

Delivering Business Messages

Positive, Neutral, & Negative

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Professor

IBA, DU

Khaled Mahmud

Selecting Writing Approach

- Based on reader's probable reaction-
 - Direct order
 - Indirect order

Selecting Writing Approach

- When ever you are writing a message, properly assess the reader's reaction;
 - If the reaction is negative, indirect order is your likely choice
 - If it is positive or neutral, you probably will want directness

Writing Routine, Good-News and Goodwill Messages



Directness is likely choice

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Routine, Good-News and Goodwill Messages Includes-

- Routine requests:
 - Asking for information, placing orders, making claims and requesting adjustments, requesting changes in system requirements (during development, after installation), requesting recommendations and references etc.
- Routine Responses:
 - Sending informative messages, granting requests for information and action, granting claims and requests for adjustments, accepting change requests, providing recommendations and references

Routine, Good-News and Goodwill Messages Includes (Contd.)-

- Announcing Good News:
 - About employment, about products and operations
- Sending Goodwill Messages:
 - Congratulations, Message of Appreciation

The Direct Pattern

- Begin with the objective (Tell immediately why you are writing)
- Explain in the body
- Be specific and courteous in the closing

Requesting Information and Action



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Opening

- Routine requests begin asking a question or issue with a polite command
- *(Will you please provide me with information about the ERP system you develop.)---*No question mark.

Body

- Include necessary information whenever fits (explain your purpose and provide details)
- “It would be nice if you would tell me . . .” and “I would like to know . . .”
- If a number of questions are involved, ask them. Make the questions stand out (using bullet, numbering, paragraphing)
- To elicit the most information, use open-ended questions (*What training programs do you recommend?*) rather than yes-or-no questions (*Are training programs available?*).

Closing

- State specifically, but courteously, the action you wish to be taken.
- Set an end date, if one is significant, and explain why.

E.g., (We will appreciate having your answers for our October 3 staff meeting).

- Avoid cliché endings (*Thank you in advance for your cooperation, a prompt reply will be appreciated*).
- Show appreciation but use a fresh expression. (We would appreciate hearing from you this week. You can reach me by calling 989 during business hours.

Routine Request

“Before” Version



This letter's indirect and vague beginning makes it slow.

Dear Mr. Piper:

We have seen your advertisement for 3,200 square feet of office space in the *Daily Journal*. As we are interested, we would like additional information.

Specifically, we would like to know the interior layout, annual cost, availability of transportation, length of lease agreement, escalation provisions, and any other information you think pertinent.

If the information you give us is favorable, we will inspect the property. Please send your reply.

Sincerely

Routine Request

“After” Version



This direct and orderly letter is better.

Dear Mr. Piper:

Will you please answer the following questions about the 3,200-square-foot office suite advertised in the June 28 issue of the *Daily Journal*? It appears that this space may be suitable for the new regional headquarters we are opening in your city in August.

- Is the layout of these offices suitable for a work force of two administrators, a receptionist, and seven office employees? (If possible, please send us a diagram of the space.)
- What is the annual rental charge?
- Are housekeeping, maintenance, and utilities included?
- What is the nature of the walls and flooring?
- Does the location provide easy access to mass transportation and the airport?
- What are your requirements for length of lease agreement?
- What escalation provisions are included in the lease agreement?

If your answers meet our needs, we would like to arrange a tour of the offices as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

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Routine Request

"Before" Version

Dear Sir:

Because we are one of the largest banking systems in the country, we receive hundreds of résumés from job candidates every day. We need help in sorting and ranking candidates by categories, such as job classification, education, work history, skill, and experience.

Recently, I was reading *WORKFORCE* magazine, and the March issue has a story about your new software program called Resumix. It sounds fascinating and may be the answer to our problem. We would like more information about this program, which is supposed to read and sort résumés.

In addition to learning if the program can sort candidates into the categories mentioned earlier, I'm wondering if the program can read all the different typefonts and formats that candidates use on their résumés. Another important consideration for us is training and troubleshooting. If we need help with the program, would you supply it?

