Module 4 : Composing faxes, memorandums and emails

- How to compose and send faxes
- How to write memorandums
- How to create and send emails
- Things to avoid when doing the above

Composing faxes, memorandums and emails comprise an important part of a PA's job.

In this module, you will learn:

- How to compose and send faxes

- How to write memorandums

- How to create and send emails

- Things to avoid when doing the above

4.1 Sending faxes

Whilst faxes are not as common as they used to be in the workplace, you may still need to know how to use a fax machine and how to compose faxes.
Learning extra skills reinforces your experience and helps you gain access to better-paying jobs.

Fax machines are all different so we strongly suggest that you read the instructions of each machine that you use - they will vary between models.

Fax machines can often be shared by different people within offices or workplaces so you should include a good cover letter with your fax. This will help minimise the chances of confusion and ensures that the fax gets to the right person.

Always include the recipient's name, the subject, number of fax pages and content. Remember to include the sender's name and information so they can contact you easily if needed.

FACT

In 1974 it took approx 3 minutes to send a fax. Today, it takes seconds

Source: ultatel.com

4.2 Modern Day Faxing

Sending and receiving faxes is not as old fashioned as people may think. Fax technology has improved over time and has kept pace with other office technology.
Nowadays, offices use what is known as internet fax, fax to email or e-faxing. This means that faxes are sent over the internet instead of the old fashioned way (by using a fax machine with phone line).

Unlike other transmission technology, faxing has refused to take a passive backseat to modern day communication technology. Faxing has been reinvented and is now usable with the Internet.

Faxes are still relevant to modern day offices and there are several reasons to continue to use faxes.

Here's a closer look at some valid reasons for using faxes:

1. Fax machines are relatively simple and intuitive to use. Modern-day internet faxing allows you to use multiple devices for sending or receiving faxes.

2. Faxing is associated with a high degree of traceability. The sender receives a printed confirmation of the successful sending of the document which serves as proof during subsequent correspondence. Internet faxing goes one step further; the system actually stores and archives all sent and received messages.

3. Faxing is a traditionally secure form of communication because it qualifies as a point-to-point communication. It's unlikely to be vulnerable to attempts at interception. Moreover, any disrupted transmission is immediately signified by the report.

Faxes can actually be a cheaper way of sending data than using a postal service or old fashioned fax machines. It is eco-friendly (you save a lot on paper) and is associated with several extra options compared to the conventional method.

Emails give you an address that will allow you to send text mail electronically. Internet fax will let you send and receive faxes in the same way. In addition, internet fax messages can be delivered direct to fax machines.

If your boss has not considered this idea yet, it could be in everybody's best interest in the company to start using it.

4.3 Benefits of Internet Faxing

Internet faxing does not use phone networks, but instead are used solely by your internet connection.
You can even set up a VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) fax.
Here is a list of the advantages

- No additional hardware is required

- No telephone line is required

- You can use paperless communication along with emails

- You can send multiple faxes at the same time

- Reduction in phone bills and costs less than original fax machines

- You can send a fax from anywhere in the world that has an internet location

- You can send and receive faxes from mobile phones, tablets and other devices

Internet faxing reduces communication costs in situations where long or complex faxes need to be sent (especially when the message needs to be sent overseas or to distant places). Traditional fax machines required regular maintenance and toner refills (much like a printer). Modern day faxing techniques are a cost-effective alternative to conventional faxing methods.

You will have no telephone connection charge when you send a fax over the internet. This will be covered by the standard internet connection fee that you pay. The recipient must also have a compatible internet fax system in order to be able to receive your fax successfully.

The modern day work culture is characterised by a high degree of mobility. Employees no longer work at their desks alone. Internet faxing can be accessed from any portable or handheld device that has internet. In effect, this means that you can send out faxes from wherever you happen to be.

If you have used the older fax machines, you may have noticed that the quality of text and documents often deteriorated over time. Fortunately, with internet faxing, you can expect high quality of faxed documents.

