

In the second article, Cardon explores the emotional reactions of Chinese businesspersons who experience the loss of face. According to Cardon, we have long been told that the Chinese react strongly and irrationally when they lose face, yet his interviews found that while Chinese businesspersons react strongly in some situations, they were merely annoyed in most incidents of face loss. However, Cardon advises that we not take this as a signal to be careless in our cross-cultural endeavors.

Next, Serri describes the emotional labor involved in her work as an affirmative action officer, particularly in sexual harassment cases. Although we often focus on the two major players in such cases, the alleged victim and the accused, Serri reminds us that in her role as mediator, investigator, and advisor, her emotions are stretched and long-held beliefs and values confronted. In her case, notions of compassion are challenged and, through thorough self-examination, redefined.

Finally, Stitts summarizes a conversation with one of her business students who was interning at a large corporation. The student described her encounters with managers who felt that she was “outshining” other interns and was not displaying appropriate nonverbal behaviors. One of the managers reminded the student that he “had a say” about whether the student kept her position. This account illustrates the sorts of interpersonal challenges that can test one’s emotional balance in competitive, high-performance environments. Furthermore, it reminds us, as business communication instructors and trainers, that emotional rhetoric, or pathos, is ever more important in our curriculum and in helping develop emotionally intelligent students, workers, and managers.

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## EXPRESSING EMOTION IN ELECTRONIC JOB COVER LETTERS

Sam H. DeKay  
Bank of New York and St. John’s University

INCREASINGLY, EMPLOYERS REQUIRE job seekers to submit their applications electronically. However, while most job seekers may be

familiar with email and other modern communication technologies, they often wonder about the rhetorical strategies to be used in their messages. Questions of the following sort arise: Should I send a résumé without a cover letter? Will a simple note explaining that a résumé is attached satisfy the reader? Should the cover letter express enthusiasm for the job? How can this enthusiasm be articulated? The purpose of this article is to help job applicants resolve these quandaries when composing electronic cover letters.

Employment application guides published after 2000 describe the technical elements associated with submitting electronic résumés. However, they rarely provide detailed descriptions of the cover letter, its function, or its rhetorical and lexical features, except that it should be brief. Yet researchers suggest that the lack of a cover letter may communicate to employers that an applicant lacks emotional engagement with the prospective position, so job seekers should always attach cover letters to their résumés (Block & Betrus, 2004; Enelow & Kursmark, 2004; Rasberry, 2004; Searles, 2003; Smith, 2000; Young, 2006).

### **Cover Letter Case Study**

In the summer of 2005, I undertook a case study of a job applicant to identify the elements of an effective email cover letter. The applicant was a woman who had been unemployed for the previous 13 months and was seeking new employment. She had 20 years' experience in the field of corporate training and had worked with a major accounting firm, a large bank, a nonprofit health organization, and an e-business consulting company. She had also taught in private and public elementary schools.

From June 1 to September 2, 2005, the applicant submitted applications for 27 positions advertised in the *New York Times*. Applications were sent by accessing the *Times* Web site and submitting an electronic note or cover letter and a résumé to an email address listed on the site.

Three questions that the study sought to answer were as follows: (a) Does sending an electronic cover letter result in more interview offers than submitting a résumé alone? (b) Does sending an electronic cover letter generate more interview offers than submitting a short, one-sentence note? and (c) In an electronic cover letter, what rhetorical strategies effectively communicate an applicant's emotional engagement with a potential position and employer?

The applicant prepared two styles of messages to accompany her résumé. The first was a one-sentence note that conveyed no discernible

emotion: “Attached please find a copy of my résumé.” The second style of message was a cover letter containing the following elements in the order indicated:

- Reference to the position for which application was being made
- Discussion of how the applicant’s experience and skills were relevant to the position and how she was uniquely qualified for the position
- A closing statement including a request for an interview that articulated the applicant’s desire for consideration by the employer

The participant composed two types of cover letters: (a) a one-paragraph message and (b) a three-paragraph text. The one-paragraph message was similar to the following:

I would like to be considered for the Training Director position. I have had over twenty years’ experience designing, developing and delivering training programs at all levels of the organization. I have also designed needs assessments to determine organizational learning needs and developed programs to meet these needs. I look forward to hearing from you. [Name of participant]

This brief message was intended to convey emotional engagement with the prospective position by (a) explicitly stating a desire for consideration, (b) describing past experiences that directly related to skills required for the prospective job, and (c) concluding the text with a standard, polite reference to future communication with the employer.

