

**The Only 250  
Letters and Memos  
Managers Will  
Ever Need**

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# **The Only 250 Letters and Memos Managers Will Ever Need**

Ron Tepper



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To Janet,

the most prolific letter and memo writer in the business

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# Introduction

My Dear Friend:

No doubt you will be madly surprised on receipt of this Epistle. But nevertheless I could not resist the temptation and hope if you cannot do me the great favor of dropping me a few lines you will at least excuse me for this for I can't help it.





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**T**he opening lines on the previous page begin a letter written more than a half-century ago by humorist Will Rogers. Rogers viewed letter writing as the epitome of communication; however, he would be amazed at how the art of letter and memo writing has changed throughout America.

In Rogers's day, good letter and memo writers were abundant. The written word was king. In today's society, however, video and the spoken word rule, while well-constructed business letters and memos are becoming rare. To some, writing one good follow-up sales letter or internal memo is more difficult than working a 40-hour week.

That shouldn't be. Almost all well-constructed letters adhere to a four-step formula. Master the formula, which is detailed in this book, and letter and memo writing becomes quick and painless rather than drudgery. For the businessperson who adheres to the formula, good letters can be written almost as quickly as the words are spoken.

Letter writers do not have to be college graduates, either. All that is required is mastery of the four-step process. Once those steps are mastered, the businessperson will find that letter writing is not only quick, but it also gives him or her the chance to be creative—and to increase sales.

Eighteen companies volunteered sales correspondence, memos, and other written documents for this book. (In return for their correspondence it was agreed that the names of clients would not be used, nor would any company letterhead.) Each of the companies practices good letter and memo writing, and most use the four-step process.

For these companies, good letter writing equates to higher sales volume, better internal communication, and more productive employees. For example, several pointed out that the typical salesperson has less time than ever to call on accounts. That holds true whether the business is manufacturing or service. Time has become a premium to business. Yet repeat business depends on contact between

sales and customer. In fact, *post-purchase selling*, which means the amount of additional products or services a customer purchases after the initial buy, can account for as much as 50 percent of a firm's sales. But that business never comes through the door if there is a lack of communication.

By utilizing written communication, many firms have enabled salespeople to increase communication, to build a campaign where every month, or at least every quarter, the customer gets some kind of correspondence. This correspondence keeps the company and the salesperson on the mind of the customer. These letters can be planned and programmed into computers and mailed on the first of the month or on the first day of a new quarter. These include specialized letters (outlined in Chapter 4) that contain information and educational material and make an indirect sales pitch. These letters pay major dividends for the companies that are using them.

The same is true of memos. Although most memos are used internally (within the company), a growing number of salespeople are writing short personalized notes (memos) to clients and thereby increasing the amount of communication between clients and prospects. Even internally, memos have taken on new importance. With the busy schedule of most executives, memos are increasingly being used to recap meetings, document decisions, outline campaigns, and pinpoint responsibilities.

Together, letters and memos have not only taken on a new importance in the workplace, but they also have become critical tools for companies as they approach the twenty-first century.

# CHAPTER 1

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## Rules and Format

Dear Cerf:

By some miracle you have published a book which is not second rate. Please send me twelve copies at once.

Yours sincerely,  
A. Woolcott

Dear Woolcott:

By some miracle you can buy those twelve copies at Brentano's.

Yours Very Truly,  
Bennett Cerf



---

**T**he letter from writer Alexander Woolcott to his friend, Bennett Cerf (and the return note from Cerf) are not only classics in letter writing, but also examples of why good letter and memo writing is an art, as well as a superior communication device. In contrast to many letters, the Woolcott–Cerf exchange reveals the personalities of two men, each with a tremendous sense of humor. The letters also reveal that the pair were old friends who did not hesitate to deprecate each other with well-placed barbs.

Woolcott and Cerf demonstrate one other thing about good letters—they do not have to be long to get the message across. Good letters and memos are crisp and clear, as are good conversations and good speeches. Good letters and memos have definite trademarks. For example, in Woolcott's initial note, only three words contain more than one syllable. In Cerf's, only two do. Letters that are brief and highlighted by monosyllabic words characterize good communicators. Short and to the point. The sentences do not run on and are not overly long. That also happens to be the way most of us talk when speaking with business associates, and we should be writing the same way.

Businesspeople who communicate perfectly when speaking to someone across the room frequently tighten up and put in excess verbiage when writing a simple note or memo. For some reason, many believe words on paper should be adorned with as many adjectives and adverbs as possible. Although adjectives and adverbs certainly have a place in communication, the best letters and memos are simple and straightforward. The adjectives and adverbs that are used are well-placed and appropriate. An example of simplicity and communication at its best is the following memo, written by the marketing director of a West Coast real estate firm. The memo announces a new member in the department.

It is with great pleasure that I announce we've traded two players and a future draft choice to Jim \_\_\_\_\_, Wes \_\_\_\_\_, and Shelley \_\_\_\_\_ for speedy Jeanne \_\_\_\_\_. Jeanne is being promoted to the first string—the marketing department—where she will be the Marketing PR coordinator beginning Nov. 1.

