



Legal requirements for business documents, web sites and company offices

1. 'Business Documents' means all forms of business correspondence and documentation and includes letters, orders, notices (eg calls for nominations, ballot papers, other notices to members or sponsors), invoices, receipts, emails, faxes and websites. It is acceptable for the details on the website to be on a 'contacts' page. Note that all Officers of societies should have a signature block with these details to use on emails about society business.
2. Every company must show its registered name on its Business Documents.
3. Companies must also disclose the following on their business letters, order forms and websites:
 - a. The part of the United Kingdom in which the company is registered (eg England & Wales);
 - b. The company's registered number;
 - c. The address of the company's registered office;
 - d. In the case of a company exempt from the obligation to use the word 'limited' in its name, the fact that it is a limited company.
4. Where a company's business letter includes the name of any director of that company other than in the text or as a signatory, the letter must disclose the name of every director of the company. Thus, it is not acceptable, for example, to list only the Executive Committee or key Officers.
5. Many charitable companies do not have 'Ltd' in their name and this can then be omitted. However, where a company's name does include the word 'limited', it is a serious offence to omit the word 'limited' from Business Documents, as this may be taken to imply that there is no limited liability.
6. A charitable company whose name does not include the word 'charity' or 'charitable' in its name must state that it is a charity in its Business Documents. Failure to do so will render the company and its officers liable to a fine.
7. For all charities, the fact that it is a registered charity must also be disclosed. It is desirable, but not compulsory, to state the charity number.

Thus, a typical format for a charity that is also a company limited by guarantee might be:

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England number 1234567.

Charity no. 3456789. Registered address as above.

8. Companies or charities not registered in England or Wales may be subject to other requirements.
9. A company must display its name conspicuously at its business premises.

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Registered address as above.
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10. The company name must be displayed at the registered office and members of the public must be able to obtain sight of certain documents, such as the member register, at this address during normal business hours. This makes it unsuitable for most private addresses to be the registered office. Solicitors or accountants will usually act as the registered office for a small annual fee.

These notes are produced for general guidance. Societies should take professional advice on any issues about which they are uncertain.

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