

## **Writing Assignment 1 (15%) – Document Analysis**

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This assignment allows you to apply basic principles of business communication as you've learned in the first five chapters of your textbook and in class lectures and discussions.

Specifically, you're asked to evaluate the attached documents for audience/purpose awareness, document format, writing style, and organization.

### **Your Task**

- Carefully review and evaluate each document (Part A and Part B)
- Take notes and find main points to make in the analysis
- In a memo to your instructor, Dr. Dan Q. Guo, evaluate these documents with examples and explanations. In other words, explain if they follow or violate the basic principles of business writing.
- Use the 3-part business message structure to make clear your purpose, main points, and conclusion
- Develop each point in short, coherent paragraphs with topic sentences
- Edit, revise, and proofread your writing for grammar, punctuation, and diction before submission

**Note:** Your task is NOT to answer the questions, but rather to write a well-organized and clear evaluation. The questions are listed to help you get ideas.

## Document Analysis – Part A

Evaluate the following memo for audience awareness, writing style, clarity, tone, and organization.

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**TO:** All Team Members, Shipping Department  
**FROM:** Esther Nields, Manager  
**DATE:** February 13, 2013  
**SUBJECT:** Your Performance

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As members of the shipping team, you've really handled the challenges of this department well. During our busiest seasons (Christmas, Valentine's Day, Easter, Graduation, and Halloween), you've always pulled more than your share and kept our shipments going out on time. Now you've all started slacking off—and the result is a big fat zero on our productivity scale!

I've done some tracking and learned that the problem is not a delay in manufacturing (in other words, products are reaching our department on time). Neither does the problem involve current difficulties with shipping channels. That means the holdups are happening within our department reflecting poorly on our performance as a team and producing statistics that will eventually come back to haunt us, individually and collectively, which is a situation that none of us want to see happen

I'd hate to do it, but if I have to I'm going to start firing on the spot anyone I catch lagging on the job. I believe that as a team we can come up with solutions that will rectify the delays and bring our performance back up to the high level we've always achieved. Tell the truth, I'm pretty steamed up about this situation so don't expect me to overlook any lapses I discover.

I'll give you a few days and then I'd like to have your suggestions and insights by February 20. You may send them directly via e-mail, or if you prefer anonymity, slip your unsigned memo into an interoffice envelope and direct it to my office.

We'll discuss the results of your input and plans for improvement at a department meeting to be held on Friday, February 27, at 10 a.m. in the morning in the conference room. By pulling together like this, we should be able to step up our performance and get back to meeting shipping schedules consistently!!

## Hints

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- What is the purpose of this memo? Is it clear in the opening paragraph?
- How would you start this memo to be audience-oriented?
- What do you think the writer tries to do in the second paragraph? As a reader of this memo, do you think the second paragraph tells you anything specific about the problem?
- What's wrong with the third paragraph? What should be the focus of the third paragraph?
- Why is it difficult for the team to do what is suggested in the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph?
- After reading this memo, do you think the writer has achieved her purpose?

## Document Analysis – Part B

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Analyze the following e-mail memos according to the case description. Explain why the memo is flawed and how to avoid such problems in business writing.

### Background

Jessica Barnes has recently been promoted to Manager of Brand Strategy for SoftLight, an esthetics company specializing in diffused-light spray foundations and powders. The company markets seven different foundations and powders for varying skin types and shades. Jessica is responsible for the overall brand strategy for both the company and the individual product sub-brands.

### Situation

Jessica has decided to perform a brand audit of each of the products with the goal of creating a brand strategy document that outlines plans for the overall corporate brand, as well as each product. Jessica has delegated the task of collecting the necessary market data from each product to her manager of corporate brand strategy, Aisha Wells. Aisha has drafted a request memo that has been delivered to the head of each product team asking for the relevant sales and market data.

### Problem

Aisha Wells distributed the memo on March 1 and immediately received a confirmation of delivery, as well as a promise to forward the request to the appropriate managers, from the product team directors. As of April 1, Aisha has received no information from the teams and Jessica Barnes' deadline for the strategy report is fast approaching.

**Exhibit A** presents the memo drafted by Aisha Wells requesting the sales and market data, while **Exhibit B** contains the response from one of the team leaders.

**Exhibit A**

To: Product Team Directors

From: Aisha Wells

Date: March 1, 2006

Subject: Market Data

As a company, we have been facing a large amount of competition from other cosmetic companies, especially those that have been in the market for longer than we have. We must develop a strategy to strengthen and protect our corporate image, as well as our product sub-brands. Our team has been mandated to develop this strategy in cooperation with you and your team.

I have been charged with collecting monthly and quarterly sales figures, the breakdown of sales through distribution channels (retail, online, etc.). I need to collect this material as quickly as possible and your cooperation is appreciated.

We need to know the sales levels in all distribution channels, as well as the breakdown of marketing budget allocated for each media.

I appreciate your help and please let me know if you require any further information.

**Exhibit B**

To: Aisha Wells

From Mary Welsh

Date: March 2, 2006

Subject: Market Data

Hi Mike, I have received your memo describing your project. I will pass it on to my team. Good Luck!

Mary

## Hints

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1. Analyze Aisha Well's memo as a request using the PAIBOC strategy—why was the memo unsuccessful?
2. How should Aisha Wells have interpreted Mary's response to her initial memo? Are there signs in the email that point toward the problems with Aisha's request?
3. Analyze how Jessica Barnes initiated the project—are there actions she could have taken to help Aisha?
4. Are there any formal issues with Aisha's memo that may have improved its chance of success as a request?