UNIT 12: CORRESPONDENCE

UNIT STRUCTURE

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12.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to :

- discuss importance of correspondence in Business and Government offices
- describe the essentials of Good Business and Official Correspondence
- discuss routine of handling mail
- learn about various forms of Correspondence

12.2 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we are going to discuss the various concepts related to office correspondence. Correspondence refers to the exchange of written communication between individuals or people on matters pertaining to their common interest. In case of business or government organisations, correspondence holds great significance. Business correspondence is the written communication representing the particular institution or office for any business or official transaction. Though communication is crucial for any organisation, large organisations specifically run business through a

lot of correspondence and to the extent that create separate departments for the same. Smaller organisations however, may not have a separate department for correspondence but nevertheless they do engage in substantial written communication for their business. At the end of this unit you will be able to get a fair idea about

12.3 IMPORTANCE OF CORRESPONDENCE IN BUSINESS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICES

Correspondence for a business or government organisation is like the accelerator that speeds up the vehicle of organisational operation. Written communication enables an organisation to initiate business transactions and further its operations for survival and growth. Correspondence fulfils diverse needs of business and government organisations. The significance of correspondence can be understood from the following:

1) *It facilitates the building and maintaining of relationships:* Business and other organisations operate across the globe. They need to communicate and contact with different stakeholders in different locations. Written communication enables to reach out to these parties for different business requirements thereby paving the way for building new relationships and also for further maintaining it.
2) *It helps in creating and maintaining goodwill of the organisation.* Through letters for correspondence, complains or suggestions of the customers may be enquired to better cater to their needs. Further, this type of written communication also enables to update the stakeholders about any kind of changes or activities of their interest, thereby staying closer and connected with them. This results in cordial relations with the stakeholders and enriching of the organisation's goodwill.
3) *It makes communication convenient in an inexpensive manner.* Communication in any form is crucial for any organisation. However, written communication supersedes the other forms of oral, telephonic, fax or telex based communication since correspondence carries better

scope of detailing in the information or message. It is also convenient to communicate through letters. Further, letters are inexpensive compared to other modes of communication.

4) *Correspondence serves as evidence to all operations and dealings of the organisation.* Office work entails a lot of information with facts and figures which is not possible to memorize.Written communication provides with a record of the transactions which is very helpful for the business or organisation, especially in case of dispute related matters.
5) *It helps in easier expansion of the business.* Through written letters tradesmen can gather market information and also respond quickly to queries and orders from different locations. Responding to every customer or business information need in person takes time, and is practically impossible. So it is through correspondence that the process is made easier and the likely expansion of the business or office work on the basis of timely market statistics and other details is made possible.
6) *It sets up a formal communication ground between the organisation and the different stakeholders.* This set up for communication creates a formal image for the firm and enables the establishment of solid foundation for business. It further reduces the chances of doubts or confusion since correspondence clearly states the necessary fact and details for the business.

12.4 ESSENTIALS OF GOOD BUSINESS AND OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE

Office correspondence intends to convey some message or information both within and outside the organisation. It is a very important form of communication because it serves as a record of all official transactions and also enables the growth and expansion of the business in addition to building and maintaining relationships. However, in order to achieve the benefits of correspondence in the desired manner, it is crucial to take note of certain aspects in regard to language, contents and

presentation while drafting the matter. Some of the essentials of successful office correspondence can be stated as below:

1) *Purpose and clarity:* The message to be conveyed must be clearly checked in terms of its purpose and the language used. The definite purpose for which the draft is prepared should be served through the contents of the message and in an easily understandable language. Ambiguity in any form or the use of difficult and fancy words isto be avoided.
2) *Structure:* Successful communication depends upon the structure of the message, especially in terms of how well it can be absorbed and understood by the receiver. A written message should typically be structured into three basic parts, namely, the opening, the body and the closing. The opening introduces the receiver to the topic, its relevance and the sender. The body highlights the detail of the main topic and the closing is like a reminder to what has already been stated with key points to note. It is essential to remember this basic structure so as to draw the attention of the receiver followed by ease of their comprehension as well.
3) *Concise, concrete and consistent:* The message to be written has to be presented in minimal and to the point words, in addition to being very specific. Further, care is to be taken to keep the message consistent both in terms of grammar and perspective. This logical set up is important for building trust and retaining attention and interest of the reader.
4) *Relevancy:* Any correspondence that lacks important information and showcases unnecessary or irrelevant details is most likely to be paid with the least attention by the receivers. The message to be conveyed should contain only the relevant details of the subject and links to further details may be forwarded for further references, if any.
5) *Accuracy and complete:* one must always check for accuracy in the content of the message in terms of facts and figures as well as the grammar and tense. Further, completeness of the message is a must. Care has to be taken to deliver all possible necessary details within the minimal description.

