



Writing Your Own Letter

Chapter One of *Deliver*, entitled “Dear Carey”, provides a broad overview of the results of writing a letter to yourself on an annual basis. The time of the year is important; the letter should be completed on a significant date that is easy to remember and that also gives you enough free time to construct the letter each year. This may be during the Christmas and New Year break, or on an important date that reflects a personal meaning. You should start to think about your letter at least a week or two before you begin writing. Your thinking will flow between the letter you have written previously and the letter you are about to write. The combination of those thoughts provides clarity that helps you to prepare for the year ahead through the letter. I suggest leaving a small gap between opening your previous letter and writing the letter for the year ahead.

Choose headings for your letter based on what is most important to you. You can give thought to summarising the year that you have just had. I generally start my letter with “Dear Carey, the last 12 months have been...”. I then look at what have been some of the major highlights and turning points over the last 12 months. The four headings that I utilise are Family, Health, Work and Finance. These headings allow me to summarise what I wish to achieve for the year ahead in key areas. I end the letter with a summary about some of my personal ambitions and thoughts, which helps to found the value system on which I base my achievements. The summary also provides me with a clearer view of the actions that will come out of the letter.

My first heading, Family, has always been the most important to me. Each of us has a different personality and family structure, but our family is where we can always turn if everything else is not so good. The relationship strength—the bond you have with your family—must at least be recognised. Family can mean different things to different people; it can mean your commitment to your own family. In more recent times for me, my own feelings about family has coloured my thinking behind when I should begin to become a father and look towards the next generation. This in itself has been a defining time that has been borne out by the letter.

My letter then moves onto Health, and some key points that I certainly struggle with seem to adorn the pages of my letter every year. However, I can mark up some significant movements toward a healthier lifestyle through the letter. My commitment to give up smoking has probably been the highlight, as has been attending personal retreats to aid my own physical and mental health. Health can also be related to discipline through exercise. I had never been a regular gym goer, but a number of years ago I added the idea of a personal trainer to my letter. This assisted me in getting a good start toward becoming more health conscious through exercise.

Work and Finance are my next two headings. By work, I generally mean the tasks and plans that I carry out throughout a normal day. I have been fortunate to have had a progression of roles within the one company, and this has allowed me to stretch and grow in my commitments and responsibilities. The letter has allowed me to plan some of the activities that I undertake at work—to see the result of something that is well planned has been really rewarding. I have never written regarding

monetary increases through my work; I have always focused on the activities that I know will be helpful towards my own development, and invariably this has taken me to a higher salary level.

Finance is somewhat ambiguous as a heading. Because I have worked solely in the property industry, my way of thinking about investment has been around bricks and mortar. I believe that I have become very astute in this sector, yet a sole investment type goes against the ideas in one of the other chapters in *Deliver*, called “Eggs In One Basket”. In my letter, I made a commitment to seek out a financial structure that would see me with a broader base of investments. This has not necessarily paid dividends for me, especially during these tougher financial times, but I know that because I am not involved in a single market that I am not subject to the risk of single-market outcomes. The letter has helped me to move my investments from a single market to a broader range of markets, which applies a broader (and, therefore, hopefully more secure) base to my finances.

Under the Finance heading, I also look at personal spending, including giving and how I might distribute my wealth in the future. For a number of years my Will remained unwritten, and the letter assisted me in sorting this out. You can use your letter for specific tasks, or you can apply a more general meaning.

I finish my Letter with positive affirmations, such as “I know you can do this...”, or “Your future will be better if you can move forward in these areas”. Probably one of the most important things about these closing lines is that they should help you to remember what is of the greatest importance to you. The cost of action is generally quite low; it is the cost of inaction in life that we pay a high price for. We just don’t see it, because it adds up every day.

I sign the letter, then seal it up and give it to a trusted person who will look after it for the next 12 months, until I come to re-open it. It continues to amaze me how much I have actioned and achieved from the letter over the year. The “Dear Carey” letter is a personal ritual of mine that allows me to centre myself and create my path through the year ahead.

There are many reasons why some things on the letter will not be achieved. I realise that when you write things down that are truly from the heart, they can be actioned much more easily, and that the courage and strength that you get from your letter will never desert you—just from time to time, you might desert it.

Summary

- Be mentally prepared to write your letter two weeks in advance.
- Think about the four headings that you will use and about what it is important to write underneath those headings.
- Write in a location that reflects the importance of the letter you are about to write.
- When you write the letter, be free from all distractions and outside influences.
- Try to fit the letter onto 2 pages.
- Once you have written the letter and read it through, seal it in an envelope with your name on it and mark it “Personal 2009” (or the year you have written it).
- Give the letter to someone trusted who will take care of it for you.
- Think about the letter from time to time throughout the year.
- Open and read the letter 1–2 weeks prior to writing the following year’s letter.

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