

Communication and Persuasion

**Some Nuggets for
Better Proposals**

**Writing
Letter Proposals
and
Persuasive Letters**

**Presented by Don Stewart
Honeywell Engines
Systems & Services
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A Letter Home

Dear Mom,

May 22

It has been quite a while since I wrote to you, but I was wondering if you wanted to come out and stay for a week in June. I know it is hot here in Phoenix, but you would enjoy your stay. There are lots of things we could do. We can watch the cactus grow. They do not grow as fast as grass or trees, but I think they grow. We could also hike the desert. The cactus blooms are just about gone by then, but there may still be some around and we could see what is left.

Turning over rocks to see what is under them has always been fun for me, so you should enjoy it too.

I have an extra room you can sleep in. I will have to clean off the Hide-a-bed since I use the room for storage. I will just put the boxes in a corner of the room. It may be a little dusty, but I will try to get around to dusting and vacuuming the room before you arrive. Let me know what flight you will be on. I'll see if I can get a friend to pick you up.

Your son,
Bill

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How many of you would accept your son's invitation?

Many letter proposals read essentially the same way as this letter to mom

- **Full of yourself with little thought to your customer**
- **Describing features but no benefits to your customer**
- **Not persuasive**
- **Rambling or rushed in its tone and construction**
- **There is a feeling that the offeror doesn't really care**

Let's Try this Letter from Another Son

Dear Mom,

April 28

It was nice talking with you last week. I would like to invite you out to Phoenix in June. I know it is hot here in Phoenix, but I have planned some activities to keep you cool so you can enjoy your stay.

I have tickets for baseball, we can go ice skating and we will find a movie we like. Diana, Carey and Carla from Sun City want you to play bridge with them.

Tickets for baseball - The Diamondbacks play your beloved Cubs here during the second week of June. The ballpark is air conditioned and lots of fun. The Cubs might even win!

Ice skating - Yes, mom, there is an ice skating rink about 3 miles from my house. It is a lot like the rink we used to skate on in the winter back home but it is enclosed here. Lots of cool, fun skating like we used to in the winter, but no frostbite!

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Movies - There is a 24 screen theater nearby and there are usually about 9 different movies playing. I am sure we can find a romance or comedy in the bunch. It is always cool in the theater. Diana, Carey and Carla are avid bridge players, like you, and they are always looking for a fourth. They will be excited to hear you may be coming out then. They had so much fun playing cards with you last time you were here, and you commented that you enjoyed the day with them.

I have the extra room you stayed in last time all cleaned and ready for your arrival. Let me know what flight you will be on so I can schedule my time to pick you up.

I am looking forward to your visit.

Your son,
Don

Which Son Gets the Pleasure of Your Visit?

- **What do you notice about the second letter?**
- **Is it mom focused?**
- **Does mom see benefits from the letter?**
- **How does it compare with the first letter?**
- **So, mom, which son do you visit?**
- **Why?**

You visit both but stay with Don (second letter)

How does this relate to you?

Do you write short proposals?

Do you need to convince your company you should bid?

Do you want to convince your company you should NOT bid?

Do you want to sell something to someone?

Do you want to win an argument?



Persuasive communication is a part of everyone's day

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What Are Letter Proposals?

- **Letter proposals are persuasive documents, usually less than 10 pages long**
- **They differ from cover letters in that they present a complete offering of your product or service (they are stand alone documents)**
- **They provide a solution to a customer problem**
- **They are more detailed than cover letters**
- **They are not as graphic as executive summaries (usually there are only a few or no graphics)**

Letter Proposal Layout

- **State the problem**
- **Show benefits of a solution**
- **Describe your offering**
- **Sell your company**
- **Close with actions**

Letter Proposal

A short opening that states (in your words) what the customer's request or problem is.

State the benefits of meeting the request or solving the problem. These are the overall benefits to the customer.

Describe the product or service you are offering. Keep it short. Three pages.

Include the competitive advantages of the customer using your company. Cite examples, especially ones the customer knows about or participated in.

Close with actions you will take to keep in contact or follow-up.

