and build strong interpersonal relationships quickly.  

Finally, I am a very structured and driven individual. I enjoy beating quotas and do not need outside motivation. I have impeccable records when it comes to attendance, dependability and loyalty, and possess a strong work ethic. Working evenings or weekends is not an issue. My decades of experience in the medical, legal, and sales fields, and familiarity with Orange County and Southern California businesses will be a plus when creating corporate partnerships. I am looking forward to an interview so that I can provide more details about my past accomplishments that would help me excel as a Senior Director of Development at Mihaylo College of Business & Economics.  

Thank you for your consideration.  

Sincerely,  

Howard P. Gordon  

Howard. P. Gordon  
hgordon@fullerton.edu
REPORTS

Standard format:

• Cover page
• Memo of transmittal
• Table of Contents with tertiary headings
• List of Figures
• Executive Summary
• Body (intro, body & close)
• References
• Appendix
• Left justified, single space, serif for body and sans serif for headings
GUIDELINES FOR A STRONG REPORT

• Determine your purpose before you write
• Consider your audience (knowledge, reaction affects strategy)
• Outline your salient points and harken back to them continually
• Use bold headings and sub headings (indent sub headings)
• Do not write wall-to-wall type, use readable graphics
• Use quality paper, no corrections, bent pages, stains
• Any research must be current and well documented
• Use owl@purdue.com as your resource
• When done, reflect back did you accomplish your purpose?
PART TWO

2.) Proper format, tone, & style

• Direct & indirect writing strategies

• Avoiding common pitfalls

• Speeding up the writing process
PROPER FORMAT & STYLE

• Denotes professionalism, promotes readability
• Creates emphasis – gets your point across
• Use MS Word templates >File>New 😊 it is all there
• Spellcheck is not a panacea – read everything out loud
• Paragraph is 3 – 5 sentences, a sentence is 20 words or less
• Use professional and minimal fonts
• Never write things in one paragraph, into/body/close
• Use chunking method and graphic highlighting
• Do not overuse any trope or literary device
• Longer is not academic, business writing is clear and concise
TONE & DIRECT STRATEGIES

• Word choices affect tone, such as “you claim” is accusatory

• Inflammatory and inferring or affixing blame = 😞 😞 😞

• Cultivate a “you” focus versus a “we” focus

• Direct strategies are for delivering news that does not require feedback – could be good, neutral or bad news

• Example – Letter stating you have been turned down for a job – be careful not to say things that you may be liable for such as “Even though you were the best candidate for the job,” or “I really wanted to hire you but...” or “If another opportunity comes up you are the person...”
INDIRECT STRATEGY

- Use for bad news, a non-receptive or non-supportive audience
- Do not pull rank
- Do not say if you have any questions, problems or concerns call me...
- Cultivate a “you” focus avoid a carping, parental or curt (matter-of-fact) tone – empathize with your reader
- Consider the reader’s reaction before you write
- Subordinate all bad news
INDIRECT WRITING FORMAT

FOLLOW ONLY THIS FORMAT

1. Positive opener (love) – *never open or close on a negative tone*
2. Reasons (use facts, examples, bullets, etc.) = conflict reduction
3. Bad news – subordinated, (at 60-70% into the document) clear and
   concisely stated (no bullets, why highlight bad news? 😞)
4. Positive close (love), emphasize moving/looking forward, may end
   on a call for future business

Note: Think of the bank that sends the letter stating that you did not get the Gold Card because of these reasons, but immediately stating thereafter that do qualify for the secured Visa. Format—*love, reasons, love, consolation prize & forward look* (be good and a Gold Card is in your future 😊)
COMMON PITFALLS TO WRITING

• Waiting too long to write and then rushing
• Relying on MS Word spellcheck
• No organization
• Redundant words, poor grammar, awkward sentence structure
• Poor or no proofreading – proofread, proofread & proofread again
• Major points are not obvious, no emphasis
• Writing is based on opinion not supported by facts, testimonials, etc.
• Too many fonts, graphics, or using the same devices
• Personal opinion or subjective diatribes
• Using emotional instead of logical and ethical arguments, poisoning the well, using the theory of relative filth or end justifies the means strategies 😞
• Negative, officious tone
SPEEDING UP THE WRITING PROCESS

- Avoid lead ins, verbosity and fillers
- Avoid business speak “due to the fact that,” or “it has come to my personal attention,” or 😞 “I am writing this to inform you.”
- Use an outline and follow it
- Consider your purpose before writing
- Do your research before you write
- Use MS Word templates (they are there to make your job easier)
- Practicing writing portions of documents
- Remember the best writers are avid readers 😊
RECOMMENDED BOOKS

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RECOMMENDED BOOKS
THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING!

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WOULD YOU LIKE A COPY OF THIS POWERPOINT?
Contact me at hgordon@fullerton.edu