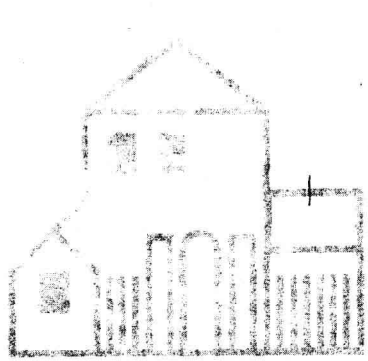


The
Random
House
Book of
**Contemporary
Business
Letters**



**The
Random
House
Book of
Contemporary
Business
Letters**

**Strategic
Communications**

**Edited by
Stephen P. Elliott**



Random House • New York

Copyright © 1989, 1988 by Round Lake Publishing Co.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without permission in writing from the publisher. All inquiries should be addressed to Reference Department, Random House, Inc., 201 E. 50th St., New York, NY 10022. Published in the United States by Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto. An abridgment of *The Complete Book of Contemporary Business Letters* published by Round Lake Publishing Co. in 1988.

Any names mentioned in this book are entirely fictitious and no resemblance to persons living or dead, or corporate entities, is intended to be made.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The Random House book of contemporary business letters/Strategic Communications; edited by Stephen P. Elliott.

p. cm.

"Adapted from *The complete book of contemporary business letters*" — T.p. verso.

Includes indexes.

ISBN 0-394-58170-9

1. Business writing. 2. Commercial correspondence. 3. Letter-writing. I. Elliott, Stephen P. II. Strategic Communications, Inc. III. Title: *Complete book of contemporary business letters*. HF5718.3.R36 1989

651.7'5 — dc20

89-8508

Manufactured in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Preface

Many bright people, perhaps you're one of them, go to great lengths to avoid writing letters. Even when it means losing sales, alienating customers, or missing opportunities to present themselves in the best light, the threat of facing a blank page or a bare computer screen can be more powerful than the need to write a letter.

Just the thought of getting started can strike terror! "How should I open the letter?" "Just what information do I need to include?" "Am I communicating in the best tone for the situation and is my approach the most effective one?" "What closing will bring the action or reaction I want?" Sometimes the challenge of all these factors so overwhelms the writer that no letter at all is ever sent, or the letter that is finally composed misses the mark completely or subverts the writer's purpose.

All of this is most unfortunate because, in fact, armed with some simple guidelines to follow, and some excellent models from which to learn, business letter writing can be a relatively easy, extremely rewarding task.

Every piece of business correspondence is a sales tool. When you write to a customer, even about such a simple matter as confirming a delivery date, your correspondence is telling him about you and your company—about your professionalism, your interest in serving him, the style with which you conduct business. The same is true of an internal memo. Here your market is your associate, your boss, your subordinate. A weak or confusing communication represents you poorly, sending the message that you are inept or that you exercise poor judgment.

This book gives you your very own "file" of concise, crisp letters, memos,

proposals and other business documents covering all of the major areas of business. Each one is designed to provide a model for effective communication. Of equal significance are the comments accompanying each document, which highlight the important features and help you to customize it.

Before you begin, decide whether you should be writing at all. This might seem like a foolish point, but it isn't. Writing is too time-consuming to engage in frivolously. The key question is "What do I want the reader to do after he or she reads this?" If you can't answer this question, you might reconsider whether you should write at all.

Don't write under the following conditions:

- When a quick phone call will do the job just as well as a letter, *and* a written record is *not* required.
- When you want to congratulate yourself. If your sole reason for writing is to let people know how great you are, think again. It's always better to *show* people you're competent than to tell them.
- When you're emotionally upset. If you're in a rage because someone on your staff failed to do what he was supposed to do, take some time to cool down before you begin to write. The letter will be better thought out, and you'll avoid saying things you may regret later on.