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Khaled Mahmud

Routine Request

"After" Version

Dear Product Manager:

Please send me information about your Resumix software program, which I read about in the March issue of *WORKFORCE* magazine.

We receive hundreds of résumés daily, and, frankly, we need assistance in processing them. Answers to the following questions would help us determine if Resumix could solve our problem.

1. In terms of fonts and formats, what kinds of résumés can your software read?
2. Can the program help us sort and rank candidates by categories such as job classification, education, work history, skill, and experience?
3. How does your company provide training and troubleshooting service for your software?

I would appreciate your response by April 1 so that we can study the program before the rush of job applications in June.

Sincerely,

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Routine Claim Letters



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Preliminary Considerations in Writing a Claim Letter

- 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 for a Claim Letter

Opening

- Begin directly. Tell what is wrong and what you want.

Body

- Explain the facts—enough to permit a decision. Clarify the problem and justify your request.
- Seek corrective action, either by
 - stating what you want, or
 - letting the reader decide what to do.
- Include names of individuals and dates of previous actions.
- End positively—on a friendly but firm note.

Closing

- **Note: Act promptly in making claims, and keep a copy of your message.**

Claim Message

"After" Version

Direct
statement
of problem

Dear Mr. Ferguson:

Subject: Color fading of your Kota-Tuff carpeting, your invoice 3147
dated January 3, 2007.

Clearly
states
problem and
identifies
transaction

Emphasis
on effect

The Kota-Tuff carpeting you installed for us last January has faded
badly and is an eyesore in our hotel pool area.

As you can see in the enclosed photograph, the original forest
green color now is spotted with rings of varying shades of white
and green. The spotting is especially heavy in areas adjacent to the
pool. Probably water has caused the damage. But your written
warranty says that the color will "withstand the effects of sun and
water."

Explains
nature and
extent of
defect

Establishes
case firmly

Suggests
solution

Because the product clearly has not lived up to the warranty, we
ask that you replace the Kota-Tuff with a more suitable carpeting.
If you are unable to find a satisfactory carpeting, we request a
refund of the full purchase price, including installation.

Justifies
claim

I will appreciate your usual promptness in correcting this problem.

Claim Message

“Before” Version

Subject: Our Order No. 7135

Mr. Goetz

As your records will show, on March 7 we ordered 30 Old London lamppost lights (our Order No. 7135). The units were received by us on March 14 (your Invoice No. 715C).

At the time of delivery, our shipping and receiving supervisor noticed that some of the cartons had broken glass inside. Upon further inspection, he found that the glass on 17 of the lamps was broken. Further inspection showed that your packers had been negligent as there was insufficient packing material in each carton.

It is hard for me to understand a shipping system that permits such errors to take place. We had advertised these lights for our annual spring promotion, which begins next Saturday. We want the lights by then or our money back.

Megan Adami

This message is
slow and harsh.



Claim Message

“After” Version

Subject: Broken glass in 17 Old London lamppost lights received

Mr. Goetz

Seventeen of the 30 lamppost lights we received today arrived with glass coverings broken.

At the time of delivery, our shipping and receiving manager noticed broken glass in some of the cartons. Upon further inspection, he found that 17 were in this condition. It was apparent to him that insufficient packing material was the cause of the problem.

Because we had advertised these lights for our annual spring promotion, which begins Saturday, please get replacements to us by that date. If delivery is not possible, we request a refund for the broken units. In either event, please instruct me on what to do with the damaged lamps.

I am aware, of course, that situations like this will occur in spite of all precautions. And I am confident that you will replace the units with your usual courtesy.

Megan Adami

This better message follows text recommendations.



