

Letters on the Job

Simple, practical approach to writing letters and memos

By Golda Mowe

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Author's Comment

The author had deliberately written this e-book in story format to make it easier to read. All characters are fictitious and do not in any way represent any person alive or dead.

She understands that different organizations will have their own official format for letters hence she does not insist that you copy her format as it is. The gist is to know what information to add and what not to add in written communications.

Communications concerning an organization need to be specific and detailed enough to make it clear to successors as to the manner and type of discussion or transaction being conducted, yet the writer of said communications should also be consciously aware of the effect of such information. The author has made an effort to put together this e-book because during the course of her working years she had come across official memos and letters that either had too much or too little information. She believes that this may have happened because the writer of such communications,

1. felt compelled to explain his action
2. became personally involved in the issue
3. was unaware of the legal impact of his words
4. felt that the recipient will understand what he implies
5. did not want to appear pushy

She hopes that you will find the e-book useful. You can write your comments to apha@gmowe.ws, or you can read more samples of her work in www.gmowe.ws.

Organization Announcement

Amy came out of her boss' office; fingers shaking, pulse racing. She had only been on the job for a week and her vice president had just asked her to write a memo. Secretarial school had taught her the proper format of a letter, but no one had ever taught her how to write an announcement telling the whole company that a senior manager had been fired. What if she does it wrong? Her boss had not been much help; in fact he appeared embarrassed to talk about it with her.

It was after 5:30 pm, the office was as quiet and as cold as a tomb. She jumped when the printer whined. The office witch –crooked fingers, hunched back, thick spectacles and frowning face– shuffled stealth-like towards the machine. Amy shivered again as the hag eyed her.

Olga sniffed. “Working late are we.”

Amy stammered, “Yes, Dr. Soon asked me to write a memo for him.”

“Well, you best go and do it now.”

Amy hesitated. She needed help but she was scared of Olga. This was her first job and she wanted so badly to succeed but Olga was rumoured to have a mean temper. On the other hand, she was inexperienced and Olga had been with the company for so long her employee number was a single digit. The secretary cleared her throat.

Olga turned, just enough to see Amy from the corner of her eye. “Did he dictate the memo to you?”

“No, he did not. He said it would be good for me to learn to do things by myself.”

“What is the memo about?”

“It's to inform the company that Mr. Wong had been fired.”

“And he asked you to do it on your own!” Olga's eyebrow rose with her voice.

“Yes.”

Crooked fingers picked up papers from the printer as the head above it shook and mumbled incantation-like words. Then Olga turned to Amy and said, “Come with me.”

The young secretary trailed behind her like a wary, stray puppy being offered a meal by a stranger.

Announcement Memo Concerning Employees

First Olga told her to collect as much information as she could about the subject matter.

Information required

Office doing the announcement

Name: Soon Le Mah, Dr.

Designation: Vice President

Department: Sales and Supply Chain Management

The person leaving the company

Name: Wong Tsu Koo, Mr.

Designation: Senior Manager

Department: Procurement and Logistics

Reason: Discharged with immediate effect.

The person taking over

Name 1: Prunella Ding, Ms.

Designation: Procurement Manager

Section: Procurement

Name 2: John Deer, Mr.

Designation: Logistics Officer

Section: Logistics

Effect on Organization: Ding and Deer report directly to VP Soon

In-House Memo

Ref: Memo/030107-01

Date: 3 January 2007

From: Dr. Soon Le Mah, Vice President of Sales and Supply Chain Management

Fellow Colleagues,

Re: Organization Announcement

It is with regret I announce that Mr. Wong Tsu Koo, Senior Manager of the Procurement and Logistics Department, will be leaving this company. I wish to use this opportunity to thank him for his past contributions and to wish him all the best in his future undertakings.

With immediate effect Ms. Prunella Ding, the Procurement Manager and Mr. John Deer, the Logistics Officer will take over duties handled by Mr. Wong within their own sections until further notice. Both persons shall report to me directly. Your cooperation in assisting Ms. Ding and Mr. Deer in the performance of their new responsibilities will be appreciated by the company.

Please contact either my office or the Human Resource Department for further clarification if you are unclear with regard to your role under this new arrangement.

Best Regards,

.....
Dr. Soon Le Mah

Amy re-read the memo and looked up with a frown. "I don't understand. Why don't you add in the fact that he had been fired?"

"Some things are best not put in writing because Mr. Wong can sue the company for tainting his character."

"Will he do that?"

"We don't know, but any form of scandal can ruin the image of the corporation. Even if Mr. Wong was a dubious man, though I suspect it was more of a disagreement in management styles, the general public will lean more towards the individual than to a corporation."

“But what if he really did something wrong?”

“Then he should be in jail. In fact, if we insist that he was wrong and we don’t charge him personally, the shareholders are going to wonder if we have swept anything else under the carpet with their money.”

Amy broke into a sweat: *What! You can get into that much trouble from a single memo?*

Again Olga spoke, “It is best to keep such information quiet. Those who need to know will have known about it already. You only need to tell people what is changing and how it will affect them. Anything more can get you into trouble. Also make sure that you have a reference number, and make absolutely sure that you never duplicate them.” She added as an afterthought. “Remind Dr. Soon to write to all the vendors, suppliers or other people who deal with Mr. Wong. Use a letterhead with the company address.”