Do write, however, if any of the following apply:

- When the reader needs time to understand and absorb the message—for example, the material is complex and technical.
- When a permanent record is necessary to guard against misinterpretation or to protect the writer and the reader from the memory lapses that come with the passage of time.
- When you need a polite way to get someone's attention. For example, when you've been trying to reach a potential customer by phone, to no avail.
- When writing a letter can demonstrate that you've made a special effort.

Be prepared! It is impossible to write a well-reasoned letter or memo without preliminary thought. You need to focus on the decision maker, the person who will take action on what you are writing, and write with that person's needs in mind. Whether that person is a customer, a supplier, a creditor, a member of your staff, or your boss, aim your letter at the intended reader. The best way to achieve this is to picture the person in your mind as you write.

Get to the point. Establish what the main point of the letter is to be by asking yourself, "What is the one thing I want the reader to remember?" Start with a sentence that compels the reader to continue reading, and then quickly make the main point or points. Don't save important information for late in the document. Many readers will never get that far.

Be brief. If your letter is well organized, you won't be tempted to run on.

Most readers are just as busy as you are. They won't read pages and pages of explanation or analysis. Keep your letters, memos, and executive summaries to one page, if possible. Keep your paragraphs short.

Say what you mean. Hedging fools absolutely no one. Many people fall into the habit of qualifying their sentences in order to avoid categorical statements that may later be proven false. As a result, their documents are loaded with sentences starting with "There is a possibility that" or "There is some potential that." Lopping off these phrases will improve most prose. Use the active voice (he completed the project) rather than the passive voice (the project was completed by him) for the same reasons—it's shorter and more forthright.

Be positive. If you can state something positively, do so. Saying "We can't fill your order" is honest enough, but saying "We'd like to substitute Product X, a superior version of the product you ordered" is much better. People are much more receptive to the positive approach.

Be natural. Letter writing doesn't have the stilted, formal sound it once did. Don't use slang, but do write in a conversational style, similar to the way you speak. Even contractions like "I've" and "let's" accurately reflect the way people converse, and are perfectly acceptable in written communications today. People have been so used to Victorian phrasing in business correspondence that they find it hard to resist phrases like "Per your letter of August twenty-first" or "Enclosed herewith please find." Read your letter or memo aloud. If it sounds stiff, it probably is! Change it so that it sounds more natural.

How to Use This Book

This book provides an easy-to-access file of model letters for every category of business. Using the chapter openers as background and the comments accompanying the letters as a guide, you should find it easy to customize any document to suit your particular needs.

Accessing the letters. The documents fall within 10 major areas, or chapters, as spelled out in the table of contents, and then into more specific areas within each chapter. Each document has a descriptive title as well as a reference number, which identifies the chapter in which the letter can be found and, separated by a hyphen, its numerical placement within the chapter. In addition, there are two indexes from which to select the letter you need, one alphabetized by letter title and one by subject. After using the table of contents and indexes a few times you may find that, for your purposes, one of them proves more helpful to you than the others in locating the documents you want to use.

Customizing the letters. Once you've chosen the letter you wish to customize, you may want to make a copy of it on which you can do the editing. Keep the book open to that page, so you can refer to the original letter and the comments under it. The comments alert you to the important features of the letter—and assure that all essential information will be included.

In addition to the content of the model letters, pay particular attention to their tone and style. These factors determine the strength and effectiveness of your written communications.

Many of the letters and other documents in the book require very little

customizing to make them appropriate for other situations, while some will need additional editing. The more complex letters provide excellent examples of how to handle particularly difficult situations.

When creating your own documents, consider combining paragraphs from several letters within the same category. This is particularly helpful when your needs fall somewhere between two model letters.

Review the letter when you finish to be sure you have changed all the information necessary to make the letter correct for your purposes. And, of course, proofread it to be sure there are no typographical errors or misspelled names.

Using Your Computer

The letters and other documents in *The Random House Book of Contemporary Business Letters* are available on computer disk for IBM-compatible and Macintosh computers. They are in text (ASCII) file format, for use with virtually any word processor.

