



Yours Sincerely

by
Martyn Lewis

For those of us who are old enough to remember the days of typewriters and mailed letters - before the days of personal computers and e-mail - you may recall that we signed off most of those letters with “yours sincerely”. Business letter writing, which just about included all written communication with clients, prospects, and partners, was certainly more formal. And, yes, there were many other differences as well but it wasn’t so long ago that, rather than tapping out a quick e-mail, more time, and I would suggest more care, was taken in composing these communications. I learned my lesson this way.

I was out one day with an executive of the company I worked for and we had just had a successful meeting with a prospect. Upon returning to the office he suggested it would be a good idea to write a letter thanking them for their time and reiterating the points of our proposal that we considered compelling. Good idea, I thought, and so we sat down to what I expected would be a few minutes to fire off a nice note to the prospect.

Imagine my surprise when it took an hour and a half just to rough out three short paragraphs. I sat there adding my own input as Ken first drafted the objectives for the letter and then outlined each paragraph. More time than I thought imaginable was dedicated to choosing exactly the right words to describe our value proposition to the prospect. Sentences were tried and revised with various phrases to evaluate which best articulated the points we wanted to make. Paragraphs were written, read, and then read again to see if they actually said what we meant to say.

Even then the process was not complete. Once the draft was done, Ken then surprised me, again, and suggested we sleep on it and return to do a final revision in the morning. I guess at that moment my surprise, and perhaps my impatience, was showing and so he then shared with me a value that many years later still guides my own style.



He said “If it’s worth writing, it’s worth writing properly.” At the end of every memo, letter, or e-mail you write, you sign your name. It doesn’t really matter what closing salutation you use, at the end it is always *your* name. It used to be your signature, but even today, any communication ends with your name.

So, does that e-mail represent you as you wish to be seen? Is it clear and concise? Does it read as you wish it to be read? Is there any possible ambiguity or potential cause for misinterpretation? There’s a good chance that at one time or another we’ve all been responsible for writing something that has been taken the wrong way. I have no doubt that a little more care and attention in the writing would prevent almost all of those misunderstandings and, in doing so, preclude the effort and cost that so often goes along with such mistakes.

When you sign your name at the end of an e-mail, letter, or memo, does that document represent you as you wish to be seen? After all, it’s *your* name.

From Martyn Lewis' upcoming book "Sales Wise - an anthology of selling stories, follies, and fables", each with a *relevant* and *timely* sales message. If you wish to be notified of publication date please email us at saleswise@market-partners.com