

Lecture no.4

Memo's writing

MEMOS

A memo is usually an internal working paper written to share information or instructions among peers, most often those working for the same organization or those working together on a common project even though they represent different organizations. Because they're informal working papers, memos are rarely sent to outsiders, especially those you or your organization want to impress.

A business letter is considered more formal, more serious, more forceful, and more impressive than a memo. Because they're written to people who are involved in or at least familiar with your work, your organization, and the standard practices of your profession, memos use an informal style in which jargon, abbreviations, and short-form references to people and organizations are acceptable.

Memos are brief business documents usually used internally to inform or persuade employees concerning business decisions on policy, procedure, or actions.

Functions and Audience

Short for "memorandum," a memo is a type of document used to communicate with others in the same organization. Memos (or memoranda) are typically used for fairly short messages of one page or less, but informal reports of several pages may also employ memo format.

Format

Memos are distinguished by a header that includes DATE, TO, FROM, and SUBJECT lines. Other lines, such as CC or BCC, may be added as needed. An RE ("Reference") line may be used instead of SUBJECT, but this use is becoming rarer as "RE" is often mistaken as "Reply" because of its use in email.

- DATE: List the date on which the memo is distributed.

- **TO:** List the names of the recipients of the memo. If there are several recipients, it's acceptable to use a group name, such as "All Employees" or "Personnel Committee Members."
- **FROM:** List the name and job title of the writer(s).
- **SUBJECT:** Think of the SUBJECT line as the title for the memo. Make it specific so that readers can immediately identify the topic.

These headings may be double- or single-spaced, and the SUBJECT line is often in all capital letters. Furthermore, the order of the items can vary. Many organizations have their own style preferences on these issues. If not, the order listed above, double-spaced, is the most common.

The text of memos typically uses block format, with single-spaced lines, an extra space between paragraphs, and no indentions for new paragraphs. However, if a report using memo format stretches to a few pages in length, double spacing may be used to improve its readability.

Organization

Professional communication forms are organized according to one of two strategies: Direct and indirect.

- The *direct* organization strategy presents the purpose of the document in the first paragraph (sometimes the first sentence) and provides supporting details in the body.
- The *indirect* organization strategy opens with relevant, attention-getting details that do not directly state the purpose of the document. The purpose is revealed in the body of the message, usually sandwiched between supporting details.

The direct approach is used for good news or routine communication; the indirect approach is used for persuasive, sales, or bad news messages.

A directly stated purpose is welcome in good news or routine messages but could be viewed as abrupt or insensitive in a bad news or persuasive message. When the audience is not receptive to the message, it is best to lead up to the purpose gradually.

In both types of organization, action information (such as deadlines or contact information) or a courteous closing statement is placed in the last paragraph.

Type of Document	Introduction	content	Definition	Body	Conclusion
Direct	Writer arrives at purpose quickly, sometimes in the first sentence.	Used for good news or routine communication (audience is receptive or neutral)	Purpose	Details	Action information or courteous close
Indirect	Writer gradually builds up to the purpose, which is stated in the body.	Used for negative, persuasive, or sales messages (audience is not receptive)	Relevant, attention-getting statements	Purpose statement is sandwiched by details.	Action information or courteous close

Style and Tone

While memo reports and policy memos are examples of documents that have a more formal tone, most memos will have a conversational style—slightly informal but still professional. The audience of memos are those with whom the writer works, so the writing style usually assumes a relationship with them (and therefore a certain lack of formality); just keep in mind that the relationship is a professional one, so the writing should reflect that. Furthermore, as with all workplace documents, the audience may contain a variety of readers, and the style and tone should be appropriate for all of their technical and authority levels.

Too Informal	Too Formal, Stuffy-Sounding, Wordy	Appropriate Balance
Hi, everyone. Hope you had a great weekend. You know those awards we give out every so often? It's time for those again!	Variety Craft Supplies' mission is to provide customers with affordable, quality supplies with superb customer service. Excellent customer service includes being knowledgeable about the supplies, but it also goes beyond that. It's about having the right attitude about helping customers. It's time to reward employees who have a customer-oriented outlook.	Direct and concise opening states the purpose of the memo. Please submit your nominations for the quarterly Customer Service Excellence Award by April 8. Help us identify great employees!

Common Memo Writing Situations

Memos are used in a variety of workplace communication situations, from documentation of procedures and policies to simple announcements. Below are some common types of memos:

- **Policies (changes and new)**
- **Instructions**
- **Procedures**
- **Announcements**
- **Trip reports**

Distribution Medium

Memos may be distributed manually through print medium in organizations in which not all employees have access to email. Organizations with access to email may distribute memos as attachments to email.