Using the disk, you can call up any letter from within your word processor, and customize and print it out quickly and easily.

Please turn to the handy bound-in envelope and order form for full information.

Contents

Preface xv

How to Use this Book xix

Chapter 1 SALES AND MARKETING

Introduction 1

Dealing with the Customer

Welcome to the Area (1-01) 3

Welcome to the Family (1-02) 4

Welcome, Brochure with Company Terms (1-03) 5

Welcome, Catalog Enclosed (1-04) 6

Sales Call Follow-ups

Follow-up to Sales Call: First Follow-up to New Client/Customer (1-05) 7

Follow-up to Sales Call: Inactive Customer (1-06) 8

Solicitation of Additional Business to Current Customer (1-07) 9

Solicitation of Former Customer (1-08) 10

Requests and Responses

Response to Request for Information (1-09) 11

Request to Use Name As Reference (1-10) 12

Thank You for Permission to Use Name As Reference (1-11) 13

Lead Generation

Lead Generation, Consumer Services (1-12) 14

Lead Generation, Industrial Products (1-13) 15

Promotional Announcements

Flyer (1-14) 16

Contest (1-15) 17

Discount Offer (1-16) 18

Premium Incentive (1-17) 19

Trade Show Announcement (1-18) 20

Store Opening, Special Offer (1-19)	21
Workshop Promotion (1-20)	22
Announcement of Sales Program, Consumer Goods (1-21)	23
Announcement of Sales Program, Industrial Products (1-22)	24
Announcement of Advertising Campaign, Consumer Goods (1-23)	25
Announcement of Advertising Campaign, Industrial Products (1-24)	26
Announcement of New Product/Service to Former Customer (1-25)	27
 Communicating with the Sales Force	
Explanation of Changes in Prices to Sales Force (1-26)	28
Update on Product Specifications (1-27)	29
Introduction of New Salesperson to Sales Force (1-28)	30
Explanation of Changes in Territory Assignments (1-29)	31
Explanation of Bonus/Commission Program (1-30)	32
Request for Meeting to Review Sales Performance (1-31)	33
 Research	
Cover Letter for Questionnaire (1-32)	34
Thank You for Answering Questionnaire (1-33)	35
Questionnaire about Salespeople (1-34)	36
Questionnaire to Inactive Client (1-35)	38
Consumer Expo Questionnaire (1-36)	40
 Orders	
Order Received, Being Processed (1-37)	42
Order Received, Being Shipped (1-38)	43
Order Received, Delivery Delayed (1-39)	44
Order Received, Merchandise Not Available (1-40)	45
Order Received, Unable to Process (1-41)	46
 Shipping	
Merchandise Being Shipped (1-42)	47
Backorder Arrived, Being Shipped (1-43)	48
Merchandise Ready for Customer Pick-up (1-44)	49
 Statements	
Statement for Services (1-45)	50
Statement for Goods Delivered (1-46)	51
 Quotations and Proposals	
Request for Opportunity to Quote (1-47)	52
Thank You for Opportunity to Quote, Proposal Enclosed (1-48)	53
Quotation Cover Letter (1-49)	54
Proposal (1-50)	55

