DISK INCLUDED

MODEL LETTERS & MEMOS

A HANDBOOK FOR

SCIENTISTS & ENGINEERS

RON TEPPER

Model Letters and Memos

A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers

Ron Tepper

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REQUIREMENTS:
An IBM, PC Family computer or compatible computer, a 3.5″ high-density floppy drive, PC DOS, MS-DOS, or DR DOS Version 2.0 or later, a printer, any ASCII editor or Word Processor.

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How to Use the Disk

The diskette requires an IBM-PC or compatible computer with DOS version 2.0 or later. It can be used in both DOS and Windows environments. The files can be read into your word processing software program using the directions given below. If your word processing program is not listed below, you can load these files by following the directions for your particular word processing programs as mentioned in your software manual. Using the index in your software manual, refer to the section on *Importing ASCII files or Loading Documents from Other Word Processors.*

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

The enclosed diskette requires an IBM PC or compatible with the following:

IBM PC DOS or MS DOS 2.0

Compatible computer with 256K minimum

A 3.5" double sided, double density drive

Optional equipment includes a DOS compatible printer and a popular word processing package like WordPerfect® or Microsoft® Word for Windows to read and print the letter and memo files.

HOW TO MAKE A BACKUP COPY

Before you start to use this disk, we strongly recommend that you make a backup copy of the original. Making a backup copy of your disk allows you to have a clean set of files saved in case you accidentally change or delete a file. Remember, however, that a backup disk is for your own personal use only. Any other use of the backup disk violates copyright law.

1. Insert your DOS disk into Drive A of your computer.
2. At the A:>, type DISKCOPY A: A: and press Return.

You will be prompted by DOS to place the disk to be copied into drive A.

3. Place Model Letters and Memo's: A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers disk into drive A.

Follow the directions on the screen to complete the copy. When you are through, remove the new copy of the disk and label it immediately. Remove the original disk and store it in a safe place.

HOW TO INSTALL THE DISK

The enclosed diskette contains over 150 data files in a compressed format. In order to use the files, you must run the installation program for the diskette.

You can install the diskette onto your computer by following these steps:

1. Insert the *Model Letters and Memo's: A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers* disk into drive A of your computer.
2. At the A:> type INSTALL and press Return.

Next, you will have the opportunity to name the subdirectory to store the data files. The default subdirectory name is LETTERS.

To accept this name:

3. Press Return.

The installation program will proceed to copy the files to your hard disk. When all copying is complete, you can press any key to exit the installation program. Remove the original disk from drive A and store it in a safe place.

GETTING STARTED

The forms on the disk are in ASCII format. ASCII format is a standard text format for DOS computers. Using this format, a number of different users with different word processing programs can read the disk. Once the forms are loaded into your word processor, you can customize them to suit your individual needs.

This means that regardless of your word processing program (WordPerfect, Word for Windows, WordStar, etc.), you can still use the files on this disk. As an example, following are instructions for reading files into some popular word processing programs.

Reading Files into Wordperfect 5.0

To read the files into WordPerfect 5.0 follow these steps:

1. Load the WordPerfect program as normal.
2. When [Document 1 0 unmodified] appears on screen, select OPEN from the FILE menu.
3. The OPEN dialog will appear. At this box, make the appropriate selections for the drive and subdirectory of the document you want to review. For instance, to open files in the directory, you must first select the LETTERS directory.
4. Under the FILES option on the left side of the dialog box, enter 1-11-L as the file name.
5. The CONVERT FILE FORMAT dialog box will appear on screen with the option for ASCII TEXT (DOS) highlighted. Click OK to proceed.

The file will immediately load into WordPerfect for Windows.

6. To print the file, select PRINT form the FILE menu.

You can make any changes or revisions to the document. When you are through editing it, you can save it under a new file name before you quit.

