

chapter five

# The Writing Process and an Introduction to Business Messages



# Overview

- The Writing Process
- The Importance of Readable Formatting
- The Main Types of Business Messages
  - Letters
  - Memorandums
  - Email
  - Text messaging
  - Instant messaging

# The Process of Writing (1 of 4)





# The Process of Writing (2 of 4)

- Planning the Message
  - Gathering and collecting information
  - Analyzing and organizing the information
  - Choosing a form, channel, and format

# The Process of Writing (3 of 4)

- Drafting the Message
  - Avoid perfectionism
  - Keep going
  - Use any other strategies that you find helpful

# The Process of Writing (4 of 4)

- Revising
  - Revision
  - Editing
  - Proofreading

# The Importance of Readable Formatting

- Avoid a daunting-looking document
- Use formatting devices to enhance readability and comprehension, such as . . .
  - White space
  - Headings
  - Typographical emphasis (boldface, etc.)
  - Bulleted lists
  - Diagrams and pictures

# Traditional Letters

- The oldest form
- Their format (Appendix B)
- Their level of formality
- Their usual audience (external)



# Memorandums Are Internal Messages (within a company)

- Email is fast taking over.
- Typically they have a distinctive form:
  - Date, To, From Subject

# Techniques for Writing Memorandums

- Techniques for writing short, simple messages are much like those for informal email.
- Longer, more formal messages should follow the advice in Chapters 6-8.
- They are usually written in the direct pattern
- But if on sensitive topics, they may use the indirect order.

# Advantages of Email

- Explosive recent growth
- And the growth to continue
  - Eliminates telephone tag
  - Saves time
  - Speeds up decision making
  - Cheap
  - Provides a written record

# Disadvantages of Email

- Not confidential
- No authoritative signature
- Doesn't show emotion
- May be ignored



# Formality of Email Writing

- Range is from highly formal to highly informal.
- Three general writing styles:
  - Casual
  - Informal
  - Formal

# Informal Writing

- Retains some casual qualities (personal pronouns, contractions)
- Corresponds to proper conversation

# Formal Writing

- Maintains distance between writer and reader.
- Avoids personal references and contractions.
- Example: “The proposal is excellent. The executives are likely to approve it.”

# General Email Writing Considerations (1 of 4)

## □ Conciseness

- Make the sentences short—only the essentials.
- Use words economically.
- Paraphrase previous messages concisely.



# General Email Writing Considerations (2 of 4)

## 2 Clarity

- Practice clear writing techniques.
- Review preceding chapters.

## □ Etiquette

- Be courteous and fair.
- Avoid “flaming” (anger displays).
- Practice courtesy techniques (as presented in Chapter 4).

# General Email Writing Considerations (4 of 4)

## 4 Correctness

- Email's fast pace often leads to incorrect writing.
- Avoid sloppy writing.

# Instant Messaging

- Growing in popularity
- Like a typed phone conversation
- Needs to be adapted to the audience
- May be monitored

**“There is no great writing, only great rewriting.”**

**--Louis D. Brandeis  
Justice of the Supreme Court, 1916-1939**



chapter six

# Directness in Good News and Neutral Situations



# Overview

- Preliminary assessment
- A general direct plan
- Applications of the general plan to
  - Routine inquiries
  - Favorable responses
  - Adjustment grants
  - Order acknowledgments
  - Claims
  - Operational Messages

# A General Guideline for Organizing Messages

- Short messages usually are written in the direct order.
- Long messages may require indirect order.



# Preliminary Assessment

- Determine the reader's probable reaction – positive, neutral, negative
  - If positive or neutral, directness usually recommended
  - If negative, indirectness usually recommended



# The General Indirect Plan

- Start with the objective.
- Include any necessary identification information.
- Cover the remainder of the objective.
- End with goodwill.

# Preliminary Considerations in Writing Routine Inquiries

- You are asking for something your reader is likely to grant.
- Thus, a direct approach is justified.