“Do I write the same things in there?”

Olga cackled then shook her head at the puzzled look on Amy’s face. She started typing again.

Announcement to 3rd party

Ref: Announcement/030107-01

Date: 3 January 2007

From: Dr. Soon Le Mah
Vice President of Sales and Supply Chain Management
Direct Line: +60-xxx-xxx
Direct Fax: +60-xxx-xxx
Email: Soon@here.com

To: Name of Vendor/ Supplier/ Customer/ Bank etc.
Address

Dear Vendor/ Supplier/ Customer/ Bank etc,

Re: Organization Announcement

It is with regret I announce that Mr. Wong Tsu Koo, Senior Manager of the Procurement and Logistics Department, will be leaving this company. With immediate effect, he will no longer be representing Here_And_Now Inc. on any form of transactions.

Matters on Procurement will be managed by our Procurement Manager, Ms. Prunella Ding, while Logistics will be handled by our Logistics Officer, Mr. John Deer. We apologize for the inconvenience caused to your organization. Your cooperation in assisting Ms. Ding and Mr. Deer in the performance of their new duties will be appreciated by Here_And_Now Inc.

Feel free to contact my office for further clarification.

Yours truly,

.....
Dr. Soon Le Mah

NOTE: If you have typed out the designation at the front of the letter, it is not necessary to repeat it here.

“There, that should settle it,” Olga said.

Amy beamed and thanked her. She took both copies to Dr. Soon for his approval. The worry lines on his face cleared when he read them. Amy went home at 8:00 that night; the hag’s computer was still running rows of data, but Olga was no where in sight.

Customer Related Letters

Dr. Soon called Olga into the office. “Amy’s been with me for three months. She told me you had helped her out quite a bit. I have a new client I would like to meet and I know that you have a lot on your desk right now. Would you mind training her to do some of the more routine stuff, so I don’t have to bother you on this thing?”

Olga shrugged. “She’s a willing learner and a bit brighter than most secretaries I’ve met. Okay, no problem, as long as she doesn’t waste my time.”

She walked out of the VP’s office and went straight to Amy’s desk. “Amy, collect all the information you can on the client Dr. Soon wants to meet. Ask him first how he plans to approach them then talk to the engineers to find out how to match our product to their needs. Come see me after you’re done.”

It took Amy a few hours to shuffle through the information on her desk and to talk to the relevant people. By 4.00pm she was ready to see Olga.

Company Introduction and request for meeting

New Client

Company Name: Gadgets2Go Pte. Ltd.

Contact Person: Ms. Susie Spins

Designation: President of Procurement

Address: Kuching

Tel: 6082-xxx

Fax: 6082-xxx

Sales of Client

Product: High Tech Toys, assemble on order

Region covered: South East Asia, India and China

Selling Method: Outlets, telemarketing, internet and mail order

Reported Sales Value: US\$ 200 thousand in 2005, US\$ 212 thousand in 2006

Reported Market Share: 2% of the region

Product applicable from Here_And_Now: Centralised communication centre – customer service, technical support, inquiry, responses, order management, complain management through phone and internet.

Person to Meet Client

Name: Soon Le Mah, Dr.

Designation: Vice President

Department: Sales and Supply Chain Management

Direct Line: +60-xxx-xxx (Direct)

Direct Fax: +60-xxx-xxx (Direct)

Email: Soon@here.com

Olga said, “You don’t have to write a 10 page letter. Anyway, telling a customer about themselves is a little tacky. You might get some information wrong and offend somebody. Just give a brief introduction of Dr. Soon, explain how he knows about them, a short sentence on why he thinks they will want to hear about his service and finally tell the client that you will call the office to set an appointment. But save the other information for his sales presentation.”

“Why do I need to tell the client that I will call her?”

“To make her expect your call. That way she can have a date ready when you phone, or alternatively she can tell you she’s busy and can’t meet. Either way, it is a way to remind her to make a decision. And don’t forget to attach a brochure. Ask Dr. Soon if he wants to add extra stuff with the letter.”

Ref: Gadgets/130307-01

Date: 13 March 2007

From: Dr. Soon Le Mah
Vice President of Sales and Supply Chain Management
Direct Line: +60-xxx-xxx (Direct)
Direct Fax: +60-xxx-xxx (Direct)
Email: Soon@here.com

To: Ms. Susie Spins
President of Procurement
Gadgets2Go Pte. Ltd.
Kuching
Tel: +60-xxx-xxx
Fax: +60-xxx-xxx

Dear Ms. Spins

Re: Request for Meeting

I am Dr. Soon Le Mah, the Vice President of Sales and Supply Chain Management in Here_And_Now Inc. We are a company that supply state-of-the-art call centre services to fast growing establishments to help them minimize the cost of their expansion.

I have learnt of your company through your promotions and am very impressed with the reported growth rate. You currently cover 2% of the regional market share and I expect that you intend to expand. The other option to hiring more people and increasing your overhead is to outsource a portion of your business. I would like to meet with you to show our range of services that could help you control cost in the areas of communication with your customers, and improve your service to them at the same time.

Attached are a company brochure and a list of existing clients for your perusal. My secretary will call your office a week from the above date to set an appointment for our meeting.

Yours truly,

.....
Dr. Soon Le Mah

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