Follow-up to Proposal (1-51)	56
Revised Proposal Cover Letter (1-52)	57
Response to Request for Bid, with Questions (1-53)	58
Request to Extend Decision Deadline (1-54)	59
Confirmation of Deadline Extension (1-55)	60
Confirmation Letter, Terms Accepted (1-56)	61
Confirmation Letter, Terms Accepted, Invoice Enclosed (1-57)	62
Confirmation Letter, Exception to Original Terms (1-58)	63
Confirmation Letter, Changes in Specifications (1-59)	64
Confirmation Letter, Acceptance of Changes in Terms/Specifications (1-60) ...	65
Consignment Terms (1-61)	66
 Contracts and Government Regulations	
Contract Enclosed for Signature (1-62)	67
Approval of Drawings (1-63)	68
Request for Verification of EEOC Compliance (1-64)	69
 Chapter 2 ADVERTISING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS	
Introduction	71
 Dealing with Advertising Agencies and Rate Requests	
Hiring Advertising Agency (2-01)	73
Request for Meeting on Agency Fees (2-02)	74
Notification to Advertising Agency of Impending Review (2-03)	75
Termination of Relationship with Advertising Agency (2-04)	76
Request for Newspaper Advertising Rates (2-05)	77
Request for Magazine Advertising Rates (2-06)	78
Request for Broadcast/Television Advertising Rates (2-07)	79
Work Agreement with Freelancer (2-08)	80
 Announcements to Customers	
Announcement of Change of Address (2-09)	81
Announcement of New Subsidiary (2-10)	82
Announcement of New Business, Professional (2-11)	83
Announcement of New Employee (2-12)	84
Announcement of New Product Line (2-13)	85
Announcement of New Business Name (2-14)	86
Announcement of Branch Office/Store (2-15)	87
 Public Relations Companies and Fees	
Hiring Public Relations Firm (2-16)	88
Request for Meeting on Public Relations Firm's Services (2-17)	89

Acceptance of Request for TV Interview (2-18) 90

Press Releases

Announcement of New Product (2-19) 91
Announcement of New Product Line (2-20) 92
Announcement of New Employee (2-21) 93
Announcement of Employee Promotion (2-22) 94
Announcement of Award/Achievement by Employee/Principal (2-23) 95
Announcement of Merger (2-24) 96
Announcement of New Partner (2-25) 97
Company Press Release, Short Version (2-26) 98
Company Press Release, Long Version (2-27) 99
Thank You for Printing Article (2-28) 100

Chapter 3 CUSTOMER RELATIONS

Introduction 101

Changes in Business

Announcement of New Product to Current Customer (3-01) 103
Notification of Price Increase (3-02) 104
Notification of Price Decrease (3-03) 105
Notification of Change in Services (3-04) 106
Notification of Change in Policy (3-05) 107
Notification of New Salesperson in Territory (3-06) 108
Notification of Change in Administrative Arrangements (3-07) 109

Compliments

Congratulations on Promotion (3-08) 110
Congratulations on New Job (3-09) 111
Congratulations on Being Quoted (3-10) 112
Congratulations on New Office (3-11) 113
Congratulations on Expansion of Business (3-12) 114
Enjoyed Your Article/Speech (3-13) 115
Appreciation of Business Suggestion (3-14) 116
Acknowledgment of Compliment to Company/Employee (3-15) 117

Meetings and Appointments

Setting Up Meeting (3-16) 118
Confirmation of Meeting (3-17) 119
Request for Associate to Attend Meeting (3-18) 120
Setting Up Appointment (3-19) 121
Confirmation of Appointment (3-20) 122

Thank You for Meeting (3-21)	123
Thank You for Setting Up Sales Call (3-22)	124
Apology to Customer for Missing Meeting (3-23)	125
Apology to Business Associate for Missing Appointment (3-24)	126

Returned Checks

Check Returned, Polite Request for Payment (3-25)	127
Check Returned, Firm Request for Payment (3-26)	128
Check Returned, Warning of Collection Agency (3-27)	129

Payments and Returns by Customer

Thank You for Prompt Payment (3-28)	130
Thank You for Prompt Payment, Other Products/Services of Interest (3-29) ..	131
Discount for Early Payment (3-30)	132
Payment Received, Pre-Payment Required in the Future (3-31)	133
Payment Incorrect, Will Credit Next Statement (3-32)	134
Payment Incorrect, Will Debit Account (3-33)	135
Payment Incorrect, Send Balance (3-34)	136
Overpayment, Check Enclosed (3-35)	137
Duplicate Invoice Provided as Requested (3-36)	138
Acknowledgment of Return for Exchange (3-37)	139
Acknowledgment of Return for Credit (3-38)	140
Acknowledgment of Return for Damaged Goods (3-39)	141
No Record of Returned Goods (3-40)	142

