

AND JUST WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE WRITING TO?

By Doug C. Grant

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Amazing!

Everyday, people write important letters, memos, reports or proposals to names without substance.

What's a name without substance? It's a name without a personality.

Names don't need faces. But they do need personalities. That is, if you want your communications to work.

Please understand. I'm not talking about routine correspondence. I'm speaking of the heavy stuff. Letters, proposals or reports that can win you sales, a promotion or at the very least, recognition. I call these 'imcoms' (important business communications)

Also understand that it's not just individuals who have personalities but also groups. We'll discuss the group personality in a followup article.

How do you build personality into a name? Successful sales people do it with a contact file. And you can use the same idea. It's an easy, simple concept for ANY business person.

Set up an empty file in your word processor or address book program. In pre-computer days, I kept mine in a notebook. Whatever you use, keep it simple.

Whenever you meet or talk to someone on the phone who could influence your future or has some specialized knowledge that interests you, add their name to your file. This is particularly important for people in your company who may read or make decisions about your reports or proposals. Include whatever information you have such as an address, phone number, likes or dislikes, family names, hobbies...that sort of thing.

At first, this information may be minimal. Perhaps just a company name and phone number. As the contact becomes more important, you'll learn other bits of information you can add to their file. Just avoid useless gossip. Every note in your contact file should relate to a person's personality not their reputation.

For example, let's say you're writing a research proposal for a vice-president of your company. You don't know Mr. Big except to say hello in the hall.

You turn to your contact file and read that he's a detail person. No one-page summaries for this guy. That suggests how to structure your proposal.

You also note that he loves golf. So you begin thinking about a lead-in to your proposal that draws a parallel with golfing. This is a great way to grab attention and begin creating interest in your imcom.

But even more important, as you read the random notes in your contact file, Mr. Big becomes a personality. He's no longer just someone you nod to in the hall. He is a name with substance. And this will have a positive influence on any type of imcom. Trust me. This works...and it does so primarily on the sub-conscious level.

Remember, whether you are writing to an individual or a group, the more you know about your target the more effective and persuasive you will be. And just one powerfully written imcom can change your future. I've seen it happen.

Effective business writing requires only a little extra effort. And the results can be life-changing. Start a contact file today and keep it updated. I guarantee that within six months, you will consider it one of your most important business tools.

Doug C. Grant, Dean of Distinctive Business Writing, is the author of 'HOW TO MOVE FROM CUBICLE TO CORNER OFFICE WITH THE SECRETS OF POWER WRITING. A FREE preview plus details on receiving a no-cost Blue Pencil Edit for one of your own imcoms is available by e-mailing: <mailto:edit@newbieclub.com>

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