Reading Files into Microsoft Word for Windows

To read the files into Microsoft Word for Windows, merely follow the steps:

1. Load Word for Windows program as normal.
2. When an Untitled document is displayed, select OPEN from the FILE menu.
3. The OPEN FILE dialog box will appear. Make the appropriate selections, for the drive and subdirectory of the documents. For instance, the files may be located in drive C under directory LETTERS.
4. Under the FILE NAME option on the left side of the dialog box, enter 1-11-L as the file name. If you want to look through a list of files , you must type in *.* under the FILE NAME option. Otherwise, Word for Windows will only look for files with the DOC extension.
5. The CONVERT FILE dialog box will appear on screen with a listing of different file types. Select DOS TEXT WITH LAYOUT as the file type and press OK.

The file will immediately load into Word for Windows.

6. To print the file, select PRINT from the FILE menu.

You can make any changes or revisions to the document. When you are through editing it, you can save it under a new file name before you quit.

Reading the Files into Other Word Processing Programs

To use these files with other word processing programs, refer to the documentation that accompanies your software. Often, the procedure is very similar to those listed above, with two primary steps:

1. Identify the file you want to load from the *Model Letters and Memo's: A Handbook for Scientists and Engineers* disk and indicate the filename to your word processor.
2. Identify the file as a DOS text file.

After these general steps, most word processing will immediately load the file.

USER ASSISTANCE AND INFORMATION

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., is pleased to provide assistance to users of this package. Should you have questions, regarding use of this package, please call our technical support number: (212) 850-6194 between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM EST, Monday–Friday.

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Preface

The two words information *and* communication *are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.*

—Sydney J. Harris

For many people, the thought of writing a simple note, a short letter, or a brief memo is enough to cause trauma. This is especially true of scientists, engineers, and other professionals whose communications with their peers rely on their superb mathematical and analytical skills, their carefully constructed logic, and their detail-oriented research.

They have a store of information, but how can relevant data be communicated in a manner that is understandable—and that takes less time than the research itself?

That's what this book is all about. It will show you—in a simple, practical, how-to manner—ways of communicating effectively, both inside and outside your company, through internal and external memos and short and long letters.

Letter and memo writing is "formulated," that is, made easy for the scientist and engineer. Follow the directions—or the formula—and you are virtually guaranteed to produce correspondence that is easy to read, effective, and communicative.

For example, there are two distinct formulas that readers can utilize. The first formula, developed by mail order copywriters, applies to the technical professions. This four-step process, called AIDA, enables the writer to follow a precise formula and come up—consistently—with correspondence that is lucid and meaningful. AIDA stands for **A**ttention, **I**nterest, **D**esire, **A**ction. With it, complex communiqués are made simple. Letters that previously took hours to write can be written in a fraction of the time. Even if you have never been able to write a well-organized proposal, or have few writing skills, you can use the AIDA approach to ensure clear written communication.

A second formula introduced is IBC (**I**ntroduction, **B**ody, **C**onclusion), which is a remarkable, time-saving tool for both memos and letters. It illustrates, in practical, how-to terms and with examples, exactly how a memo can be written, conclusions developed, and introductions written, in a matter of minutes.

Another writing aid for professionals is unveiled—USP (**U**nique **S**elling **P**roposition). This formula explains why every letter and memo—regardless of what the topic happens to be—is really a sales letter (or memo). By applying USP, letters and memos *communicate and sell.*

This book contains another unique writing aid—two full chapters of boilerplate letters and memos for the scientist, engineer, and professional. These documents were provided by engineers and other technical professionals who are accomplished writers and communicators. Nearly 200 letters and memos covering more than 125 different subjects can be found throughout the book.

In addition, you will find:

- Dozens of hints on how to make your correspondence more effective;
- The use of summaries and where to place them;
- How to handle lengthy documents and make them more readable;
- How to virtually guarantee the recipient will not only read what you write but will understand the message you want to get across.

This comprehensive presentation would not have been possible without the help of many scientists, engineers, and other professionals who generously gave their time and provided memos and letters as guidelines. Thanks to them, this book will not only make effective letter and memo writing easier, but it will save you countless hours in front of the word processor.

RON TEPPER

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Chapter 1

What Makes a Letter or Memo Effective?—12 Rules to Remember

If it is just one page, I promise to read it with attention. If it is longer, my secretary will put it straight into a wastepaper basket.