Inquiries About People

- The form of routine inquiry involves two aspects:
 - Need to respect human rights
 - Need to structure around the one job

Dear Mr. Bateman:

Subject: Request for some information about Mr. Solaiman Ali

Will you please assist me in evaluating Mr. Solaiman Ali for work as a district sales manager with us. In his application Mr. Solaiman indicated that he worked for you as a salesperson from early 2001 to 2005. He has authorized this inquiry. The work for which we are considering Mr. Solaiman involves supervision a staff of four salespeople plus an office staff of two. While with you, did Mr. Solaiman show the leadership ability such an assignment requires?

As a manger, Mr. Solaiman would need to know administration. He would be responsible for running the business end of an office. Do you feel he has the necessary knowledge and ability?

Mr. Solaiman would also be responsible for managing the sales efforts in her district--activities like setting quotas, working out itineraries, evaluating performance, and coordinating and stimulating sales efforts. Does he have the ability to do these things?

In addition to the managerial duties, Mr. Solaiman would spend some time selling Kopy Kat equipment. This is hard selling--and it requires an aggressive, personable, hardworking person. Does Mr. Solaiman meet this requirement?

Both Mr. Solaiman and I will appreciate your candid replies to these questions, plus any other information you feel we should have. Of course, I will hold your comments in strict confidence.

Sukhon Haider, Manager
Human Resources Department

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Order Letters



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Opening

- Use order language to identify the message (*Please send the following items from your spring catalog by UPS*).
- Name the information source (*the May 2 advertisement in the Daily News*).

Body

- List items vertically.
- Provide quantity, order number, complete description, unit price, and total price.
- Prevent mistakes by providing as much information as possible.

Closing

- Tell how you plan to pay for the merchandise.
- Tell when you would like to receive the goods, and supply any special instructions.
- Express appreciation.

Direct Reply Letters



Directness for a Favorable Response

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 reduced emphasis.

Closing

- End with friendly, adapted words.

Answering a request/action



Response Message

“Before” Version

Subject: Your inquiry of April 3

Ms. Motley

I have received your April 3 message, in which you inquire about our Chem-Treat paint. I want you to know that we appreciate your interest and will welcome your business.

In response to your question about how many coats are needed to cover new surfaces, I regret to report that two are usually required. The paint is mildewproof. We do guarantee it. It has been well tested in our laboratories. It is safe to use as directed.

George Moxley

This email is
indirect and
ineffective.



Response Message

“After” Version



This direct email
does a better job.

Subject: Your April 3 inquiry about Chem-Treat

Ms. Motley

Yes, Chem-Treat paint will prevent mildew or we will give you back your money. We know it works because we have tested it under all common conditions. In every case, it proved successful.

When you carefully follow the directions on each can, Chem-Treat paint is guaranteed safe. As the directions state, you should use Chem-Treat only in a well-ventilated room—never in a closed, unvented area.

One gallon of Chem-Treat is usually enough for one-coat coverage of 500 square feet of previously painted surface. For the best results on new surfaces, you will want to apply two coats. For such surfaces, you should figure about 200 square feet per gallon for a long-lasting coating.

We sincerely appreciate your interest in Chem-Treat, Ms. Motley. This mildewproof paint will bring you five years or more of beautiful protection.

George Moxley

Response Message

"After" Version

Dear Ms. Casey:

Direct—
tells that
writer is
complying

Following is the information about our use of temporary executive suites you requested in your August 3 fax. For your convenience, I have numbered my responses to correspond with the sequence you used.

Sets up
listing

Orderly
listing of
answers

1. Our executives have mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the center. At the beginning, majority opinion was negative; but it appears now that most of the antagonism has faded.
2. The center definitely has saved us money. Rental costs in the suburbs are much less than downtown costs; annual savings are estimated at nearly 30 percent.
3. The transition did create a morale problem among those remaining downtown even after we assured them that their workloads would not increase.
4. We began using executive suites at the request of several sales representatives who had read about other companies using them. We pilot-tested the program in one territory for a year using volunteers before we implemented it companywide.
5. We are quite willing to share with you the list of facilities we plan to use again. Additionally I am enclosing a copy of our corporate policy, which describes details of use.