Chapter 4 HANDLING CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS

Introduction	143
--------------------	-----

Complaint Justified

Clarification of Billing (4-01)	145
Apology for Billing Error (4-02)	146
Apology for Computer Error (4-03)	147
Apology for Delay in Shipment (4-04)	148
Apology for Error in Shipment (4-05)	149
Apology for Damaged Shipment (4-06)	150
Apology for Employee Rudeness (4-07)	151
Apology for Missing Documentation (4-08)	152

Complaint Unjustified

Company Not at Fault (4-09)	153
Company Not Responsible for Delay in Shipment (4-10)	154
Company Not Responsible for Rudeness (4-11)	155

Customer Misunderstood Delivery Time (4-12)	156
Customer Misunderstood Terms of Sale (4-13)	157
Customer Misunderstood Terms of Sale, Special Order (4-14)	158
Customer Misunderstood Product Specifications, Features Explained (4-15) ..	159
Customer Misunderstood Product Specifications, Return Authorized (4-16) ...	160
Customer Misunderstood Product Specifications, Return Not Possible (4-17) .	161
Customer Misunderstood Delivery Terms (4-18)	162
Response to Customer Who Is Threatening Legal Action (4-19)	163

Chapter 5 CREDIT AND COLLECTIONS

Introduction	165
--------------------	-----

Extending and Refusing Credit

Request to Customer to Complete Credit Application (5-01)	167
Request to Customer for Financial Information (5-02)	168
Request for Credit Report on Individual (5-03)	169
Request for Credit Report on Company (5-04)	170
Approval of Credit, Retail (5-05)	171
Refusal of Credit, Commercial (5-06)	172
Refusal of Credit, Retail (5-07)	173

Collection Sequence (moderate tone)

Collection Letter, Moderate Tone, Letter #1 (5-08)	174
Collection Letter, Moderate Tone, Letter #2 (5-09)	175
Collection Letter, Moderate Tone, Letter #3 (5-10)	176
Collection Letter, Moderate Tone, Final Notice (5-11)	177

Collection Sequence (stern tone)

Collection Letter, Stern Tone, Letter #1 (5-12)	178
Collection Letter, Stern Tone, Letter #2 (5-13)	179
Collection Letter, Stern Tone, Letter #3 (5-14)	180
Collection Letter, Stern Tone, Letter #4 (5-15)	181
Collection Letter, Stern Tone, Letter #5 (5-16)	182

Credit Reports

Response to Credit Report, Misleading Report (5-17)	183
Response to Credit Report, False Report (5-18)	184

Chapter 6 DEALING WITH SUPPLIERS

Introduction	185
--------------------	-----

Requests and Inquiries	
Inquiry about Product (6-01)	187
Request for Credit (6-02)	188
Inquiry about Credit Terms (6-03)	189
Inquiry about Discounts (6-04)	190

Bids and Proposals	
Request for Bid (6-05)	191
Rejection of Bid (6-06)	192
Declining to Do Business at This Time (6-07)	193

Dissatisfaction with Shipment or Service	
Request for Service under Warranty (6-08)	194
Shipment Refused on Quality Grounds (6-09)	195
Payment to Be Made When Work Is Completed (6-10)	196
Invoice Cannot Be Processed, Shipment Incomplete (6-11)	197
Invoice Cannot Be Processed, Charges Incorrect (6-12)	198
Cancellation of Order (6-13)	199
Performance Unsatisfactory, Service Company (6-14)	200

Compliments and Suggestions	
Thank You for Cooperation During Difficult Project (6-15)	201
Suggestion to Supplier (6-16)	202
Compliment to Supplier (6-17)	203
Compliment for Supplier's Employee (6-18)	204

