

# 11

## BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

### 11.1. ELEMENTS OF BUSINESS CORRESPONDENCE

Business writing skills require a fair degree of training and a lot of mental discipline in defining the purpose of writing, collecting and collating informations, and evaluating options. It also implies and calls forth the ability to work in a team. For instance, writing a memo requires the organization of facts in a suitable format.

The essential elements of business writing are :

- (a) **Defining objective** : Specifying the aim, *i.e.*, having recognized the need for a decision.
- (b) **Collection and collation of information** : Every decision is based on certain informations. Therefore, collecting and organizing data; checking facts and opinions, identifying possible causes, establishing time constraints and financial implications, all these activities require a high level of rational thinking in order to put the whole problem in a systematic framework.
- (c) **Developing options** : *i.e.*, listing possible courses of action and their alternatives in exigencies.
- (d) **Evaluation and Decision** : Finding out pros and cons; examining the consequences; measuring against criteria ; trials and testing against objectives and selecting the most practical option.
- (e) **Implementation**. Every decision leads to implementation. It requires the ability to work in a team and to lead the team. Motivate it to act and carry out the decision. In process, there comes the problem of monitoring and reviewing the plan in the light of new experience.

Such professional writing is an aspect of professional management. It may be public administration, business administration, university and college management or for, that matter, hospital administration or hotel management. The generic soft skills needed for general administration are the skills also needed for business writing.

Some of these are :

1. **Know your Readers** : The most important thing in business or official writing is to know your audience. The more you know, the more you can tailor your message for an individual or group. Therefore, never assume that the reader knows what you know or thinks the way you think.

**II. Try to persuade your readers:** Cicero was a senator and great orator of ancient Rome. Some people consider him the greatest orator of all time. He has written several books on the art of public speaking. According to him, the aim of public speech is persuasion, and the most difficult task in life is to persuade somebody or a group to do your bidding. The same principle applies to the problem of persuasion in written communication. To this end, the following tips may be useful:

- Persuading the reader of your business correspondence is a difficult job, but do try it.
- Don't try to put too much in a single document.
- If you are in correspondence with someone or with a party, in course of time the information provided by you, your attitude, your sincerity of purpose, etc., will persuade the reader/party.
- Be always specific and to the point in your writing.
- State benefits, to gain the attention of your readers.
- Always state the specific action you want the reader to take.
- Anticipate objectives and questions, solve them before these are raised.
- Be always courteous and purposeful.

**III. How to say No ?** : The problem of dealing with tough situations can be summed up in the saying attributed to Abhinav Gupt, who was a great literary critic and philosopher of Kashmir. He belonged to the tenth century A.D. His remark was : Don't say 'No' . Always say 'Yes' . Your 'Yes' should include 'No'. Based on this wisdom of Abhinav Gupt, Bhartri Hari, a poet and philosopher of the twelfth century A.D., further clarified : Tell the truth. Tell an untruth. But don't utter a harsh truth. The words of wisdom of Abhinav Gupt and Bhartri Hari are very relevant to the realm of public and business life.

- When you have to break bad news, put it in positive terms. Your writing should be full of courtesy and goodwill, so that the reader does not feel offended or take the news as a personal insult.
- Give good reasons for the negative message, explain briefly circumstances leading to this unhappy situation.
- Conclude by explaining the positive aspects that may emerge out of this negative message.
- Turn negative situations into positive advantages by focusing on building future relationship with the customer/party.

## 11.2. KINDS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

From the view-point of the art of persuasion, business correspondence can be put in five groups:

1. Asking for Information or Giving Information.
2. Making a request for a deal or favour.
3. Persuading some one or a party for mutual benefit.
4. In Reply : Sending good news.
5. In Reply : Sending bad news

**I. Asking/Giving Information** : We write letters, memos, circulars or e-mails to provide information about the matters of public importance, upcoming meetings, policies, projects and plans. Here, the aim is to provide necessary information, and to project both positive and negative factors as objectively as possible. The following hypothetical circular of AICTE is an example of informative official writing :

**All India Council of Technical Education**

Indraprastha Estate

New Delhi

CIRCULAR

No. 382 of 2014

April 14, 2018

1. The Government of India, in its order No. 56 of 2004, dated Feb. 10, 2015 has decided to abolish the category of free seats in admission to technical and engineering colleges.
2. Therefore, the categories of free seats and paid seats stand abolished.
3. There shall be uniform admission and tuition fee structure for all students admitted to technical and engineering education.
4. The fee structure determined by the Government of India will be notified separately.

Sd.

**Secretary**

**AICTE**

**Fig. 11.1.** Information Circular

## II. Making a Request for a Deal or Favour

Readers normally welcome a direct request. Therefore, be honest in requesting the information or services you need. Show why you need the information and how you will use it. Specify what you want the reader to do :

Parliament Library  
Parliament Extension  
New Delhi

June 15, 2018

Director Marketing  
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers  
Chicago, USA

Subject : Magazine samples and publication catalogues

Dear Sir/Madam

The Parliament Library is the National Library of the Government of India. We collect all worth-while publications in forty languages throughout the world.

We would like to subscribe to all your publications. Therefore, we would like to have the list of publications, their prices, and your authorized vendors.