Two Goals of a Letter Proposal

- **Focus on Selling**
 - Maintain a selling approach throughout the document
 - When reviewing, make sure it sells the product or service you are offering
 - Remember to view the proposal from your customers viewpoint
- **Add Persuasive Attachments**
 - These augment the proposal and provide proof of your statements
 - Attachments include:
 - ◆ An implementation schedule that meets or exceeds customer needs (and one that you can achieve)
 - ◆ Return on Investment (ROI) analysis if you know the issues well enough to present this
 - ◆ Pricing that supports your claims

The Best Approach

- **Customer Centered**
 - Focus on your customer and their needs and constraints
 - Write so the proposal can be easily evaluated
- **Oriented toward a long-term relationship**
 - Partnership
 - Establish a mutually beneficial relationship
- **Direct and business like**
 - No rambling or jokes
 - Subject line should establish the tone
- **Avoid Cliches**
 - They can be mis-interpreted and make your proposal seem reused
- **Sound enthusiastic and sincere**
 - Use active voice
 - Seem excited to do business with them



Pitfalls of a Letter Proposal

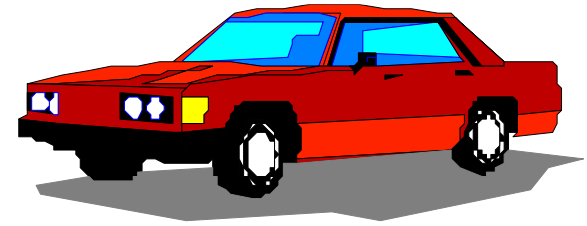
- **Self-Centered**
- **Subservient**
- **Legalistic**
- **“If you have any questions, please call . . .”**
- **Overly Technical Language**
- **Proprietary claims, export licenses, non-disclosure rights, etc.**
- **Making excuses for not completing tasks on time**
- **Not reviewing the document for exceptions or problems before sending**



Example Letter Proposal 1

September 26, 2003
Samuel O. Slick
Customer Sales
Belcher Motors, Inc.

Subject: **Car**



Some time ago you wrote us a letter requesting information on a new car. I am attaching a brochure on several cars. I do not remember what type of car you wanted, so I have sent several brochures on the cars we have in stock. Our dealership has been rated as one of the best in the nation by a leading magazine and we are pleased to be able to offer you one of our 2003 cars. The prices are competitive and our service is top notch. You will enjoy working with us through out the process of purchasing a new car.

We are offering a special this month on our remaining inventory of cars and cannot wait to get you behind the wheel of one of our cars. Come in for a free test drive. Our world-class dealership will be awaiting your arrival. I recently drove one of our cars to Estrella for lunch. The car performed flawlessly and the bean burritos were very tasty. I recommend the restaurant, it is called “My Maria’s Cooking.”

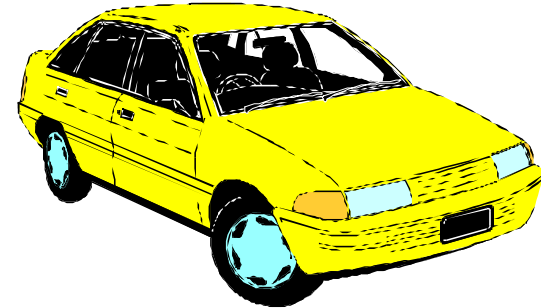
If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to call our office at 555-968-7727.

Sincerely,
Sammy Slick
Samuel O. Slick
Sales, Belcher Motors

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Example Letter Proposal 2

September 26, 2003
Stan Driver
Customer Sales
Friendly Motors, Inc.



Subject: New Car Information You Requested

It was a pleasure to receive your letter yesterday requesting information on a new car. As you stated you were interested in the Corona Deluxe, I am attaching a brochure on this car.

We have several of these 2004 Corona Deluxe models in stock. You stated in your letter that you were looking for:

- Low cost
- Good gas mileage
- Yellow color

Low Cost - We are known for our low price policy. Auto Trend Magazine rated us the best in low prices for quality cars. My commission is based on the number of cars I sell so I want to see you get the car of your choice. We have a refund-the-difference policy to ensure you get the lowest price possible. We have no hidden charges.