The three-paragraph letter used the following pattern:

I am extremely interested in the training coordinator program. I was active in the training profession for years, but two years ago I decided to enroll in law school. I am now at a position in my legal studies that I can attend part-time.

As you can see from my résumé, I have had extensive experience designing and delivering training programs in both the nonprofit and profit sectors. I have designed and conducted train-the-trainer sessions. I have extensive knowledge of adult learning methods and theory as well as excellent conceptual, analytical, speaking and writing skills. I am a self-starter with a customer services orientation.

If you would like to discuss this position with me, please call me at [telephone number]. I am very flexible as to salary.

The applicant demonstrated emotional engagement with the prospective position by (a) stating that she was “extremely interested”

in the job, (b) describing her experiences and skills that explicitly matched requested qualifications, and (c) expressing a willingness to negotiate salary.

None of the cover letters included a greeting or closing or a direct expression of emotion, with the exception of the phrase "extremely interested." Nine of the applications were submitted with no cover notes or letters; the email messages contained only attached résumés. Another group of 9 applications included the one-sentence cover note. The final 9 applications contained one- or three-paragraph cover letters. The same résumé was attached to all 27 applications.

## Results and Conclusion

No application submitted without a cover letter or just the one-sentence cover note received a positive response. However, all nine applications forwarded with cover letters resulted in invitations to interviews. During the interviews, the applicant reported that none of the potential employers referred to the résumé or had copies of the résumé for reference purposes. However, five of the interviewers (55.5%) had printed copies of the cover letter and referred to its contents. One of the interviews resulted in an employment offer. These results suggest that a cover letter is an essential component of an online employment application.

From the perspective of disclosing emotion, an effective email cover letter represents a delicate navigation of rhetorical extremes. The letters in this study avoided mention of desirable character traits (e.g., enthusiasm, compassion, patience, efficiency), and focused instead on the applicant's emotional engagement with the potential position and emphasizing an appropriate match between the applicant's background and the requirements of the position. Thus, special focus should be on the controlled expression of emotion that successfully communicates interest and enthusiasm while avoiding the double pitfalls of bland, disinterested prose and unfettered, overly emotional enthusiasm.

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*Address correspondence to Sam H. DeKay, The Bank of New York, 101 Barclay Street, Floor 9E, New York NY 10007; email: sdekay@bankofny.com.*

## **REACTING TO FACE LOSS IN CHINESE BUSINESS CULTURE: AN INTERVIEW REPORT**

Peter W. Cardon  
University of South Carolina

IN CHINESE CULTURE, the concept of face refers to personal dignity, prestige, and status and serves to maintain harmony in social relationships and hierarchies. The fear of the loss of face permeates Chinese society. In business, face loss may disrupt deals and harm goodwill. However, limited empirical research has addressed the emotional reactions Chinese businesspersons experience when face is lost (Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Hwang, 1987; Jia, 2001; Redding & Ng, 1982; Zhu, 1989; Zuo, 1997). A better understanding of such emotional reactions to face loss can empower businesspersons from abroad to enhance their relationships with the Chinese.

This article draws on interviews conducted between January and August 2003 with 34 Chinese businesspersons. Chinese informants who had significant international business experience were selected from the five major commercial centers in China: 12 from Beijing, 4 from Shanghai, 8 from Guangzhou, 2 from Hong Kong, and 8 from Taiwan. Most of the Chinese informants were men (24), yet there was still a significant number of women (10). In terms of business position, 12 informants were high-level business executives, 16 were middle-level managers, and 6 were low- or entry-level managers. To protect personal identities, pseudonyms are used in this article to present statements from informants.

Informants described the role of face in business situations. Interviews included both open-ended and structured questions and were approximately 45 minutes long on average. Regarding face loss, informants were asked questions such as the following: (a) Could you

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