

Employer and Corporate Contact Strategies

IF YOU ARE SEEKING A JOB or making some other request, you may need to contact an employer or corporation in writing. When businesspeople get stacks of mail with similar requests every day, you need to make yours stand out. In this unit, you will learn tips and strategies for writing an outstanding, professional request letter.



Objective:



Explain how to contact an employer or a corporation.

Key Terms:



attention line

body

business letter notations

cc:

complimentary closing

copyrighted materials

enclosure notations

full-block formats

identification initials

inside address

matching donation

programs

networking

Re:

salutation

signature block

tact

Making Contact

At some point in your career, you likely will need to write a letter, either in your job search or to request some kind of help from a business. The key to getting your request granted is to grab the attention of the person reading the letter. Pages and pages of gray type may be overwhelming, making it hard for a businessperson to read anything with interest. One way to combat the problem is to make sure your own letter is short and concise, with plenty of white space. This allows the reader to focus on your request, improving your chance for success.

CONTACTING AN EMPLOYER

Cover letters require concise information to keep an employer’s attention when numerous applications are received for a job opening. When writing a contact letter to a potential employer or corporation, keep it to one page, being as brief as possible. Write short paragraphs, and include no more than four to five paragraphs. Include a customized narrative to suit the needs of the business, and always use professional communication standards.

Business letters use **full-block formats**—a style in which all type is aligned on the left margin. Business letters can be sent by U.S. Postal Service or by email. For this format, type your information on the left, below the top margin, or use letterhead. This information includes name, address (street or P.O. Box, city, state, and zip code), phone numbers (home and/or cell), and email address.

Date

Type the date three lines below your information or the letterhead. Use a month-day-year sequence, with elements separated by commas. The month should be spelled in full, without using abbreviations. For example, you would type: “November 4, 2014.”

Subject Line

Use the abbreviation **Re:**, which indicates the subject line, below the date. The subject line is a key communication tool that should embody the mission of the communication. **Business letter notations**, which are key information for the reader (e.g., “CONFIDENTIAL”) are typed in all capital letters in this space.

Inside Address

The **inside address** is the name and address of the employer or corporation receiving the communication. If you use the name and address on the attention line, it is appropriate to omit the information from the inside address.

Attention Line

The **attention line** is the name of the person receiving the communication. Do not use the name and address from the inside address if you use them on the attention line.

Salutation

A **salutation** is an opening phrase used to address the employer or corporation receiving the communication. A colon usually follows the salutation in a business letter. Examples of common salutations are:

- ◆ Dear Sir or Madam:

- ◆ To Whom It May Concern:
- ◆ Dear Ms. Brown: or Dear Mr. Smith:
- ◆ Dear ABC Company:
- ◆ Dear Mary Wilson, M.D.:
- ◆ Dear Senator Eckstrom:

Body

The **body** is the part of the letter that contains the message. It is usually single-spaced with a line of space between paragraphs. This is the section of the letter that tells the reader what he or she needs to know or do. To introduce the letter, reference whatever has occurred previously or state the cause for the letter. Include background or special data to help the reader understand the message.

Closing

Close the letter with a final summary or “next steps.” A **complimentary closing** is the portion used to terminate the letter. An example of a formal closing is “Respectfully yours.” A less formal closing is “Sincerely.”

- ◆ A **signature block** is a space of four blank lines after the complimentary closing for the writer’s signature. After the signature, you may add the typed name and an optional title.
- ◆ **Identification initials** are letters used to identify the typist if it is someone other than the letter writer. For instance, the writer’s initials (DJP) and the typist’s initials (str) would be shown one line space below the signature block, if the writer did not type the letter. The typical format would be “DJP:str.”
- ◆ **Enclosure notations** are statements about additional information and/or attachments with the cover letter or application. The notification should include a description of the attachments. For example, “Enclosures (2): Julie L. Benson Resume, Julie L. Benson References” indicates what two attachments are included with the cover letter.
- ◆ The abbreviation **cc:** (courtesy copies or carbon copies) in a full-block format letter indicates to whom courtesy copies of the letter were sent. The receiver/addressee of the letter is not included in the cc:.