6) *Choice of media and neatness:* The particular media used is also very influential in getting the desired message across. Whether it is a plain paper for the letter, or a plain text for an electronic mail, the right choice does create an impact. Also crucial is the neatness of the correspondence in terms of spacing, indentation or paragraphs used.
7) *Quality and size of paper:* One needs to be careful with the quality of paper used for the message owing to the cost factor. Good quality but inexpensive paper serves the purpose in the best way. The size of paper that is popular for office correspondence is A4. However, based on the need, different sized paper may be used.

Apart from these aspects, successful office correspondence also demands due attention towards matters pertaining to the font used, the folding of the paper or even the envelopes. An ill-fitting envelope or an over folded letter tends to leave a bad impression at the receiving end.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: State any three essential feature of successful office correspondence

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Q2: State any three importance of correspondence.

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12.5 ROUTINE OF HANDLING MAIL

Correspondence concerns with being in touch with the different stakeholders to a firm or organisation. And this is done through letters, notices, enquiry notes, circulars etc. the sending or receiving of such communication is regarded as mail. Mail for a business needs to be handled

very carefully since it acts as the connecting thread between the concerned parties. Generally, mails could be either incoming or outgoing. Sometimes inter-departmental mail is also necessary organisational actions. Handling mail comprises of proper planning of mail services for the business. The basic routine involves the following:

1) *Arranging for the Mailing Department:* A proper set up for handling mail through the establishment of a Mailing Department is a must. In case of small organisations, a single individual may be entrusted with the job of looking into the mail function. However, for large organisations where the volume of mail is high, separate department needs to be created with several staff to work for it. Depending upon the level or volume of work, the department maybe centralised or decentralised.
2) *Associating with the Post Office:* On the basis of the correspondence level, there arises the need to have a strong association with the postal service provider. If the firm is a small one with less correspondence activities, the local post man and the nearby post box serves the purpose of sending and receiving mails. However, in case of large organisations, special arrangements with the post office have to be made in regard to post boxes and post bags for efficiently managing the mail services.
3) *Establishing the mail routine:* There is the need to have a specific routine for handling mails, both incoming and outgoing. The routine helps in creating a better impact upon the receiving parties and ensures efficient operational performance.

The inward mail routine emphasises focus upon the following issues:

a) Receiving and opening the mail after acknowledging the receipt and sorting it. Confidential mails are to be sent immediately to the concerned addressee. Letters may be opened manually or through machines depending upon the volume.
b) The contents of the envelopes are to be scrutinised for the subject of the correspondence and enclosures if any. If any discrepancy is observed, it must be reported to the concerned supervisor immediately.
c) The stamping of date and time is another routine task after opening the mail for record purpose.

d) Recording the details of the correspondence like date and time, serial number, sender's name and address, subject and enclosures in the Inward Mail Register is mandatory for efficient mail handling. The initial of the final recipient of the letter is also recorded in the register.

e) Sorting and distribution of the letters is also done simultaneously, if they are to be arranged department wise. Baskets may be used for the purpose and the initials of the receiving clerks for each department are obtained for record.

The outgoing mail routine is also of significance for the business. The outgoing mail comprises of replies and responses to the incoming mails which have to be sent timely through the despatch section. In order to make prompt delivery of the replies, it is important to clearly specify the receiving address and the sender's address, in case the mail is not delivered or returned back without acceptance. Some of the basic steps involved in handling outgoing mails can be stated as below:

a) Sorting the outgoing letters and entering the details in the outgoing mail register is of primary importance. The first task in regard to handling of outgoing mails is sorting on the basis of destination, and then assigning a serial number, which is further noted along with the contents and address of the receiver in the outgoing mail register. Every outgoing letter is assigned a particular despatch number which is mentioned in the letter. Based on whether the letter is sent through the post office or through the messenger, the records are made in the despatch register or the peon book.

b) Folding and inserting the letters into envelopes follows next.Once the entries are made in the despatch register, the letters are folded and inserted into envelopes. The envelopes are addressed accordingly. This folding and inserting task may be done manually or with the help of machines.

c) Sealing and affixing stamps is the following task.It concerns with sealing the envelopes and affixing appropriate postage stamps with the help of franking machines.

d) Posting the letters. The final step in the routine of handling outgoing

mail is posting the letter and ensuring the delivery of the mail. Depending upon whether the mail is to be delivered locally, or whether it is a registered post, messengers or post boxes facilitate the posting and delivery process.