Complete
yet concise
answers

Friendly—
adapted to
the one
case

If after reviewing this information you have any other questions, please write me again. And if you want to contact our sales representatives for firsthand information, please do so. I wish you the best of luck in implementing these suites in your operations.

This extra
builds
good-will

Khaled Maḥmūd

Granting Claims



Khaled Mahmud

Granting Claims

Opening

- When approving a customer's claim, announce the good news immediately.
- Avoid sounding grudging or reluctant.

Body

- Strive to **win back the customer's confidence**; consider explaining what went wrong (if you know).
- Concentrate on how diligently your organization works to avoid disappointing customers.
- Be careful about admitting responsibility; check with your boss or legal counsel first.
- **Avoid negative language** (trouble, neglect, fault, unfortunately, inconvenience, discomfort).
- **Don't blame customers – even if they are at fault.**
- **Don't blame individuals or departments in your organization.**
- Don't make unrealistic promises.

Granting Claims (Contd.)

Closing

- Show appreciation that the customer wrote.
- Extend thanks for past business.
- Refer to your desire to be of service.

Granting Claims

“After” Version

Dear Mr. Haturuaingha:

Subject: Full credit for suit from Westecs

Crediting your account for 8350 is Westecs'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 occurred in spite of our best precautions and this is a very rare instance. Anyway, we were relieved to know that Westecs'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 Westecs suits in the years ahead.

Albert T. Hamm, Manager
Consumer Relations

Khaled Mahmud

Full credit from...

Granting Claims

“Before” Version



This email is indirect and negative.

Subject: Your broken Old London lights

Ms. Watson,

We have received your May 1 claim reporting that our shipment of Old London lamppost lights reached you with 17 broken units. We regret the inconvenience caused you and can understand your unhappiness.

Following our standard practice, we investigated the situation thoroughly. Apparently the fault is the result of an inexperienced temporary employee's negligence. We have taken corrective measures to assure that future shipments will be packed more carefully.

I am pleased to report that we are sending replacements today. They should reach you before your sale begins. Our driver will pick up the broken units when he makes delivery.

Again, we regret all the trouble caused you.

Stephanie King

Granting Claims

“After” Version

Subject: Your May 1 report on invoice 1248

Ms. Watson,

Seventeen carefully packed Old London lamppost lamps should reach your sales floor in time for your Saturday promotion. Our driver left our warehouse today with instructions to special deliver them to you on Friday.

Because your satisfaction with our service and products is our top priority, we have thoroughly checked our shipping procedures. It appears that the shipment to you was packed by a temporary employee who was filling in for a hospitalized veteran packer. We now have our veteran packer back at work, and have taken measures to ensure better performance by our temporary staff.

As you know, the Old London lamppost lights have become one of the hottest products in the lighting field. Their authentic Elizabethan design has made them a smashing success. We are confident they will play their part in the success of your sale.

Stephanie King

This message
is direct and
positive.



Letters of Recommendation



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Opening

- Name the candidate and position sought.
- State that your remarks are confidential.
- Describe your relationship with the candidate.

Body

- Describe the applicant's performance and potential.
- Strive to include statements about communication skills, organizational skills, people skills, ability to work with a team, etc.
- Include definite, task-related descriptions (*She completed two 50-page proposals* instead of *She works hard*).
- Include negative statements only if they are objective and supported by facts.

Closing

- If supportive, summarize candidate's best points.
- Offer ranking of candidate (*Of all the accountants I have supervised, she ranks in the top 10 percent*).
- Offer to supply additional information if needed.

Dear Mr. Shukhon:

Subject: Confidential report on Mr. Solaiman Ali, requested July 2

From December 2002 through February 2005, Mr. Solaiman worked for Central Grocery, Inc., under my direction. He left us for employment in her hometown. We would welcome her back. While he was with us, she served first as a stock clerk, later as a checkout cashier, and for the last year as my assistant. During this time he learned all aspects of the grocery business. In my judgment, he has the experience and knowledge needed for the job she seeks.