Proofread

Proofread business letters for spelling, grammar, and typing errors. Email communication with employers or corporations should be brief, but professional.

REQUEST LETTERS

You may need to approach corporations about fundraising projects. Keep all requests professional. In addition to monetary donations, you may request nonmonetary contributions, such as meeting space, used equipment, and products that the corporation manufactures.

It is beneficial to inquire about any matching donation programs supported by the employer or corporation. **Matching donation programs**, or gift programs, are the focus of some employers and corporations who match employees' and retirees' gifts to selected nonprofit organizations. The General Electric Foundation, a philanthropic arm of the General Electric Company, founded the first matching gifts program in 1954. The matching donation program is activated when an employee makes a contribution.

Identify the contacts at the corporation. Before making a request for funding, prepare an explanatory letter or brochure showing plans for any contributed funds. Include information about how the funds would be used, who the funds would serve, and how the employer or corporation would be recognized.

Requests to Work

Contact prospective employers via a cover letter or email inquiry. The job posting may be in a local or national newspaper, in an online job bank, or about other possible unadvertised job openings. Job request cover letters should include the reason the letter is being written, your qualifications, and your contact information.

References for a new job often are garnered via **networking**—the process of gathering information and contacts by asking friends, acquaintances, and people who work for the targeted company about openings. Follow up successful networking with a cover letter to the potential employer, listing the contact who mentioned the job, and request an application. A referred cover letter increases its chance of being read and considered by the potential employer.

You can make a formal request to previous employers for an employment recommendation. To maximize the benefits of networking and referrals, request the recommendation soon after leaving employment. Ask permission before using a former employer as a reference. If a former employer reacts in a positive manner to a request for a reference, you may feel more confident in your job search.

Requests for Copyrighted Materials

Copyrighted materials are those items to which an exclusive legal right to reproduce or publish has been obtained by an entity. The legal right to reproduce an original work (e.g., literature, music, or artistic properties) must be obtained from the holder of the copyright.

If you want to use copyrighted materials, you first must identify the selection you want to reproduce. Then indicate the placement of the reproduction and those who will use the copyrighted materials. It is essential to obtain permission to use copyrighted materials before reproducing them. It is best to assume any original material is copyrighted.



BROADENING AWARENESS...

AMAZING ASPECTS: Copyright Law

The first U.S. law regarding copyrights was the Copyright Act of 1790. That law required people to register their works. Then a copyright was issued for a term of 14 years. The term could be extended for another 14 years, as long as the original creator was still alive.

Current law does not require people to register their works. Instead, all original work is automatically protected, including work that has not been published. A copyright exists, even if there is no notification announcing it. However, most published works do include a notification, usually expressed as the letter “c” inside a circle, followed by the name of the person or company that holds the copyright. For example, in a book, you might see “© Perfect Publishing, Inc. Laws regarding the timeframe of protection have changed over the years. For all works created on or after Jan. 1, 1978, copyright protection exists for the life of the creator, plus an additional 70 years after the creator’s death.

Violations of copyrights include reproducing published work, publicly performing a play, or displaying an image from a movie without proper permission. It is important to note that actual works have a copyright, but ideas do not. A person can write a book using the same idea as another author, as long as he or she does not copy the author’s words.

LETTERS OF ANNOUNCEMENT

There may be circumstances in which you need to make a formal announcement to your employer or a corporation. Complaint letters must be concise, accurate, and well-structured to be read and considered. Professional and well-written letters have more credibility.