Payment	
Payment Enclosed (6-19)	205
Apology for Late Payment (6-20)	206
Explanation of Late Payment (6-21)	207
Return of Item for Credit (6-22)	208

Request Permission to Return Item/Shipment	
Request Permission to Return Item in Shipment, Damaged (6-23)	209
Request Permission to Return Shipment, Not Ordered (6-24)	210
Request Permission to Return Shipment, Damaged (6-25)	211

Chapter 7 PERSONNEL RELATIONS

Introduction	213
Hiring	
Announcement of Job Opening (7-01)	215

Request for Help in Recruiting New Employees (7-02)	216
Response to Resume, Unsolicited (7-03)	217
Response to Resume, with Referral (7-04)	218
Thank You for Application, Will Keep on File (7-05)	219
Invitation to Interview (7-06)	220
Interview Outline (7-07)	221
Confirmation of Job Offer, with Terms (7-08)	222
Revised Job Offer (7-09)	223
Follow-up to Interview, Rejection (7-10)	224
Termination of Job Offer (7-11)	225
Problems	
Warning about Excessive Lateness (7-12)	226
Warning about Excessive Sick Days (7-13)	227
Termination of Employee (7-14)	228
References	
Reference for Departing Employee, Good Employee (7-15)	229
Reference for Departing Employee, Unsolicited (7-16)	230
Reference for Former Employee, Average Employee (7-17)	231
Request for Reference, to Company (7-18)	232
Request for Verification of Employment (7-19)	233
Response to Request for Employment Verification (7-20)	234
Employee Benefits	
Description of Employee Benefits (7-21)	235
Job Descriptions and Evaluations	
Job Description, Entry Level (7-22)	236
Job Description, Middle Level (7-23)	237
Performance Appraisal, Written Evaluation (7-24)	238
Performance Appraisal, Rating Form (7-25)	240
Notification of Promotion (7-26)	242
Notification of Salary Increase (7-27)	243
Motivation of Employee (7-28)	244
Chapter 8 MANAGING YOUR BUSINESS	
Introduction	245
Business Logistics	
Inquiry about Office Lease (8-01)	247
Inquiry about Insurance Coverage (8-02)	248

Inquiry about Office Equipment (8-03)	249
Inquiry about Consulting Services (8-04)	250
Inquiry to Venture Capital Firm (8-05)	251
Request for Action to Local Town Government (8-06)	252
Request to Employment Agency for Information (8-07)	253
Dealing with Tenants (8-08)	254
Dealing with Your Landlord (8-09)	255
Request to Excuse Employee from Jury Duty (8-10)	256
 Business Plans, Help, and Housekeeping	
Business Plan, Executive Summary (8-11)	257
Business Plan, Executive Summary Cover Letter (8-12)	258
Thank You for Help (8-13)	259
 Reservations and Rentals	
Reservation of Hotel/Meeting Facility (8-14)	260
Appreciation to Hotel/Facility for Help/Good Service (8-15)	261
Complaint to Hotel/Facility about Poor Service (8-16)	262
 Chapter 9 INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	
Introduction	263
 Meetings and Planning	
Notification of Meeting (9-01)	265
Agenda, Background Meeting (9-02)	266
Follow-up to Meeting, Assignments (9-03)	267
Recap of Meeting (9-04)	268
 Suggestions, Reports, and Recommendations	
Thank You for Employee Suggestion, Accepted (9-05)	270
Request for Employee Participation in Charity Drive (9-06)	271
Progress Report, Executive Summary (9-07)	272
Final Report, Executive Summary (9-08)	273
Explanation for Lateness of Work/Report (9-09)	274
Recommendation to Purchase Equipment (9-10)	275
Recommendation to Adopt a Course of Action (9-11)	276
 Procedures and Policies	
Procedure for Dealing with the Media (9-12)	278
Recommendation to Change a Policy (9-13)	279