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Example Letter Proposal 2

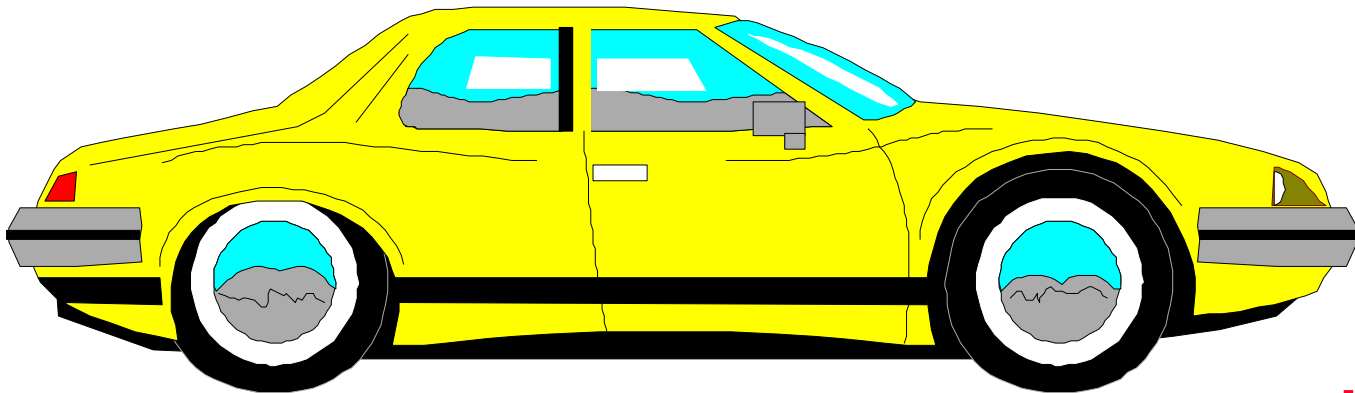
Good Gas Mileage - The Corona Deluxe car you are interested in has the lowest gas mileage of any car in its class. It gets 47 miles per gallon (mpg) in the city and 63 mpg on the highway.

Yellow Color - We have two shades of yellow Corona Deluxe cars in stock. Stop by and you may choose the color and options you prefer.

I have reserved these cars for your review and will be available to accompany you on a test drive and answer questions you may have. Just call me at 555-968-2073 so I will know when to expect you and have the cars ready.

Sincerely,
Stan Driver

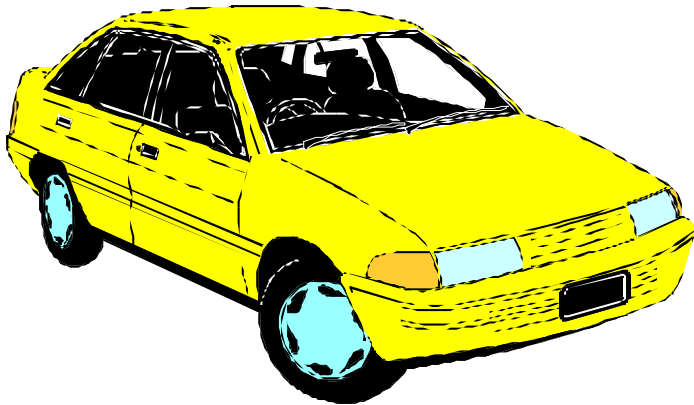
Stan Driver
Sales, Friendly Motors



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Comments on the Last Two Letter Proposals

- Is one more customer focused?
- Which dealer would you go to for your new car?
- If you got both of these proposals at the same time, would it be a difficult choice?



Are you getting this?



Or are you getting this?

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Organization for Letter Proposals

- **Subject** - Informative customer centered subject line gets attention and sets tone of proposal. Include problem and solution.
- **First Section** - State purpose of letter and set up the organization of the letter. Short 2 to 3 sentences and customer focused.
- **Second Section** - Specific bulletized customer needs, preferably written using the customer's words.
- **Third Section** - Expand bullets in the same order as section 2 with more detail and one paragraph per bullet. Use same words to introduce the paragraphs as used in the Second Section. Each paragraph should have a response that directly shows how you will meet the needs of the customer.
- **Summary** - Restate purpose and solutions. Leave responsibility for actions with your team.

Are You Persuasive?

