

As with all forms of business communication, a little forethought makes a great difference when it comes to **fabulous festive felicitations**.*

Ask yourself:

1. What is the purpose of this letter?

Merry Christmas? Enjoy your vacation? Thanks for the business? More business please? Promotional? Advertorial?



Are you thanking your clients? Putting a face to your business? Or sharing information?

2. Who is my audience?

Christians or a multicultural group of individuals?
 Would "Happy Holidays" be better than "On this holy day our saviour is born"?
 Hot chocolate-sipping Northern Hemisphere clients, or South Africans?
 Are snowflakes and sleigh-riding children really necessary? Or can you make it more relevant to South Africa?
 Do my customers enjoy humour?
 "Naughty? Nice? Who says you can't be both...?"



Is your audience formal? Non-denominational? Is it ok to send a girly traditional message? Would you be better off taking this opportunity to build better business relationships?

These questions can be a bit of a minefield of P.C.-ness. To help you find your own voice in this minefield, it helps to add this question to the mix:

“What does this time of the year mean to ME?”

My take on this is that getting through a year in business is tough. And whatever your denomination, Christmas holidays represent a relief that we have made it. It's also a time to celebration relationships and unity, a spirit of goodwill, and a general hope for a better future. With the dawning of a new year so close on the heels of Christmas, it's an especially felicitous time to reflect on the year that was, and prepare for the year ahead.

3. How can I structure my message to get to the point quickly and accurately?

Time is precious, and seems to speed up as the year winds down, so get to the point. Whether you are delivering traditional physical cards or sending electronic greetings, a picture is worth a thousand words, so be creative in expressing YOUR message right from the outset.

See these imaginative examples for inspiration:



Who said accountants don't have a sense of humour? A craft supply business. A travel agent.

Finally, it goes without saying that **the four pillars of effective business writing** still apply i.e.

Active Voice	"Your business is appreciated"	"We appreciate your business."
Clear and Concise	"This year we have experienced the setback of.... and Thankfully, we have.... and" {yawn}	"We survived a tough year, thanks to your hard work and dedication. Thank you for sticking with us!"
Positive and Specific	"Dear Supplier. Thank you for your service."	"Dear Joe and your amazing Team. Thank you for helping our business grow with your willing service."
Proper Grammar and Spelling	"Thx 4 a gr8 yr!"	"Thank you for a great year."

* It is never a good idea to use unusual words if there is ever a chance that they may not be known to your audience. Remember the Golden Rule of Communication: "Good communication occurs when both the sender and the receiver share the same message meaning."

However, I am addicted to alliterations:



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