I feel, also, that Mr. Solaiman has the personal qualities the job requires. He is mature, stable, and personable. He has strong convictions and expresses them firmly--sometimes at the expense of harmony within the work group. But he is also sincere and open-minded. As far as I know, his morals are exemplary.

Answering your question about Mr. Solaiman's leadership ability is somewhat difficult for his work with us was primarily in a subordinate position. But from what I have observed, I feel that he has good leadership potential. He appears to like people and to have a genuine concern for them. And he appears to have other characteristics of good leadership--a sense of fairness, good communication ability, loyalty, and dedication to work.

In summary, I feel that Mr. Solaiman is well qualified for the work he seeks. I would not hesitate to put him in a similar position in this company.

If I can help you further in your evaluation Mr. Solaiman, please write me again.

T. Iqbal, Manager
Human Resources
Central Grocery

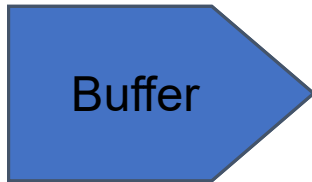
Communicating Bad/Negative News

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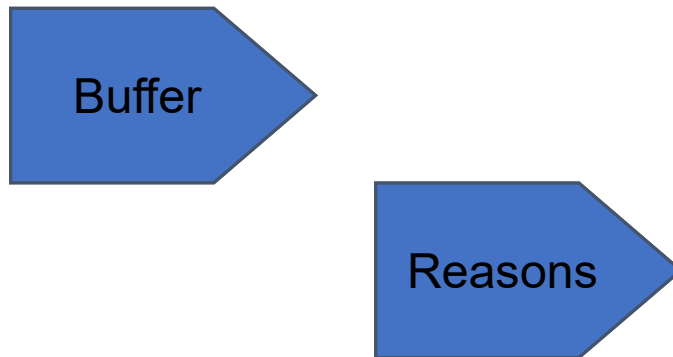
Goals in Communicating Bad/Negative News

- To make the **reader** understand and **accept** the bad news
- To promote and maintain a good image of the writer and the writer's organization
- To make the **message so clear** that additional correspondence is unnecessary