- **How NOT to be persuasive**

- Focus on yourself
- Sell features only
- Write passively
- Don't worry about spelling
- Use your own jargon
- Don't be responsive (use your tried and true outline)
- Use untailored boilerplate
- Ignore areas you are weak in
- Do not substantiate your claims
- Use long sentences with big words - it sounds intelligent

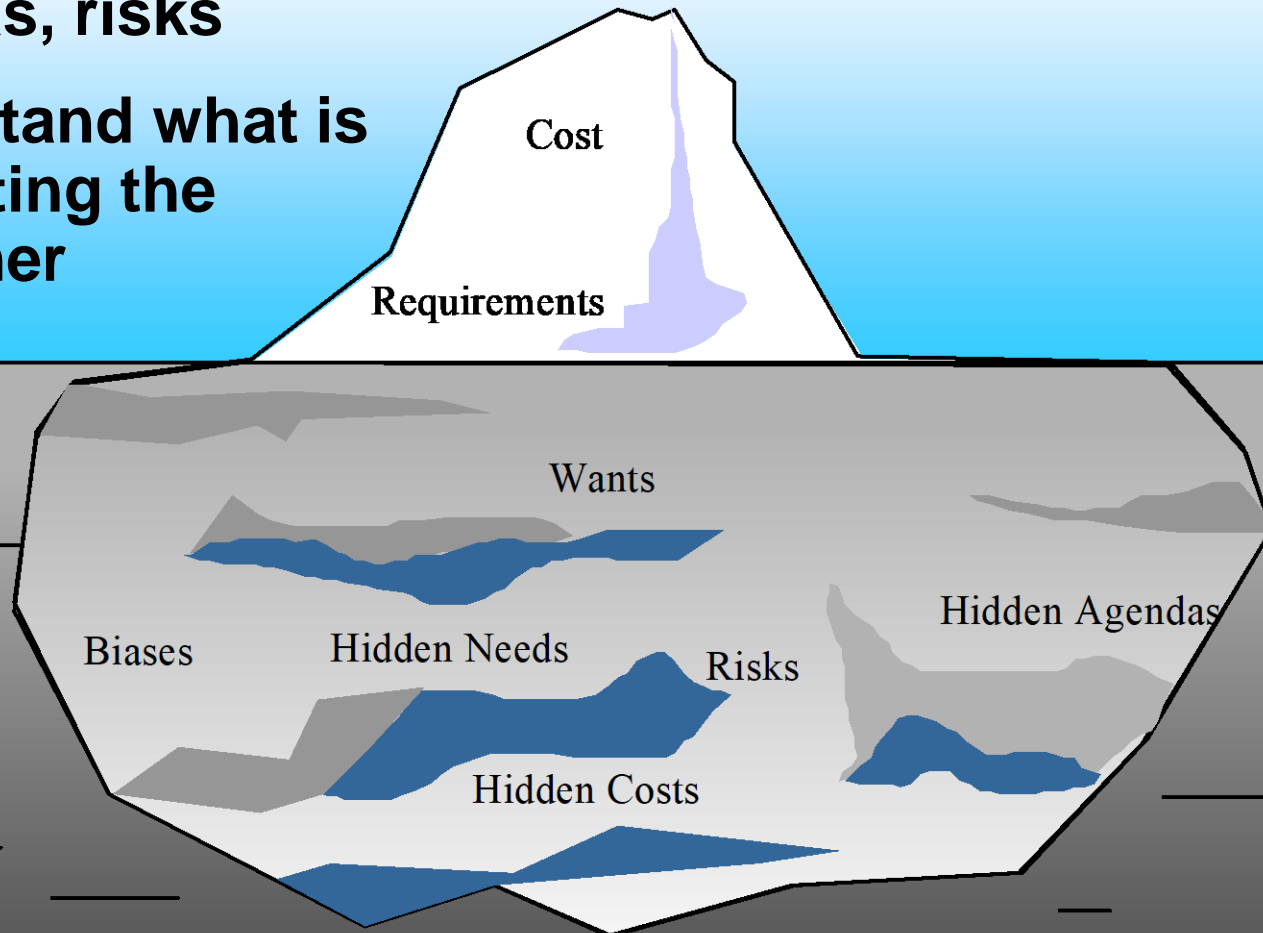
- **How to be persuasive**

- Focus on your customer
- Sell benefits
- Write actively
- Spell correctly
- Use your customer's words
- Be responsive, follow the customer's outline
- Tailor all boilerplate
- Address your weaknesses*
- Substantiate all claims (use attachments)
- Keep sentences to 20 words or less and average words to make the meaning clear

* If you don't, guess who will! **Honeywell**

To be Persuasive, Plan Your Work

- **Become familiar with the RFP or letter request**
- **Understand your customer's needs, wants, hidden agendas, risks**
- **Understand what is motivating the customer**



