

Business Communication Assignments

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Business Administration 3033: Business Communication

Apologies

Audience analysis

- How serious is the issue?
- How much damage has been done?
- How valuable is the future relationship?
- Are there historical, cultural, personality issues as well?

Tone—your most important consideration

- Establish a serious, sincere, but not overly dramatic tone.
- Often how you phrase your apology matters more than what is actually stated.

Format

- Offer a sincere apology, but don't overdo it.
- Give an explanation where appropriate, but don't make excuses or blame others.
- Offer to make amends when appropriate.
- Close by maintaining good will.

Bad News or Negative Messages

Audience analysis is key here

- Cultural differences
- History/experience
- Personal investment
- Future relationships

Tone is extremely important

- People accept negatives better when delivered gently.
- Find the middle ground between sugar-coating and being overly blunt.
- Use language that conveys respect.

Format

- Letter/memo/fax/email? Which is appropriate for your audience and your message?
- If your audience is likely to respond favorably or neutrally, use a direct approach.
- If your audience is likely to be hostile or very disappointed, use an indirect approach. Open with a buffer—first establish good will; open on a positive note before stating the bad news.
- State the bad news clearly and offer an explanation for it—not excuses
 - State the bad news as positively as possible, using tactful wording.
 - Emphasize what you are doing or did do, rather than what you can't or didn't.
 - Offer enough detail to show the logic of your position.
 - Include only business reasons, not personal ones.
- Suggest some alternatives when appropriate
- Close by maintaining goodwill with a positive, forward-looking statement
- Provide an easy means for readers to contact you if they have questions.

Memo

To:

From: Communication Center

Date: August 16, 2002

Subject: Constructing a Coherent and Readable Memo

Constructing an effective memo requires you to consider two key issues: the form of your memo and the process by which you write. By considering both, you should be able to construct a memo that conveys key ideas quickly and that takes a form the audience finds easy to read.

Addressing the Form of Your Memo Includes Five Key Dimensions

In order to maximize the impact of your memo, pay attention to the following:

- *The opening of your memo must identify the What, Why, and How.* In combination, the subject line and the first two or three sentences should explain what the topic is, why the topic is important to the reader, and how the memo will proceed.
- *The headings should be in the informative style.* Your handbook for the Writing Workshop contains a document titled, "Informative Headings Improve A Memo's Readability." This document will explain the three styles of headings.

- *The transitions should provide clear roadsigns for the reader.* Simple phrases such as, "second," "in addition," or "however" will clarify the relationship between points in your memo.
- *The visual design should include white space and visual variety.* Too much text and not enough white space makes the memo look daunting and difficult to read. Bulleted lists, italics, headings, or graphs will add white space and make the document more visually appealing.
- *The close should provide a specific action request, suggested means for implementing, justified deadline, and a reminder of the key benefits.*

Improving the Process of Memo Writing Requires Editing

In addition to reviewing the memo's form, good business writers should be concerned with the writing process. Key to this process is editing. An effective edit will take place on three levels:

- *Headings.* Are your headings in the informative style and are they parallel?
- *Paragraph.* Does each paragraph develop a single point? Does the topic sentence appear first?
- *Supporting evidence.* Does every assertion have elaboration? Does that elaboration include some form of quote, statistic, fact, example, or logic?

Concluding Your Memo Requires Final Review of the Product

Now that you have improved the form of your memo and used an effective process, it is time to give your memo a last "glance." Are you comfortable with the *style* of your writing? Do you avoid *jargon*? Have you double-checked punctuation and *grammar*?

When you take the time to construct your memos following these guidelines, you will have a finished piece that is coherent and easy to read—something that will quickly establish your reputation as an effective communicator!