In her new position, Jeanne will deal with the media, assist in the preparation of the company newsletter, market softening and PR campaigns, write brochures and use her many marketing talents on a variety of assignments.

Jeanne started with \_\_\_\_\_ in February, 1988, as \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.

Our thanks to Jim, Shelly and Wes for developing and supplying us with this #1 draft choice.

The preceding example, while refreshing and interesting, is not intended to suggest that every letter and memo has to be humorous. Correspondence should, however, be written to keep the reader's interest. Letters and memos should also convey the personality of the person, department, or company writing them.

A personnel memo announcing the appointment of a new employee need not be loaded with clichés. It can have color and flair. The memo written by the marketing department is creative and down-to-earth and fits the image of the department. It may not, however, fit other departments (e.g., data processing) within the company. Memo writers have to make that judgment and ask themselves, "What is the image of our department? What is appropriate and what isn't?"

Memos should also reflect the entire company's personality. Is the company formal? Informal? Is it a mature, well-established Fortune 500 company, or is it a free swinging, new young enterprise? Is it a bank or bowling alley? An auto manufacturer or automatic car wash? Regardless of the business, where is room for creativity. Some memos suit the image of both a formal and an informal company. Memo 1-1 can be used for either type of company.

## THINK ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

Jay Abraham, a talented marketing entrepreneur who makes a large portion of his living through his ability with the spoken word, admon-

Date:

To:

From:

Subject: Promotion

I am please to announce the promotion of  
[name] to Programmer/Analyst.

[Name] has been with us since [date] as a  
Senior Programmer. He [she] has been  
instrumental in our computer division's  
development since we opened for business last  
March. He [she] has also been the project  
leader for Release 2.10.

[Name] will continue to help in the creation  
and ongoing development of our computer  
product.

Please join me in congratulating [name] on his  
[her] promotion, and on wishing him [her]  
continued success.

signed

JH/ib

ishes letter writers to think about the audience: "What will interest them? How should it be said? How do you get the message across so they remember it?"

Abraham supplied two examples of letters that were the backbone of a successful marketing campaign. The first went to consumers, the second to publishers (Letters 1-1 and 1-2).

Although the letters go to different markets, they have several key elements in common—elements that every letter writer should follow regardless of the subject and audience. First, the language in both letters talks directly to the recipient. They are targeted at the reader's (not the writer's) needs. Their physical format is similar, too. They both have short, punchy paragraphs that make each letter readable. The paragraph indentation also keep the reader's eyes moving down the page.

Well-structured and well-written correspondence can be one of the most important things a businessperson does. A letter with a touch of humor can win over a prospective client. It says to the recipient that the originator is more than black ink on white paper. He or she has a personality, and in letter and memo writing, it is just as important to convey a covert meaning as an overt one.

Well-written memos tell employees that the boss is human; he or she is one of them. Compare Memos 1-2 and 1-3. Each gives a mental picture of management.

Memo 1-2 leaves no doubt that management is tough, business-like, and adversarial. The only question is whether management cares at all for the employees. The same message could have been put across with far less acrimony. Correspondence such as this is not new to the business world.

Memo 1-3 is about an equally serious topic; however, management has put together a memo that asks employees for their cooperation and shows that the company cares as well. Obviously, one of the company's primary concerns regarding worker compensation claims is the cost, but dollars lost (to the company) is not something that impacts employees as much as a plea from management that says, "We care about you."

George Post, chief executive officer (CEO) of one of the most successful independent banks in the country, says "letter and memo writing has become a lost art." Post knows. Some of his prose is among the best ever penned in the world of finance. His correspondence is also a lesson in brevity that every businessperson would be wise to learn.



Dear Friend:

I'd like to take a minute of your time to talk about an extremely important subject: your health!

No one can possibly take your health as seriously as you do.

Perhaps I am responsible for gently "pushing" you to improve your nutritional intake—but now it's up to you to take full control of your nutritional requirements. You alone must sustain and perpetuate the benefits you'll receive from starting to take the A.M./P.M. solution.

It's an investment in your body that will pay dividends for many years to come.

The benefits of having proper nutritional balance within your body include looking better, feeling better, and having more energy, more concentration, and less tension. I honestly believe that once you get your body nutritionally balanced, you'll transform yourself into the healthiest, strongest, most alive person you can be.

To help guide you in the investment you've made in your own health, I've included a handy reference guide to the vitamins and minerals contained in the A.M./P.M. solution.

The reference guide explains the importance of each ingredient I've chosen to include in the A.M./P.M. supplement. It also clearly explains why that ingredient is vital for you to include in your diet every day.

It's essential for you to be fully informed on the purpose of each vitamin within the body—as well as knowing the consequences a deficiency can lead to. Only then can you take full control and responsibility for your health.

I hope this reference guide will serve to keep you motivated to take your A.M. and your P.M. solution each and every day. It should serve as a daily reminder of the vital need your body has for the vitamins and minerals in the A.M./P.M. supplement. You see, it's often the case that, after reaping short-term rewards, people suddenly stop taking their vitamin supplements, because they "feel better."