

Chapter 7: Writing Persuasive Messages

Supplemental Lecture Material

(You are responsible for the information in the text and the information in this packet)

I. Persuasive Requests

Some examples of persuasive requests include requesting a refund (claim), asking for a raise, or asking someone to do a favor for you. The difference between these letters and the letters we wrote in Chapter 5 is expected resistance.

In Chapter 5, we expected the reader to be willing to grant our request (ex: product was under warranty or request was for something the reader was glad to supply). Therefore, we used the direct strategy.

In this chapter, we expect the reader to resist complying with our request (ex: product is out of warranty, was purchased on sale, etc.) Therefore, we will use the indirect strategy as explained below.

A. Opening - Purpose is to Gain Attention

1. Begin with a statement that both you and your reader can agree upon
2. Introduce the topic you are discussing, but don't make your request yet.

B. Body – Purpose is to Build Interest and Reduce Resistance

1. Use Logic to present a strong, honest argument
It should be based on what appeals to your reader, for example,
 - Facts/figures to persuade your boss
 - Invoices, warranties, etc. for persuasive claims
 - Logical reasons to support your request for an action
2. Use Emotional appeals but don't get emotional
You are appealing to the reader's emotions.
Do not get angry or emotional yourself.
 - a. Appeal to the reader's pride and/or reputation
Use words like success, prestige, fair, and reputation
 - b. Use moderate language
You will state the problem or the request, but using anger and threats does little to achieve your goal. Remember, your purpose is to achieve the action you desire, not to merely complain.
 - c. High emotion lowers credibility
Angry outbursts or overly pushy sales pitches lower your credibility

3. State information in terms of reader benefit
Ex: Instead of “I need you to ...”, write “*Doing this will benefit your ...*”

C. Closing – Purpose is to Motivate to Action

1. Ask for a specific action
2. Give an end date
3. Remind the reader of the benefit of granting your request

Example of an Effective Claim Request

Effective Claim Request

Because of Visa card's reputation and your bank's low interest rate, my wife and I became cardholders two years ago. Recently, however, we experienced a charge that we would like to discuss.

In August we made 12 purchases; 10 of these purchases were given telephone approval. Our last statement, however, showed a \$120 over-the-limit charge (\$10 for each purchase). I have enclosed a copy of our statement.

Of course, we should have been more aware of our limit; however, we assumed that if our purchases received telephone approval from your credit processors, we were still within our credit limit.

Please examine our account before the next statement date and reconsider this penalty. Since we have never before exceeded our credit limit and since we received telephone approval for most of the charges, we feel that the \$120 charge should be removed.

Notice the following:

1. The Opening begins with a statement that the writer and your reader can agree upon and introduces the topic of the Visa card over charge.
2. The Body builds interest and reduces resistance using a logical argument in the second paragraph and an emotional argument in the third paragraph.
3. The Closing asks for a specific action and gives an end date.

Example of an Effective Favor Request

Effective Favor Request

Over 15,000 students attend Foothill College, and many are registered voters in your district.

On Thursday, April 16, you will be able to introduce yourself to these potential voters at the Associated Student Organization's Career Awareness Day. For this event we plan to have three major speakers representing industry, education, and politics. You were selected by our ASO as the politician they would most like to hear.

You will have 30 minutes to connect with these potential voters as you describe the rewards and costs of a career in politics. You may also choose the time most convenient for you between 9:00 and noon.

Please consider giving Foothill students an opportunity to meet you and to learn about a career in politics. I'll call your office next week, or you may contact me at 320-5832 to confirm this speaking engagement. This will allow us time to prepare appropriate publicity.

Notice the following:

1. The Opening catches attention.
2. The Body builds interest and reduces resistance by logically presenting the information and appeals to the reader's emotion by praise (*"You were selected...as the politician they would most like to hear"*). It also states reader benefits in both the first and third paragraphs.
3. The Closing asks for a specific action and gives an end date (*"I'll call you next week"*).

II. Sales Messages

Sales letters are a type of persuasive message. You are attempting to persuade the reader to purchase your product. Again, you expect resistance, so you will use the indirect strategy as outlined below.