# Directness for Routine Inquiries

## The message plan:

- Opening** ■ Begin directly with the objective.
  - Either ask a specific question or
  - make a general request for the information.
- Body** ■ Include any necessary explanation--wherever it fits (as a separate part of the message or worked in with the questions).
  - If a number of questions are involved, give them structure.
    - May number them.
    - Make them stand out.
- Closing** ■ End with goodwill words--something appropriate that fits the one case.



# Routine Inquiry—Bad Example

Dear Mr. Crifasi:

As you will recall, you recently returned merchandise to us. We at Hobsons sincerely hope that this transaction was satisfactory. In fact, we are in the process of making changes which will insure that such transactions are favorably handled. Thus, we would like the answers for some questions about your experiences returning merchandise to us.

We'd like to know whether you were served promptly and courteously and whether the adjustment was satisfactory and in accordance with your wishes. Also, we'd like to know whether the salesperson offered assistance to you in selecting other merchandise.

You may just write your comments on this letter and return it in the enclosed addressed and stamped envelope. Thanking you in advance for your cooperation, I remain,

Sincerely,



# Routine Inquiry--Good Example

Dear Mr. Crifasi:

Will you please help us to serve you better by answering the following questions.

When you returned merchandise at our store recently:

1. Were you served promptly and courteously?
2. Was the adjustment satisfactory and in accordance with your wishes?
3. Did the salesperson offer to assist you in selecting other merchandise?

Please write your answers--and any other comments you may wish to make about the service of this store and any other Hobson store--on this letter. Then return it in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope.

We shall be most grateful for your help.

Sincerely,



To: Jessica Brown <Jessica\_Brown@trevorhardware.com>

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Itemized statement for July

Dear Ms. Brown:

Will you please send me an itemized statement covering my account for July.

According to my invoice file, the amount owed should be \$2,374.27. Your statement shows \$2,833.74 owed. Perhaps you did not record the \$427.17 of merchandise returned on invoice no. 3211C late last week. But even this possible error does not explain all of the difference.

I shall appreciate your usual promptness in clearing up this matter.

Jane Adami, President  
Two Sisters Antiques



# Preliminary Considerations in Writing a Favorable Response

- You are complying with the reader's request.
- The news is good.
- Thus, directness is justified.

# Directness for a Favorable Response

## The message plan:

- Opening** ■ Begin with the answer or state you are complying with the request.
  - Identify the message being answered--incidentally in the beginning or in a subject line.
- Body** ■ Continue to give what is wanted in an orderly arrangement.
  - If negative information is involved, give it proper emphasis. Consider including extras.
- Closing** ■ End with friendly, adapted words.





To: Jandrews@mclaughlinbody.com

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Manufacturers' Directory Assistance

Mr. Andrews:

Yes, we'll gladly help with your manufacturers' directory, just as you have asked in your April 12 message.

To get the names and classifications up to the "directory" exactness, Mr. Joseph McLaughlin, of our own directory staff, has already started a by-name check of each listed industry. He will label carefully the exact goods produced or processed; and he will mark the sales agents as such. You can expect his report by the 20th, I'm sure.

Your completed online directory will certainly help Louisiana industry get a measure of itself and will help to "sell" Louisiana as a ripe field for many types of new enterprises. It's a fine job you are taking on. We'll be glad to see the finished product.

Lisa Miller

# Preliminary Considerations in Writing an Adjustment Grant

- The news is good.
- Something bad has happened, and you are correcting it.
- But even though the main message is good news, you have the need to regain lost confidence.



# Directness for an Adjustment Grant

## The message plan:

- Opening** ■ Begin directly--with the good news.
  - Incidentally identify the message you are answering.
- Body** ■ Avoid negatives that recall the situation being corrected.
  - Regain lost confidence through explanation or corrective action.

**Closing**

Untitled - Message (HTML)

Message H Insert N Options P Format Text Q

Send Account Paste Copy Format Painter Send Clipboard

Calibri (Body) 11 Basic Text

Address Book Check Names Names

Attach File Business Card Include

Calendar Signature

Follow Up

Permission High Importance Low Importance Options

ABC Spelling Proofing

To: Katie McPhee

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Full credit for suit from Consort

Ms. McPhee:

Crediting your account for \$321.40 is Consort's way of assuring you that your satisfaction is very important to us.