If you have an authorized agent or agency which manages after your interests in India, we would be glad to communicate with them. Please furnish their contact details.

Yours faithfully,  
(Chief Librarian)

**Fig. 11.2.** Request Letter

## 11.4. MAIN PARTS OF BUSINESS LETTERS

Business letters, as per need, may have ten to thirteen components :

1. Heading
2. Date
3. Reference
4. Inside Address
5. Attention line, if needed
6. Salutation
7. Subject line
8. Body of the letter
9. Closing
10. Signature
11. Identification marks, if needed
12. Enclosure
13. C or CC (Copy), if needed.

**To repeat business letters in India are normally written in block style (Fig. 11.7) often with mixed punctuation. This is also in general the American practice but no punctuation, i.e., 'closed punctuation.' This is the format of Microsoft Window which has become universal practise in business correspondence.**

The following is the model of business letter that has all the thirteen components. Some business letters may not need all these elements. Normally, a business letter has ten components. In the model letter (Fig. 11.11), the numbering refers to numbered circles of the constituents explained in sequence.

**EAGLE PUBLICATIONS**

72, Indira Gandhi Chowk, New Delhi-110001, India — 1  
 Tel : 0091-11-3467981 Fax : 0091-11-3467725  
 e mail : eagle@press.ernet.in

Your reference: MR/Kg — 3  
 Our reference: BM/KL

2 — September 20, 2018

The Director  
 The Rubber Research Institute — 4  
 12 Ipi Street,  
 Kottayam-670002  
 Kerala, India

Attention : Sri Hari Nayak — 5

Dear Sir, — 6

Subject : Need of a rubber specialist correspondent. — 7

Our group publishes the only magazine in India devoted on rubber industry world-wide. We need a correspondent who specializes in the share prices of multinational rubber companies whose shares are quoted daily in the stock markets of New York, London, Tokyo, Hongkong and Singapore. The desired person, if needed, should be willing to travel to the various parts of the country and abroad.

For the right person, adequate compensation would be no problem.

We would appreciate if you could suggest the name/names with this in view. Your recommendations will be kept confidential and will be used only for this purpose.

We have the pleasure of enclosing the most recent edition of the **Rubber India : A Monthly Reporter.**

9 — Yours faithfully,  
 10 — N. Sinha  
 Chief Editor  
 DCT/lg  
 11

12  
 Encl:  
 C. Marketing Officer — 13

Fig. 11.11. Normal components of a business letter

1. Heading (Printed letter-head or Computer Generated Address)
2. Date : September, 20, 2018
3. Reference : Your Reference MR/KG  
Our Reference BM.KL
4. Address
5. Attention line : Sri Hari Nayak
6. Salutation: Sir/Madam
7. **Subject**
8. Body of the letter
9. Closing : Yours faithfully
10. Signature  
Name/Designation. Both are required in high level official correspondence
11. Identification Mark : Showing the origin of letter in computer file

12. Enclosures :
13. C or CC : (Carbon copy)

**Signature** : The signature is the full name of the writer together with the name of the firm he represents, and is placed under the complimentary close. As the signature is often illegible, the name of the person signing the letter is type-written four or five lines below the complimentary close so that there is enough room for the signature by the writer's own hand. A woman may or may not wish to indicate her marital status, so that the person replying can address her suitably, keeping gender equality in mind; e.g., Sonia John (Mrs), Amita Sinha (Ms.)

### Rule of Per Procuracionem

The right to sign for the firm is often given by a legal instrument called Power of Attorney (PA). The names of the persons who are thus authorized to sign, are put in short form of **per procuracionem** (per pro) before their names :

per pro Ramkrishan Munshi Lal & Brothers  
(Signature)  
G.S. Siddhu

OR

pp or p.p. Ramkrishan Munshi Lal & Brothers  
(Signature)  
G.S. Siddhu

**Per pro** or **p.p.** is the abbreviated form of **per procuracionem**, a Latin phrase meaning for or on behalf of. The **per pro** indicates that the firm is legally bound by the commitment made by G.S. Siddhu.

Important officers of a company such as the Managing Director, Manager, Financial Controller, etc., have authority to sign on behalf of the company. The authority may be allowed by custom or as the result of the execution of the Power of Attorney in their favour.

Routine and unimportant letters of a firm may be signed by Junior Officers/PA/PS adding the word **For**, e.g.,

For Additional Secretary  
Department of Foreign Trade  
Govt. of India  
(Signature)  
Amit Bhatnagar

This indicates that the Dept. of Foreign Trade of the Govt. of India is not bound by the commitments made by Amit Bhatnagar.

### 11.5. OBJECTIVES OF BUSINESS LETTERS

Business letters are written for several purposes such as :

- A simple business transaction
- Enquiries and replies to them
- Offers: solicited as well as unsolicited
- Execution of orders
- Non-fulfilment of contract
- Correspondences concerning payment, transport, insurance and agents
- Import and export transactions.

All types of business letters should normally conform to over-all format of blocked style with Indian modifications as pointed out in the figures Nos. 11.7 and 11.11 in Microsoft Window Exp.

layout. As various types of business transactions require specialized knowledge as well as some degree of expertise in the particular trade, it is necessary that the body of a letter should be on the pattern of correspondence made in an area such as import-export transactions or correspondences concerning payment, transport, insurance, etc.