In organizations in which email reaches every employee (or every employee in the memo's audience), writers must determine whether to send a memo or an email message to convey their information. In cases such as this, writers should consider three factors: the nature of the message, the depth/number of its details, and its likelihood of being printed for easier reference. These types of messages should be written up in memo format and attached to an email message for fast (and environmentally friendly) distribution:

- Messages that have an official aura, such as new policies or revisions of policies.
- Messages containing much detail (such as instructions on how to calibrate a complicated piece of machinery).
- Messages requiring reference away from a computer (necessitating a print copy). Print copies of emails generally use a small type that is difficult to read.

Memos Purpose

A memo (or memorandum, meaning "reminder") is normally used for communicating policies, procedures, or related official business within an organization. It is often written from a one-to-all perspective (like mass communication), broadcasting a message to an audience, rather than a one-on-one, interpersonal communication. It may also be used to update a team on activities for a given project, or to inform a specific group within a company of an event, action, or observance.

A memo's purpose is often to inform, but it occasionally includes an element of persuasion or a call to action. All organizations have informal and formal communication networks. The unofficial, informal communication network within an organization is often called the grapevine, and it is often characterized by rumor, gossip, and innuendo. On the grapevine, one person may hear that someone else is going to be laid off and start passing the news around. Rumors change and transform as they are passed from person to person, and before you know it, the word is that they are shutting down your entire department.

One effective way to address informal, unofficial speculation is to spell out clearly for all employees what is going on with a particular issue. If budget cuts are a concern, then it may be wise to send a memo explaining the changes that are imminent. If a company wants employees to take action, they may also issue a memorandum. For example, on February 13, 2009, upper management at the Panasonic Corporation issued a declaration that all employees should buy at least \$1,600 worth of Panasonic products. The company president noted that if everyone supported the company with purchases, it would benefit all (Lewis, 2009).

While memos do not normally include a call to action that requires personal spending, they often represent the business or organization's interests. They may also include statements that align business and employee interest, and underscore common ground and benefit.

Memo Format

A memo has a header that clearly indicates who sent it and who the intended recipients are. Pay particular attention to the title of the individual(s) in this section. Date and subject lines are also present, followed by a message that contains a declaration, a discussion, and a summary.

In a standard writing format, we might expect to see an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. All these are present in a memo, and each part has a clear purpose. The declaration in the opening uses a declarative sentence to announce the main topic. The discussion elaborates or lists major points associated with the topic, and the conclusion serves as a summary.

To: All Employees
From: Larry Ogawa, President, University of State
Date: February 14, 2009

Subject: Future Expenditure Guidelines

After careful deliberation, I have determined it is necessary to begin the initial steps of a financial stewardship program that carries UState through what appears to be a two-year cycle of a severe state shortfall in revenue and subsequent necessary legislative budget reductions.

Beginning February 9, 2009, the following actions are being implemented for the General Fund, Auxiliary Fund, and Capital Fund in order to address the projected reductions in our state aid for the remainder of this year 2008–09 and for next year 2009–10.

1. Only purchases needed to operate the university should be made so that we can begin saving to reduce the impact of 2009–10 budget reductions.
2. Requests for out-of-state travel will require approval from the Executive Committee to ensure that only necessary institutional travel occurs.
3. Purchases, including in-state travel and budget transfers, will require the appropriate vice president's approval.

Please understand that we are taking these prudent steps to create savings that will allow UState to reduce the impact of projected cuts in expected 2009–10 legislative reductions. Thank you for your cooperation, and please direct any questions to my office.

FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE BUSSINESS MEMOS

Audience Orientation

Always consider the audience and their needs when preparing a memo. An acronym or abbreviation that is known to management may not be known by all the employees of the organization, and if the memo is to be posted and distributed within the organization, the goal is clear and concise communication at all levels with no ambiguity.

Professional, Formal Tone

Memos are often announcements, and the person sending the memo speaks for a part or all of the organization. While it may contain a request for feedback, the announcement itself is linear, from the organization to the employees. The memo may have legal standing as it often reflects policies or procedures, and may reference an existing or new policy in the employee manual, for example.

Subject Emphasis

The subject is normally declared in the subject line and should be clear and concise. If the memo is announcing the observance of a holiday, for example, the specific holiday should be named in the subject line—for example, use “Thanksgiving weekend schedule” rather than “holiday observance.”

Direct Format

Some written business communication allows for a choice between direct and indirect formats, but memorandums are always direct. The purpose is clearly announced.

Objectivity

Memos are a place for just the facts, and should have an objective tone without personal bias, preference, or interest on display. Avoid subjectivity.

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