All hard copies are converted to TIFF or PDF when attached to email. If data is sent over office/workplace LAN, then it will be sent directly to any internet fax or intranet. Internet faxes don't require long distance connection calls if reception is verified at both ends.

Activity 1 - Working with Faxes and Cover pages

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes

You have learned how to effectively compose important communication within your organisation, including faxes, emails and memorandums.

As a personal assistant, you will need to understand how to operate a fax machine and compose faxes. So, for this activity, write a fax to a business contact and ensure to include a cover letter. What key information should you include on both the fax and the cover page?

4.4 IP ADDRESS and IP FAX relay

One should not confuse Internet fax with IP fax.

IP fax transmits data over an office intranet that is designed to be networked from one multifunctional device to an IP address of another. IP fax reduces costs of transmission fees.

IP faxes do not require any dedicated servers to make use of office mail servers.

FACT

The worldwide fax services market was valued at $2.92 billion in 2021 and is projected to reach $5.47 billion by 2027

4.5 Computer based Faxing Process

As modems began to be used on a wider scale on personal computers, they are now used to send out faxes directly.
This is much easier, quicker and more cost-efficient compared to printing hard copies and then having to send them out by fax machines. Documents can now be directly printed to Internet faxing software and sent by a computer modem to the recipient. The receipt of faxes follows a similar process.
Here is an example: Computer - phone line - fax machine Fax machine - phone - computer
An understood disadvantage of receiving faxes through a computer is that it must be turned on to be used. If it is not running, then it will not receive faxes. This will render faxes unreadable by certain applications.

4.6 Internet Faxes and Server Gateways

The internet has enabled us to develop other methods of sending and receiving faxes.
There are extensions of computer based faxing but would require a server or gateway to convert documents from fax to email.

Fax using VoIP

VoIP stands for Voice over Internet Protocol, a new standard T.38 that was made to compress fax signals over a VoIP adapter and create a gateway in order to receive.

Most fax machines can be plugged into them in the same way as a conventional fax machine. Unfortunately, T.38 can be quite unreliable and the efficiency would depend on your area, server and connection.

4.7 Doing things the traditional way

Dialling a fax number is the same as you would with a telephone number.
You must remember to feed in fax paper specially formulated for fax machines.

Also keep in mind that faxes can be read at the recipient's end by anyone at all. This is no longer true; internet faxing can be programmed in a way that restricts access.

4.8 A Guide to Memorandums

Memorandums should be able to preserve consistency and standard as it is representative of your office.

Make an effort to preserve the format and style. A memorandum is to record specific terms that could include transactions, contracts, policy memos, or a memorandum of an association.

To be more precise, a memorandum can be a note, brief, record or reminder of terms used in an agreement. Memorandums are usually created at the draft stage and are popularly referred to as 'memos'. Memos are informal pieces of communication designed to share information.

Memorandums first began to be used during the latter half of the nineteenth century. They were used to communicate across distances and within corporate entities.

Other alternative formats for your memos include briefing notes, reports, binders and other letters. The number of pages of each memorandum may vary depending on the task or subject. If the user or reader is senior management or staff, then keep the language formal.

The format should be thorough and defined and text should be kept to a minimum. A memorandum to a colleague or across the organisation can be constructed with less formal language (which could even include colloquialisms), but memos to senior management must be formally structured.

What is the Purpose?

The primary purpose of your memorandums is to support a decision that needs to be made or help make an influence. This could be with specific problems or current events/proposals.

Memos are essentially used as reminder tools and are used within an office. Memos could be used to instruct (regarding new procedures, equipment etc.), remind (of upcoming events, meetings, seminars etc.) or highlight certain issues.

You may simply be looking to convey a message, make requests on behalf of your company, present reports or remind your boss of their upcoming schedule. As a PA you will have to write memorandums for various tasks.

Quality control

We have no universal standards for brief memorandums and they will just take some practice. They can actually be one of the simpler parts of your job as a PA.

Memorandums are typically more formal than emails, but less formal than business letters.

