

# **THE BUSINESS WRITING POCKETBOOK**

By Clive Bonny

*Drawings by Alan Roe*

"Bite-size messages with a big impact."

**Mel Webb, Sector Skills Development Manager**

"Informative and concise: good book, good words."

**Richard Wolfstrome, Managing Partner, Wolfstrome Design**

"Essential for reminding us that simplicity is the key to success."

**Gilly Smith, Managing Director, Juicy Guide**

"Sensible suggestions for delivering straightforward messages."

**Keith Stafford, Training Editor, Reuters**

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## PLANNING

## CHOOSING CHANNELS



- Is writing the right thing to do?
- Should you write, telephone or meet?

Deciding on **HOW** you send your message is the first step.

### Exercise

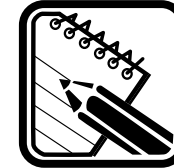
Choose your order of preference: would you write (W) telephone (T) or meet (M) in these situations? You are:

- 1) advising a major customer of a significant delivery delay
- 2) confirming receipt of a large order
- 3) changing an important procedure at work for your team
- 4) recommending an unusual and possibly risky business opportunity to your boss
- 5) turning down a staff request for a pay rise.

*See next page for recommended responses.*

## PLANNING

## CHOOSING CHANNELS



- **Writing is best when there is a need for:**
  - no immediate feedback
  - an accurate legal record
  - complex information and detail.



- **Telephoning is best when there is a need for:**
  - some immediate verbal feedback
  - quick one-off issues
  - simple facts.
- **Meeting is best when there is a need for:**
  - immediate verbal and non-verbal feedback
  - demonstration and observation of facts and feelings
  - sensitive and confidential information.

Recommended responses

- 1) **Telephone or meet to explain, then write to confirm.**
- 2) **Telephone to thank, then write to confirm details.**
- 3) **Write to clarify and meet to explain.**
- 4) **Write then submit face to face.**
- 5) **Meet to explain.**

## PLANNING



## THE FOUR I'S

Define your **PURPOSE** and stick to it.  
Your writing will need to achieve one of the four I's:

- I**nstruct : eg: new policy or procedure
- I**nform : eg: advise progress
- I**nterpret : eg: summarise details
- I**nfluence : eg: persuade to buy



Your purpose in writing should be clearly stated in your opening.

**AVOID THE SLOW BUILD-UP - IT FRUSTRATES BUSY PEOPLE**

## PLANNING

## COSTING



Professional services (eg: banks and solicitors) can charge you £25 - £50 for a single letter.

A stamp and stationery are less than **2%** of the cost.  
98% of the cost is the **TIME** it takes to:

- research and plan the content
- layout and compose the draft
- write and check the copy

People involved can include managers, secretaries and mailroom assistants.

Overheads can include office space, filing cabinets, computers and franking machines.

Your correspondence costs you more than you think.

## PLANNING

### AVOID THE THREE R'S



Rush = Return = Re-write

Plan time to get it right first time based on your previous experience.

Don't underestimate the time needed for first drafts.

Allow up to **THREE TIMES** longer to plan than to write.



## PLANNING

### THE FIVE W'S



**WHO** is it for? Keep the **reader** in mind

**WHY** are you writing? Make an early statement of **purpose**

**WHAT** will you say? Keep it short and simple (KISS)

**WHERE** will your main points go? Have a logical **flow**

**WHEN** do they need it by? Write in **time**

(and **HOW** long will it take you?) **BUDGET CONTINGENCY TIME!**



## PLANNING

### THE SEVEN C'S



**A** lways

**B** e

- COURTEOUS** : in tone, personalised to your reader
- CONSISTENT** : in format, layout and 'house' style
- CLEAR** : with visuals which are easy to read
- CHECKED** : spelling and use of English
- CORRECT** : facts and figures
- CONCRETE** : specific and descriptive words and phrases
- COMPREHENSIVE** : covering all you need to say and no more.

## About the Author

### Clive W. Bonny

Clive's early career began in financial services management. It progressed through accounting and marketing into direct sales with British, German and American employers. His sales career developed into major accounts and sales management within commercial, central government and local government sectors, consistently breaking company sales records for new business. He was appointed General Manager in a publicly quoted American multi-national company with profit and loss responsibility and within a two year period he improved divisional net profits from 6.8% to 18.2% of total revenues whilst increasing the customer base tenfold.



Clive is owner-manager of Strategic Management Partners, advising organisations on Business Excellence and coaching individuals to improve results. Besides success in operational and board level positions, he is a Certified Management Consultant, a Fellow of the RSA, and author of several publications on corporate communications, career management and business ethics.

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