

3. What are the two types of style used in writing announcements?
4. What are the main features of the direct style?
5. What are the main features of the indirect style?
6. Which style is best suited to good-news announcements? Why?
7. Which style is best suited to bad-news announcements. Why?
8. How can we minimize the negative reaction to a bad-news announcement?
9. Which style is best suited to a neutral announcement? Why?
10. How does 'positive phrasing' help neutral messages?
11. Write the following announcements:
 - (i) Write a letter to the employees of your company announcing a salary cut of 5% as part of the economy measures forced on the company by a steep rise in the price of imported raw materials. Many other companies have been affected (specify). Other economy measures have already been implemented.
 - (ii) Write a letter to the employees of your company announcing that your company has procured a big and prestigious order (specify) from abroad. Timely completion of the order will mean great benefits for the company and the workers.
 - (iii) Write an announcement to inform your customers in central and east U.P. that your company is opening a new branch at Lucknow with effect from June 1. Orders from these areas now must be sent to this branch and not to the Delhi branch.

30.3 WRITING CIRCULAR LETTERS

30.3.1 What are circular letters?

Circular letters are letters, with identical content, sent to a large number of people. They are used in business when the same information has to be sent to a large number of people, for example, customers or clients. The information may be of the following or similar kinds:

- opening of a new business
- establishment of a new branch
- expansion of existing business
- moving to new premises
- changes in partnership/ownership, etc.

At other times, the function of the letter may not be simply to convey information but to do a variety of other things. For example, it may be to

- request the customer to take some simple action (e.g., fill in a card or a questionnaire)
- acknowledge an order
- make an inquiry about non-receipt of, or delay in, the supply of an order
- reply to inquiries (e.g. about job openings) and requests (e.g., for a line of credit)
- respond to a complaint letter, etc.

Since the content of all the letters is the same, or the function that they are to perform is identical, the text of the letter is prepared only once. The required number of copies of the text are then made, but the name and address of the recipients are entered individually. The salutation and the sender's signature are also individualized so as to give the letter a personalized appearance. In modern times, the mail-merge facility provided by the word processing programs has made this otherwise cumbersome process very simple. As a result of this process, the circular letter gives the impression of being a personal letter to each recipient.

30.3.2 The style of a circular letter

The style of a circular letter must reinforce this impression. This is because in business each customer must be made to feel important. The letter must give the impression that the writer is interested individually in each customer and is taking the trouble to approach him or her personally. How can you produce this kind of impression by your style? Here are some well-tried ways:

1. Address each customer individually in the salutation. The best way of doing so is to find out the name of the customer (from telephone directories, etc.) A letter addressed 'Dear Mr. Bakshi' has a better chance of being read through than one which begins 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Customer'. However, if names are not available, use specific salutations like 'Dear Householder,' or 'Dear Subscriber.' 'Dear Customer' may be used only as the last resort. The plural forms ('Dear Customers') should never be used.
2. Take the reader's, i.e. the customer's, viewpoint in everything you write. Keep his/her not your own interests uppermost in your mind. Talk to him/her directly, using the pronoun 'you' as frequently as necessary instead of the word 'customers', 'clients,' or 'people'. The following examples will show the difference between the two attitudes: one in which the writer keeps his/her own interests uppermost and the other in which s/he keeps the reader's:

Example 1: The writer's viewpoint

Our business has been so successful that we are opening a new department for cosmetics and shall be stocking a wide selection of articles.

Example 1: The reader's viewpoint

We are pleased to inform you that, encouraged by the response of customers like you, we are now opening a department of cosmetics in our store. This department will store a wide selection of articles and will make it possible for you to shop for all your daily necessities under one roof.

Example 2: The writer's viewpoint

We regret to inform you that we cannot grant you the line of credit you have requested, as the information provided by you in your letter is not adequate. We cannot take the risk of selling to companies we know very little about.

If you wish to pursue the matter of credit further, we will advise you to have the enclosed form filled by your bank and mailed to us direct. If your claims are supported by the information provided by the bank, we will reconsider our decision and inform you accordingly.

Example 2: The reader's viewpoint

Thank you for your letter requesting a line of credit with our company.

We are always glad to consider requests for credit, and have already reviewed the credit information so thoughtfully supplied by you. All that you have to do now is to have your bank fill out the standard form enclosed and return it directly to us in the envelope provided. As soon as we receive this information, we will let you know the status of your new account.

The inclusion of a self-addressed envelope in the second version of the second example is only an additional example of the importance attached to the reader's viewpoint. The difference in tone from the first version is quite marked. The first version casts a doubt on the truth of the details supplied by the customer and says that only if the details are verified by the bank will the decision be reconsidered. The second version, on the other hand, puts it in an entirely different way, which shows a readiness to accept the details provided, making the bank's verification appear as a kind of formality that has to be gone through but presenting no big obstacle. This does not mean that the request for credit cannot be denied in case of an unfavourable bank report; what it does mean is that even if it is, the customer is not permanently lost.

3. While the use of personal pronouns by itself cannot be any indication of the degree of personalization in a letter, in general, letters which use personal pronouns (like I, me, my, we, our, you, your, etc.) will sound more personal than letters which use nouns like

our company, our customers, clients, etc. So use these pronouns wherever possible but do not overdo it. In particular, use the singular I only where you must speak only for yourself. But avoid using third person nouns which sound cold and distant, and instead use we, our, etc. to refer to the company. In the final analysis, of course, it is how you use these pronouns that will matter more than what pronouns you use. Their use should reflect your eagerness to help the customer do business with you.