Sir Winston Churchill

The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt

THE "SOUND BITE" OUTLOOK

Radio news broadcasts seldom devote more than 30 seconds to each story. Anchors on television news shows rarely spend more than 20 seconds introducing a story, and the film clips that depict the event usually run 10 to 20 seconds, rarely longer. Not long ago, most commercials ran 60 seconds. Now, 5-second and 10-second spots can be purchased. We live in a "sound bite" culture. Communication is short and to the point. Messages are rapid-fire. Take 60 seconds to deliver your message, and your audience is asleep or has switched to another channel.

Should true communication take longer? Winston Churchill answered that question succinctly: *No!* If you cannot say something in one page, maybe it is not worth saying at all. Could President Roosevelt's message have been any more potent in 20 words instead of 10?

SHORT IS IN

Today, we have less time for reading—or watching TV—than ever before. People read less, whether they are scientists, engineers, bricklayers, or marketing executives. Everyone wants to see the bottom line—quickly. They want newscasters to get to the point—quickly. Sales of remote control units have flourished, not because people are too lazy to walk to the TV but because the unit allows the viewer to change channels rapidly if someone on the TV screen does not get to the point in 15 or 20 seconds.

The same economy is true of print media. *USA Today* has a circulation of more than a million copies. Its short, to-the-point, capsuled, 250-word news stories have set a successful pattern that other publishers are watching. Nearly every newspaper has jumped on the bandwagon: "capsule" contents of the edition appear up front so that readers can scan the important stories.

Time and *Newsweek* have revamped their layouts; both now offer short, punchy headlines and stories. *Newsweek,* for instance, has "Periscope," a one-page synopsis of some of the week's hottest events. A typical issue may spotlight six or seven stories on just one page. Whether readers are turning the pages of *Newsweek, Time,* the *Los Angeles Times,* or the *Chicago Tribune,* they almost always find a 10- or 20-word wrap-up, or capsule summary that they can peruse quickly and get the message without reading the full text.

Despite the efforts of national newsmagazines and daily newspapers to accommodate the fact that short is in, their ranks continue to shrink. Time has become a precious commodity, and no one has time to read lengthy articles. Nightly television gives us the news instead.

When people are impatient with professionally written articles and news, just imagine how much shorter their attention span is when they receive 2- and 3-page letters, or overly long memos. The written word—whether in the form of a letter or a memo—has fallen victim to today's pressures on their time.

AVOID THE RAMBLE

For the professional, engineer, or scientist who wants to get a message across, the first rule is: Deliver it in sound bite fashion. That does *not* mean every letter has to be less than a page, or every memo has to be one paragraph. But, in order to be read, correspondence and memos have to be brief, succinct, and to the point. Every word must count. Try staying with the full text of the following lengthy memo.

From:
To:
Date:

As you may know, a few months ago we completed a study of our engineering facilities, and discovered that there were certain things lacking within our maintenance facilities. Although many of our departments have problems because they are not up-to-date, the maintenance area had glaring deficiencies. For instance, there was not a procedure in place to report the spillage of toxic cleaning compounds. If something happened, it was up to the supervisor to call security, and security would notify engineering, which would dispatch a team to decide if there was anything seriously amiss. If there was, a call would be made, depending upon the seriousness of the spill, to an outside hazardous cleanup team, usually from the _____ company.

Now, we are in the process of upgrading our maintenance area. One of the first things we are going to do is to put a hazardous cleanup team in place 24 hours a day. Thus, if something is spilled at any time, we will have immediate response, whether the spillage is with maintenance or some other department. In putting the hazardous cleanup team together, the suggestion was made that some of our employees are from other industries and they may have had experience in handling materials of this type. If so, and you are interested in becoming a member of the team, contact John _____ at extension 5465.

This memo went on for another page before it was finally concluded. Aside from its wordiness and overly long paragraphs, the writer spent an inordinate amount of time giving background rather than the planned remedy for a bad situation.

What was the purpose of the memo? To generate membership for the hazardous cleanup team that was being organized. The memo failed to answer four key questions:

1. Was this a full-time position?
2. Were people being asked to switch jobs?
3. Was the cleanup volunteer work?
4. Were any benefits planned for those who joined the team?

Realistically, the entire rambling memo could have been condensed into a few paragraphs: