

# Quality of the tone of letter

## WHAT IS TONE?

"Tone in writing refers to the writer's attitude toward the reader and the subject of the message. The overall tone of a written message affects the reader just as one's tone of voice affects the listener in everyday exchanges" .

Business writers should consider the tone of their message, whether they are writing a memo, letter, report, or any type of business document. Tone is present in all communication activities. Ultimately, the tone of a message is a reflection of the writer and it does affect how the reader will perceive the message.

How can I make sure my messages have the appropriate tone?

The writer should consider several things when preparing to write. The following questions will help you to determine the appropriate tone for your message.

Why am I writing this document?

Who am I writing to and what do I want them to understand?

What kind of tone should I use?

## WHY AM I WRITING THIS DOCUMENT?

You should take time to consider the purpose of your document in order to determine how you should express the message you wish to convey. Obviously, you want the message to reach your audience, and you will probably want the reader to take some action in response to your message.

When you consider the message and how you wish to express it, the tone of your message will become apparent.

For example:

Suzy is writing a job acceptance letter to an employer but is unsure of the tone she should take in the message. She has decided to accept the position. When she asks herself, "What is my intent upon writing?" she answers, "I want to accept the position, thank the company for the offer, and establish goodwill with my new co-workers." As she writes the letter she quickly assumes a tone that is appreciative for the offer and enthusiastic about beginning a new job.

## **Who am I writing to and what do I want them to understand?**

Who is your audience? Whether it is an employer or a fellow worker, it is essential that you consider your reader before writing any document. Your message will be much more effective if you tailor the document to reach your specific audience. The message you wish to express must be written in a way that will effectively reach the reader.

The tone that you use to write the document directly affects how the reader will interpret what is said.

For example:

Bob is writing a cover letter for a position as a Sales Representative for a newspaper. He is unsure that he will be able to succeed at such a position, and uses phrases such as: "I hope that you will contact me..." "I know that my qualifications are not very impressive, but..."

The reader is likely to interpret these phrases to mean that Bob isn't really qualified for the position or that he doesn't really want the position. Clearly, Bob is not assuming an appropriate tone. He must consider that:

- He is applying for a position as a Sales Representative.
- He wants the employer to ask him to come in for an interview.
- The employer will look for highly motivated and confident individuals.

If Bob were to consider these things he may rewrite his cover letter to include such phrases as: "You can reach me at 555-2233; I look forward to hearing from you." "My qualifications make me an excellent applicant for this position..."

The tone of the message has changed drastically to sound more confident and self-assured.

## **WHAT KIND OF TONE SHOULD I USE?**

Fortunately, you can use the same kind of tone for most business messages.

"The business writer should strive for an overall tone that is confident, courteous, and sincere; that uses emphasis and subordination appropriately; that contains nondiscriminatory language; that stresses the "you" attitude; and that is written at an appropriate level of difficulty" . The only major exceptions to these guidelines are when you need to write a negative business message, such as when you deny a job offer or a customer request.

Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when considering what kind of tone to use in your letters and how to present information in that tone:

Be confident.

Be courteous and sincere.

Use appropriate emphasis .

Use non-discriminatory language.

Stress the benefits for the reader.

Write at an appropriate level of difficulty.