

Workshop: powerful communications

Module: # 19 – Writing effectively by...writing better letters

Coaching

Letter writing takes up a significant amount of a lawyer's time. Writing letters well signals effective communication by a lawyer. There are three common objectives that letters might have:

- Provide information.
- Get the reader to take some action.
- Create a favorable impression .

Here are five hints for writing letters better.

1. Have one central theme:
 - The idea that pulls everything in the letter together.
 - This helps you include what's relevant and exclude what isn't.
2. Somewhere, close to the beginning, say exactly what you want:
 - Tell what your letter is about in the first paragraph.
3. Make the letter enjoyable to read, not a chore:
 - Be positive.
 - Be nice (Read the letter out loud. Does it sound friendly?).
 - Be natural.
 - Don't be cute or flippant.
4. Be specific:
 - Don't make the reader work to find out what the letter is about.
 - Keep it short and to the point.
 - Distinguish opinions from facts.
 - Start and finish with a summary.
5. Make it look good:
 - When possible put it on one page.

Mentoring

In the following (excercises), try to start letters for the reasons given.

- Write the opening paragraph of a letter to a longstanding client to update them on your range of services.
- Write the opening paragraph of a letter requesting a meeting with a member of city council.
- Write the opening paragraph of a letter presenting your credentials to a prospective client.

About the OCC

The Online Coaching Centre (OCC) is LAWPRO's innovative online education tool. It lets you quickly and easily enhance a variety of "soft skills" that not only help you survive and thrive, but also help reduce malpractice claims.

The OCC is entirely web-based, allowing lawyers across Ontario to use it at a time and place convenient to them. It is organized into six workshops, each of which contains approximately 25 learning modules, such as the one profiled on this page. Modules encourage self-teaching and self-evaluation; answers you provide when working in the modules should be saved for review at a later time.

To access the OCC, go to www.practicepro.ca/occ.