4.9 Tips on Writing Memorandums

The briefing note should be coherent and have a synopsis or policy of identified problems within.
How do you wish to address the issues with the reader?
Always include

- A descriptive message of proposed policies.

- All needed background information and discuss all possible considerations or outcomes. Financial, stakeholders, impacts, consequences etc.

- If the message is lengthy and complex, then you may wish to write a report instead of a memo.

- Check to see if your company has a standard format for writing memos.

- Avoid lengthy sentences and wordy prose. Keep the language simple, concise and purposeful.

- It's not necessary to use a greeting or salutation to begin the memo; you can get straight to the point.

- Conclude with a call to action and mention the word 'attachment' if you wish to add an attachment.

Memos typically consist of a header and a body and the body is further divided into the opening, main body and closing text.

The header should specify who the memo is for and who has sent it. You should also include the date that the memo was written. Always address the reader by their real name and no nicknames. Be specific with the subject line for improved clarity. Remember, you are representing your boss. Also, highlight in areas what all of the key points are, this makes it easier for the reader to understand.

Identify the recipients of the memorandum and write to them on their level. Tailor the length, tone and formality based on the nature of the audience. Address the concerns and priorities in the memorandum; why would this information be important to the reader? In what way are you seeking to inform or help them?

Try and anticipate what questions may arise from the reader, so you can hopefully answer all of their queries in one letter instead of a series of letters and replies. Consider your audience and include all information that is relevant to the reader.

Activity 2 - Practise Working with Memorandums

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes
After practising how to send faxes and cover pages, you should have a firm grasp on the very basics of this office function. Now, let's focus on memorandums.

For this activity, you will create a practise memorandum to a member of staff. Keep in mind that it needs to have a purpose, and you should bear in mind the writing tips in the module.

4.10 Support your call to action in memos and emails

When you discuss your call to action in the discussion segment, you should be persuasive and tell the reader how they can benefit from your help.
You must sound professional and concise. Your call to action should be courteous, persuasive and definitive; avoid leaving room for ambiguity.

It's also important to understand that memos should not be worded in an overly informal fashion. At the end of the day, memos are considered as important internal business correspondence.

Give evidence and logical reasons for any solutions that you have suggested to them. This could include graphics, lists, charts or surveys. Make sure they are fully accurate or you will regret it at a later date.

Take a Quick Recap Test

[viralQuiz id=69]

4.11 Emails

Electronic mail is one of the most common forms of communication today and almost everybody has at least one email address.

They are the first point of contact for many people and have become very accessible.

Keep your work email and private email separate to avoid confusion or embarrassment in the workplace.

Business Email Writing Etiquette

The tone and quality of business email writing has the potential to sabotage professional relationships.

- Ensure that your email content is meant for public reading before clicking on 'send'. Private emails that become public have turned into sources of embarrassment for the sender.

- Never write an email while experiencing intense emotions like anger, impatience or frustration. Keep in mind that emails last forever (and can be easily retrieved) and avoid using inappropriate language. Avoid exchanging gossip about colleagues or your boss - it could easily get around to them.

- Avoid the excessive use of exclamation marks, emoticons, shortcuts and slang in a business email.

- If you have to simply say 'thank you 'or 'okay', write a complete sentence instead of just a

single word. For example, say, 'Thank you for your payment for order number ....'.

Assignment

Composing faxes, memorandums and emails
Time: 30+ minutes
Hopefully, you took in as much of the information in this 4th module as possible. To find out how well you have done, complete the following worksheet.

Download the worksheet below print out and complete.
[Download Worksheet (PDF)](#)

[Download Worksheet (Word)](#)

Module summary

In this module you have learned how to compose and send faxes for business use. They are not used as much as in the past couple of decades, but most offices still have a fax machine. Internet faxing is a cost effective, quick and efficient way of sending faxes. Internet faxing is associated with several benefits. It is important as a PA for you to be versatile and skilled in as many different areas of communication as possible.

Composing memorandums and emails is similar to writing business letters. They all should follow a formal yet friendly procedure. Every piece of business correspondence is important as they are stored for the purposes of future reference.

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