A. Opening – Purpose is to Capture Attention

Here are some examples of techniques to capture attention:

- Offer or Promise: *“Follow my program, and you could be the next superstar of television and movies!”*
- Product Feature: *“Receive six large lattes in your favorite flavor for only \$1.”*
- Question: *“Would you like to stop cleaning your house forever?”*
- Startling Statement: *“Drunk drivers injure over 500,000 victims every year.”*

B. Body – Purpose is to Build Interest and Reduce Resistance

1. Create interest and desire by appealing to the needs of reader.
(*Can you think of sales messages/advertisements that have used one or more of these appeals?*)
 - Emotional – Appeal to reader’s feelings of anger, fear, pride, love
 - Rational – Appeal to reader’s desire to make or save money, improve efficiency
 - Dual – The best sales messages combine both appeals.

REMEMBER: Stress the You-Viewpoint; state the features of the product in terms of benefit to reader.

Turn “features” into “benefits.” **** Features merely state something about the product; benefits show how those features benefit the reader.**

Example of features: *“The spools in our fishing reels are machined from solid blocks of aircraft-grade aluminum.”*

Example of benefits: *“Go fishing with confidence: these lightweight reels will stand up to the toughest conditions.”*

2. Reduce resistance by lowering perceived risk
Readers may be reluctant to purchase a product because of a fear that it will be a disappointment. Ways to overcome that resistance include mentioning customer satisfaction polls or awards, warranties and guarantees, or providing samples or free trials.

****** When discussing warranties/guarantees, be sure to state it positively.
Rather than: “If you are unsatisfied” or “If you don’t like it...” (negative)
Write: *“Our lifetime warrantee guarantees your satisfaction.”*
Or *“This product is backed by a money-back guarantee.”*

3. Reduce resistance by introducing price strategically

Readers may be reluctant to purchase a product based on its price.

Ways to overcome that resistance include the following:

-- Showing the price in small units – *“For just \$20 a month for 10 months...”*

-- Showing the savings – *“Lower your electric bill 30% by...”*

-- Comparing it with competitors – *“Other stores charge \$50 for this service, but here you pay only \$32.50.”*

-- Associating the price with benefits – *“Just \$10 a month provides security for your family and peace of mind for you.”*

C. Closing – Purpose is to Motivate to Action

The closing should motivate the reader to make a purchase. Do this by making the action clear, making the action and payment easy, and encouraging action NOW (through an inducement or time limit). Again, remember reader benefit.

-- Make action clear – *“Order your beach cabana today and enjoy a relaxing summer of beauty and comfort.”*

-- Make action and payment easy – *“Simply mark the enclosed postage-paid card and return it today. All major credit cards are welcomed.”*

-- Offer an Inducement or Limit the offer – *“Order your cabana today and receive a beach tote, chair, and towel ...free.”*

“Hurry, this offer expires May 1. Don’t miss your chance to purchase America’s top-rated cabana at warehouse prices.”

Example of an Effective Sales Letter

Effective Sales Letter

Pay 20% less on your next electronic purchase AND double the warrantee period for **FREE**. You don't want to miss out on Kent Inc.'s low prices and unbeatable service.

- You'll find all the major brands of computers, printers, scanners, and more--all at savings of at least 20%.
- You'll be worry free knowing that Kent's **free** extended warrantee doubles the manufacturer's warrantee on every purchase.
- You'll receive plain English answers to any questions and prompt, friendly service from both our sales and repair professionals.

Visit us online at Kentinc.com or stop by our showroom at 400 Main Street in Walnut, California. Save money and double your warrantee. Come to Kent Inc.

Sincerely,
Kent Jones

P.S. Use the code at the top of this letter to receive an additional 10% off all your purchases between now and June 30.

Notice the following:

1. The Opening catches attention.
2. The Body builds interest by presenting logical arguments (saving money) and emotional arguments (worry free, plain English answers). It reduces resistance by mentioning the warrantee and friendly service. It is also stated from a reader benefits point of view.

Note the bullet format. This highlights the benefits. (Remember: "Bullets are the least used, most valuable tool of a business writer.

3. The Closing asks for a specific action and makes it easy. The incentive and time limit are put in the P.S. This highlights this information.