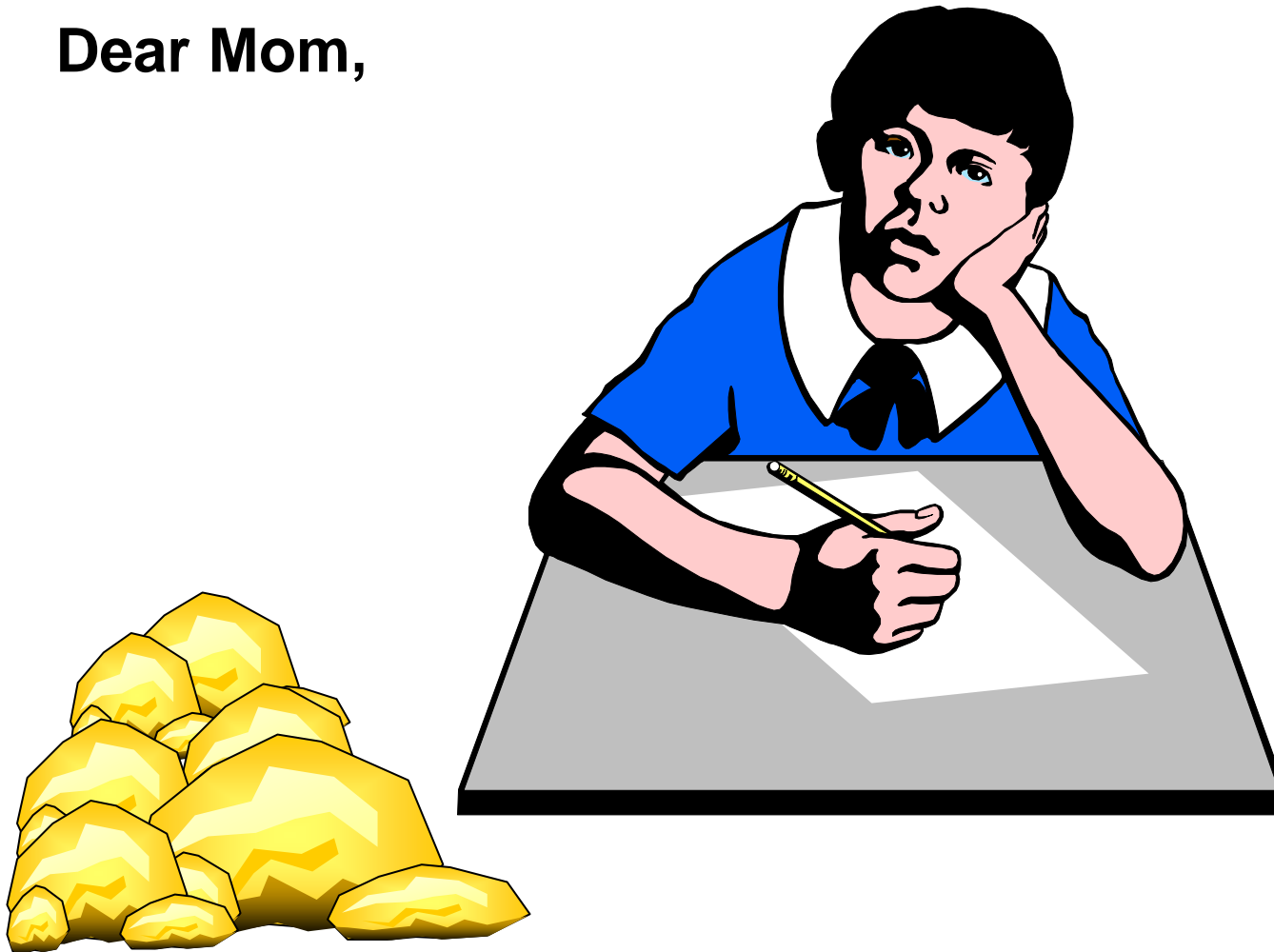
Most of a customer's needs, wants, and desires are not readily visible, requiring you to look below the surface

Tips to Help Write a Persuasive Letter Proposal

- **Establish an Outline that Is Responsive to the Customer's Needs (follow the RFP for a guide to your response)**
- **Identify their most important need (it is usually first)**
- **Know your customer (and their motivation)**
- **Answer their questions (all of them)**
- **Use their headings (or informative headings)**
- **Create a cross reference matrix to help you respond**
- **Know your product or service**
- **Write energetically, it is contagious**

So, How Will You Start?

Dear Mom,



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