Because we sincerely want to please, we thoroughly examined the suit you returned to us. Our investigation showed that the likely cause of the fading was accidental contact with some form of chemical. We couldn't determine precisely what the chemical was or just how contact was made. But we suspect a liquid spill sometime after packaging, either in our warehouse or during shipment. Such unexpected happenings will occur in spite of our best precautions. Anyway, we were relieved to know that Consort's reputation for quality fabrics and craftsmanship remains good.

We want you to know that we sincerely desire to serve you. And we look forward to serving you with high-quality Consort suits in the years ahead.

Albert T. Hamm, Manager  
Consumer Relations



# Preliminary Considerations in Writing an Order Acknowledgment

- You have received an order.
- Now you must report the status of the order.
- The situation is good news--routine in business.

# Directness for an Order Acknowledgment

## The message plan:

- Opening** ■ Give the status of order.
  - Include some goodwill—acknowledging incidentally, reselling, sales talk, or such.
- Body** ■ Include a “thank you.”
  - If there is a problem (vague order, back order)--
    - Some businesses report frankly, assuming some problems are expected.
    - Others prefer to use tactful approach to get needed information on vague orders, or report back orders.
- Close with adapted, friendly words.

## Closing



Untitled - Message (HTML)

Message Insert Options Format Text

Send Account Paste Copy Format Painter

Send Clipboard

Calibri (Body) 11

B I U

Basic Text

Address Book Check Names

Names

Attach File Business Card Calendar Signature

Include

Follow Up

Permission High Importance Low Importance

Options

ABC Spelling Proofing

To: Krystal Benko

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Trevor Hardware Order Confirmation

Mr. Cotton:

By the time you receive this letter, you should have received the assorted pipe you ordered July 15. As you requested we shipped it by Zephyr Freight, and we will bill you on the first.

As you may know, the J-4 Kotter Pipe Joint Clamps have been a very popular item recently. We have marked these clamps for rush shipment to you just as soon as our supplies are replenished. Our plant foreman tells me that his people are working overtime to catch up. He promises that we will have the clamps on the way to you no later than August 12.

# Preliminary Considerations in Making a Claim

- A product or service has given you a problem.
  - You are in the right.
  - Probably the offending company will want to correct the matter.
  - You want to make a strong claim.
- These three facts of the case support directness.



# Directness in Making a Claim

## The message plan:

- Opening** ■ Begin directly. Tell what is wrong.
  - Include all necessary facts in the text or in a subject line.
- Body** ■ Explain the facts—enough to permit a decision.
  - Seek corrective action, either by
    - stating what you want, or
    - letting the reader decide what to do.
- Closing** ■ End positively—on a friendly but firm note.

Untitled - Message (HTML)

Message H Insert N Options P Format Text O

Send Account Paste Copy Format Painter Clipboard

Calibri (Body) 11 B I U Basic Text

Address Book Check Names Names

Attach File Business Card Include

Follow Up Permission High Importance Low Importance Options

Spelling Proofing

To: Alison Ott

Cc:

Bcc:

Subject: Wrong billing of shipment under Invoice X13771

Ms. Ott:

From your invoice of August 7, I see that you have sent my gifts C.O.D. I need your friendly help in restoring face.

Please refer to my original order of July 31 (copy attached) to see that the Madam Butterfly jewel box for Ms. Mary Ellen Bannister and the Piper smoking jacket for Mr. Collis Bannister were clearly specified for prepaid shipment. You were to include the bill for these items in the C.O.D. shipment of the Black Diamond desk sent to me.

Please correct this embarrassing error right away. I ask that you write each of the recipients of my gifts, refunding their money and explaining what happened. Then send copies of your letters and the total bill to me.

You have my grateful thanks for putting me back in the good graces of the Bannisters.

Helen Toohey



# Operational Communications

- The internal communications needed in a company's work
  - They range widely in formality.
  - Most are informal – written directly with courteous frankness.
  - The few formal ones generally follow the pattern of other formal messages.

**“You have to expect things of yourself  
before you can do them.”**

**--Michael Jordan**