4. Another technique often used to give a personal touch to a circular letter is the use of direct address forms in the text of the letter. The most common address form is the name itself, which we often use in face-to-face conversation to show your earnestness, sincerity and friendliness. The same technique can also be used in circular letters. Properly used, the device will lend earnestness to your tone. Consider, for example, the following:
 - a. I'm sure, Mrs Mehta, the foregoing account of our activities will have convinced you that investment in our company will assure you not only of high returns but will also serve the causes of environment protection and women's welfare which, as an enlightened member of the modern society, must be very dear to your heart.
 - b. Meanwhile, Mr Rao, I look forward to a visit from you to our main store in the Central plaza, where our staff can demonstrate to you the multifarious capacities of IPR-3990.

30.3.3 When not to send a circular letter

We have discussed several ways of making circular letters personal so that the recipient does not feel treated like a number. The need for these ways arises because, in the main, a circular letter is a standard text unmodified to meet individual needs or requirements. Therefore it is fine to use a circular letter for the kinds of purposes we have listed above: making announcements, providing information, etc. But it would be unwise for a businessman to send a circular letter where he feels a potential sale is involved. When you receive a request for a catalogue or a brochure seeking more information about a product, a sale may be involved. In responding to such requests it is desirable to write a letter which makes use of positive techniques of persuasion so that the potential sale can be turned into a real one. This cannot be achieved by a circular letter which at best aims at not turning away a customer. A positive letter of persuasion must do at least the following three things: (1) Provide all the information the potential customer has asked for, (2) encourage the potential sale and (3) leave the customer with a positive impression of your firm. Of these three goals, only the third one is positively pursued in a circular letter.

Check Your Progress : 2

1. Answer the following questions briefly:
 - (a) What is a circular letter?
 - (b) Why should we try to give a circular letter a personalized appearance?
 - (c) What can we do so that a circular letter produces a personalized impression on the reader? Name at least four things.
 - (d) When is it inappropriate to send a circular letter?
2. Write the following circular letters:
 - (a) A letter announcing that your company offices are moving from their present location (in west Delhi) to Central Delhi (110, Rajiv Chowk), which is better connected to all parts of Delhi and will help you to attend to customer complaints more quickly. You are a big dealer in electronics goods.
 - (b) You are a big bank. You have opened a new branch in East Delhi. You want to find out what kind of banking services your East Delhi customers need most. Write a circular letter to your customers requesting them to fill in the enclosed questionnaire to help you serve them better.
 - (c) You are a big engineering company. You receive a large number of enquiries from

of reply thanking the applicants for their interest in the company. Also inform them that your company has included their resume details in the company database and they would hear from you as soon as a vacancy arose. Your letter should neither turn the applicant away nor give him false hope.

30.4 WRITING NOTICES AND AGENDAS FOR MEETINGS

Meetings play a very important role in the life of business organizations. It is estimated that 11 million meetings take place everyday in the United States alone. This is because business is no longer owned by individuals or families but by corporate bodies. Another reason is that modern business is a very complicated affair and requires the assistance of experts in various fields. Important decisions in modern business cannot be taken by individuals but only by boards and committees. Even where the decisions are taken by individuals, they are usually taken only after the individual has consulted committees at meetings. The simple reason for this is that a committee has the benefit of the wisdom, ideas and experience of a number of people, old as well as young, experts as well as generalists, radicals as well as conservatives. Decisions arrived at by committees are therefore generally more sound, more courageous and more comprehensive than decisions taken by individuals alone.

Normally, the constitution of every business organization lays down its own rules regarding the meetings of its various bodies. For example, it lays down how often the Board of Directors is to meet (once a month, as often as necessary, at least three times a year, etc.), who chairs the meeting (the chairperson of the company or, in his absence, the Managing Director), who calls the meeting (usually the MD in consultation with the chairperson), what the period of notice is (usually two weeks), etc. However, there are certain general rules which are followed universally in the conduct of meetings of all bodies. For example, the notice and the agenda for the meeting are circulated in advance, the minutes are recorded and then presented for confirmation at the next meeting, and so on. For meetings to function properly, these three documents — notice, agenda and minutes — are of vital importance. They are prepared by the secretary of the body in consultation with the chairperson. We shall discuss the first two of these - notice and agenda - in this unit and shall take up the writing of minutes in the next unit.

30.4.1 Writing notices

When the chairperson has decided that a meeting has to be held, and has with her/him a list of the items to be discussed at the meeting, s/he fixes a date and a time for the meeting and asks the secretary to send out a notice of the meeting to the members. In fixing the date and time of the meeting, care is taken to see that the members get sufficient notice of the meeting as laid down in the constitution of the company. If no period of notice is laid down, the members should be given a reasonable period, say a week, to prepare themselves for the meeting. If the notice period is very short, not only will the members not be able to prepare for the meeting, some of them may not even be able to attend the meeting due to other previous commitments.

A notice for a meeting therefore has two purposes: (1) to give the members sufficient advance warning so that they can keep themselves free for the meeting and (2) to give them time to prepare themselves for the meeting.

The notice of a meeting must include the following information:

- a) The name of the body which is to meet
- b) The nature of the meeting
- c) The day, date and time of the meeting
- d) Place of the meeting
- e) The purpose of the meeting
- f) Signature of the secretary
- g) Date of issue of the notice