4) Mechanising the Mail services: Finally, the mail handling department while performing the repetitive operations, may need to take the help of mechanical devices for ensuring speed and accuracy. Some of the modern mechanical devices may include the letter opener, franking machine, stapler, envelope sealer etc.

12.6 VARIOUS FORMS OF CORRESPONDENCE

Depending upon the purpose or need, there may be different forms of correspondence. Even the function of the department that carries out correspondence defines its basic form or type. Generally, correspondence is classified into the following forms:

1) External correspondence: Any written communication between the organisation and the outsiders like individuals, customers, government, suppliers, financial institutions, etc. is regarded as external correspondence. So all letters sent to and received from these outside parties indicate external correspondence.
2) Internal correspondence: The correspondence between the departments of the company, or between branches and head office of the same organisation is considered as internal correspondence.
3) Personalised correspondence: Any letter or form of written content based on personal factors or emotions indicate personalised correspondence. This may be a letter of appreciation or gratitude, letter of recommendation or introduction etc.
4) Routine correspondence: This correspondence concerns with written communication for routine office operations like enquiry letters, reply to inquiries, orders, appointment letters etc.
5) Sales correspondence: Matters relating to sales may also be conveyed through written formats like invoices, sales enquiry, delivery letters, offer and discount letters etc. which is considered as sales correspondence.

6) Circular letters: Sometimes, common matters like change of address, opening of a new branch, launch of a new product etc. need to be sent to a large numbers and business firms. These are sent through circulars.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q3: State any four forms of correspondences.

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Q4: Write the basic routine of mail handling

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

- Correspondence for a business or government organisation is like the accelerator that speeds up the vehicle of organisational operation. Written communication enables an organisation to initiate business transactions and further its operations for survival and growth.
- The significance of correspondence can be understood from the following:

1) It facilitates the building and maintaining of relationships
2) It helps in creating and maintaining goodwill of the organisation.
3) It makes communication convenient in an inexpensive manner.
4) Correspondence serves as evidence to all operations and dealings of the organisation.
5) It helps in easier expansion of the business.
6) It sets up a formal communication ground between the organisation and the different stakeholders.

- Office correspondence is a very important form of communication because it serves as a record of all official transactions and also enables

the growth and expansion of the business in addition to building and maintaining relationships.

- Some of the essentials of successful office correspondence are:

1) Purpose and clarity 2) Structure 3) Concise, concrete and consistent 4) Relevancy 5) Accuracy and complete 6) Choice of media and neatness 7) Quality and size of paper

- Correspondence is classified into the following forms:

1) External correspondence
2) Internal correspondence
3) Personalised correspondence
4) Routine correspondence
5) Sales correspondence
6) Circular letters



12.8 FURTHER READING

1) Balachandran (2009); *Office Management;* Tata McGraw-Hill Education, India.
2) Bhatia, Dr. R. C. (2005); *Principles of Office Management*; Lotus Press; India.
3) Bhatnagar, S. K. (2011); *Office Management*; Frank Brothers; India.



12.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No.1: Essentials of successful office correspondence are - Purpose and clarity, Structure and Concise, concrete and consistent

Ans to Q No.2: The importance of correspondence are:

1) It facilitates the building and maintaining of relationships
2) It helps in creating and maintaining goodwill of the organisation
3) It makes communication convenient in an inexpensive manner

Ans to Q No.3: Correspondence is classified into the following forms:

1) External correspondence
2) Internal correspondence
3) Personalised correspondence

4) Routine correspondence

Ans to Q No.4: The basic routine of mail handling involves the following:

1) Arranging for the Mailing Department
2) Associating with the Post Office
3) Establishing the mail routine
4) Mechanising the Mail services



12.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Q 1 : Discuss the importance of correspondence in business and government offices

Q 2: Describe the essentials of Good Business and Official Correspondence

Q 3: Discuss routine of handling mail.

Q 4: Explain the various forms of Correspondence

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