



Business and Community – Evolve and Succeed Together!

*Writing a Series of Sales Letters
The Encyclopedia of Business letters, faxes, and e-mails
By: Robert Bly and Regina Anne Kelly*

AIDA – Attention, Interest, Desire, Action

Attention – Open with an intriguing question or statement, a “teaser” to encourage reading further. Get the reader’s attention with a hard hitting lead paragraph that goes straight to the point or offers an element of intrigue.

Interest – Then the letter hooks the reader’s interest: The hook is often a clear statement of the reader’s problems, needs or wants.

Desire – The letter should create desire and demand. Tell the reader how he or she will benefit from your offering. That creates a demand for your product.

Action – The letter states a call for action. At this point, you should ask for the order, the signature, the assignment, etc.

Don’t use antiquated phrases:

*Enclosed please find...rather say “I’m enclosing”
When time permits...time doesn’t permit, people do.
Please don’t hesitate to call...“Feel free to call”
As per your request...“As you requested”*

Have a “You” orientation to the letter. Conveys you are thinking about what the reader wants, needs, and desires. A principle rule in holding someone’s interest is that they are not interest in you, they are interested in themselves.

Getting Their Attention

Examples to getting a readers attention:

Is freelance a dirty word to you? It really shouldn’t be. In public relations, with its crisis..... Use them when you need them. When you don’t, they don’t cost you a cent. Use me. I am a public-relations specialist...My services are available to you on a freelance basis.

Congratulations on your new business. May you enjoy great success and receive much pleasure from it. I offer my services as a freelance public relations writer specializing in medical and technical subjects.

Keeping Their Interest

To stay ahead, you need aggressive people willing to take chances. People who are confident and dedicated. People who want to learn and who are not afraid to ask questions.

Create a Desire For Your Service or Product

Don't fill your letters with pompous phrases, jargon, clichés, and long-winded sentences. Don't write to impress, write to express. State the facts, features, and the benefits of your offer in plain, simple English. Give the reader reasons why they should buy your product, give you the job, sign the contract, etc.

I am one of those people, one of the people you should have on your list of top freelancers. As a freelancer, I can offer you and your company many benefits. I work only when you need me. I don't require a desk in your company, nor a phone, nor stationery, nor medical benefits, nor sick or personal days. There are no "lazy" days for a freelancer; I will always hand you my very best, hoping to be hired again.

State What You Want Them To Do

If you're selling consulting services, ask for a contract. If you want an interview, ask for it. If you're writing a fundraising letter, include a reply envelope and ask for the donation. In short, if you want your letter to get results, you have to ask for them:

Read over the attached list of my clients and credits. It shows I can take any challenge and succeed. Then pick up the phone and call me today. Even if you have no project to assign immediately, let's talk about how my experience can help you get things done in the future.

An exchange of business letters is usually an action-reaction situation. To move things along, determine the action you want your letter to generate and tell the reader about it.

Use the AIDA formula when you want to motivate a sales force, a mailer to bring in orders, a letter to collect bad debts.

A Recommended Series of Sales Correspondents

Sales is a multi-step process involving multiple communications with a given prospect. Many create a standard series of "sales letters to address each stage in the selling process.

Initial Inquiry Generator (use snail mail vs. email)

A short, simple letter can be used to gauge their initial interest and get them to ask for more details about who you are and what you do.

Essential elements:

1. Opening should grab attention with something "catchy."
2. Create interest by acknowledging the reader's needs.
3. Build desire by explaining how you can meet those needs.
4. Call for action by explaining what the reader should do next.

Inquiry Fulfillment Letter (to accompany literature) – Common mistake is to include a long and redundant letter that repeats product facts and features covered in the literature. The letter should just hit the highlights, leaving the details for the brochure or fact sheet.

Essential elements: Your literature speaks for itself, the letter should move the customer to actually read the brochure.

1. A thank you for requesting the information
2. The literature or attachment if sending via email (email offers a faster response. Be sure you have asked preference)
3. An explanation of what the literature covers.
4. A brief overview of what the service or product offers the customer.
5. An offer to discuss the service or product by phone or in person.

Letter Preceding a Sales Meeting – E-mail or fax acceptable

Many sales meetings are unproductive simply because the seller does not help the buyer prepare. In a quick fax or e-mail, tell your prospect how they can help you serve them better in the meeting, what you need, and by when.

Essential elements: This serves to both confirm that you have a meeting and also make sure that everything you need to make the meeting products is available:

1. Open with a confirmation of the time, date and location of the meeting
2. List each of the things you need the other person to have prepared for this meeting.
3. Conclude with a cordial closing.

Encouragement to Reorder

Essential elements: Sending customers a letter reminding them to reorder can be very profitable, especially if you can time the letters so the customer is likely to get one when their supplies are beginning to run low.

1. A reminder that the customer has ordered from you before and a statement of that order.
2. A statement that you appreciate the customer's business with words of encouragement before running out.
3. A simple order form that lists the items, leaving room for new products giving ordering instructions.
4. A statement of the company policy on warranties and guarantees.
5. A thank-you.
6. A discount mentioned in the postscript, to encourage the customer to place the order.

Follow-up Letters/Emails – Follow up is key. 80% of business sales are made on the fifth follow-up, but most salesmen follow up only three times or less. A combination of "snail" mail and email is acceptable with follow-up correspondences.

Essential elements:

1. Mention of the literature that was sent.
2. A statement about the benefit to the reader of your product or service.
3. Instructions to act now.
4. An offer to send the material again if it was not received.

Follow-up After A phone Conversation or First Meeting – Send immediately after a first meeting or call.

Essential elements:

1. Mention of recent conversation.
2. Cost estimates of product or services discussed, tailored to needs.
3. Available financing.
4. Instructions about how the customer can take the next step.

Follow-up After A Purchase – Assures the customer they made the right decision.

Essential elements:

1. Thanks for the purchase
2. A review of all the positive features
3. A reminder of rebates, guarantees, other extras
4. A psychological plug that assures the customer how smart he is for making this purchase.

Follow-Up at One-year Anniversary – The real profit comes from repeat orders and referrals. Depending on your product/service, follow up may and should occur earlier than one year.

Essential elements: - Builds goodwill and customer loyalty.

1. A happy anniversary message
2. A request for positive feedback (good for testimonial advertising)
3. An offer to answer questions or lend a hand.
4. An offer to solve any problems that have come up with your product.
5. An upbeat closing that looks ahead to a business relationship continuing into the future.