Place the main points toward the front of the letter. Add attachments only when a detailed history of the problem exists. For example, you may attach copies of the warranty, an extended service contract or other contracts, and a historical timeline of the complaint. Then present the facts using significant details. For instance, if you are complaining that your curling iron is not working properly, you could write, “The XYZ curling iron was purchased on Saturday, March 1, 20—, from ABC Beauty Supply. It was used five times in the next two weeks. The sixth time it was plugged in, it did not heat.”

It is necessary to suggest positive action by the corporation rather than just making complaints. In the example above, you could write, “Please replace the defective XYZ curling iron with a new product. I have had other XYZ products and have always been pleased with their durability.” It is important to justify the need for compensation. “The last XYZ curling iron I owned worked well for five years, and I was expecting this model to have the same durability.” Make sure you keep the letter friendly, and include complimentary comments.

Thank-You Letters

Follow up each job interview with a thank-you letter. It is polite and indicates you are interested in the position. A professional and well-written letter shows regard for the company, the

interviewer, and the interviewer's time. In addition, it allows you to show your enthusiasm for the job. Restate your qualifications and how they fit the position.

Changes in Schedule

Follow the employer's procedures to request a change in a regular schedule for vacation days, sick leave, or family emergency leave. Some employers will require you to put these requests in writing. Inform your employer as soon as you know there will be a conflict in scheduling. As with any letter to an employer, it should be prepared in a professional manner and proofread for proper spelling and grammar. Keep a copy of the letter or form requesting a schedule change as well as the response by the employer on file. It may be necessary to remind the employer close to the time of the scheduling change.

Job Acceptance or Rejection Letters

It is polite to send a response in writing, even when the position was accepted or rejected over the phone or via email. The acceptance or rejection letter should be addressed to the person who offered the position and should be professional and well-written.

If you are writing to accept a job, indicate thanks and acceptance for the position. To prevent confusion, state the elements of the job offer. Include the terms of employment, such as position title and salary, benefits or other conditions of employment, and the starting date. If you are not accepting the job, send a brief rejection letter. However, you must indicate your thanks and appreciation for the offer.

Resignation Letters

A resignation letter helps you maintain a good relationship with a former employer who will be listed on your résumé or job applications and may be needed as a reference in the future. Use **tact** (courtesy) when writing the letter. It is not the time to complain about the things you did not like about the job. It is customary to give two weeks of notice before leaving a position.

Summary:



Cover letters require concise information to keep an employer's attention when numerous applications are received for a job opening. Business letters should follow the proper format and include all necessary personal information, such as name, address, phone number, and email



FIGURE 1. Use tact when writing a letter of resignation, and give your employer at least a two-week notice.

address. They should include an inside address, attention line, salutation, and body of the letter, plus a complimentary closing and signature. Letters may include identification initials and enclosure notifications. Request letters follow the same format and may ask for donations of money, meeting space, equipment, or manufactured products. Provide information about how the donations would be used. Letters may be requests for work. In those cases, include information about any contacts you may have within the company.

There are a variety of reasons to write formal letters of announcement. For instance, you may write a letter of complaint if a product or service is unsatisfactory. You may write a thank-you letter to follow up on a job interview or thank someone for providing a reference. Some businesses require schedule changes to be requested in writing. You may need to write a letter to formally accept or reject a job or to resign a job you already have.

Checking Your Knowledge:



1. What are the general rules for writing a cover letter to an employer or corporation?
2. List three examples of common salutations in business letters.
3. Why are identification initials used in a business letter?
4. What types of requests can be made in a business letter.
5. List the five types of announcement letters.

Expanding Your Knowledge:



Talk to a few different employers, and ask them to describe the importance of well-written business letters. Ask how they react to cover letters with multiple mistakes or long letters with too much information. You may find that in some cases, those letters are immediately discarded. Ask the employers to offer additional tips on how to make your letters stand out from the crowd.

Web Links:



Copyright Law

<http://www.bitlaw.com/copyright/index.html>

Cover Letters

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/coverletters/a/coverletters.htm>

Following Up

<http://jobsearch.about.com/od/thankyouletters/a/thankinterview.htm>