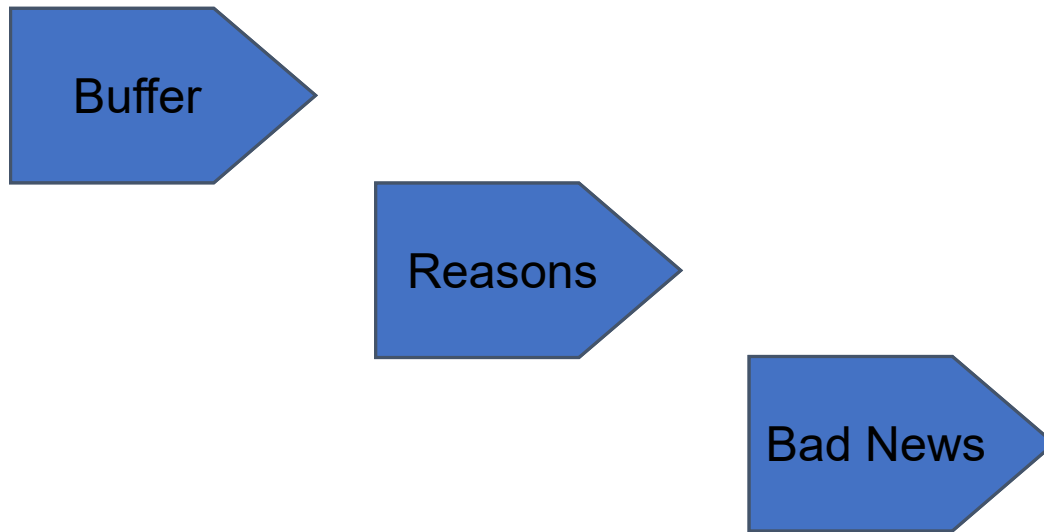
The Indirect Pattern



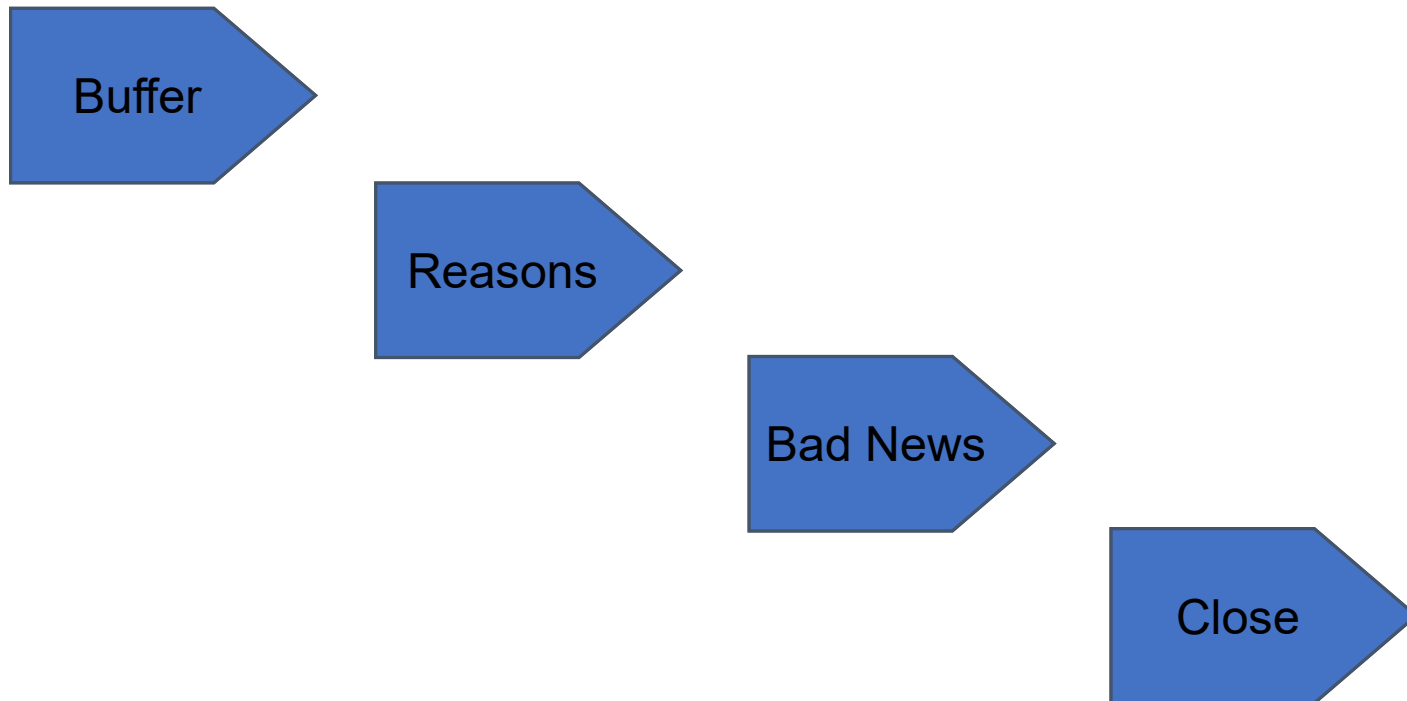
The Indirect Pattern



The Indirect Pattern



The Indirect Pattern



The Indirect Pattern

- **BUFFER** – a neutral or positive opening that does not reveal the bad news
- **REASONS** – an explanation of the causes for the bad news
- **BAD NEWS** – a clear but understated announcement of the bad news that may include an alternative or compromise
- **CLOSE** – a personalizing, forward-looking, pleasant statement

Brief Review of a Procedure for a Refused Request

Preliminary considerations:

- The news is bad.
- The reader wants something; you must refuse.
- Your goals are:
 - to say no, and
 - to maintain goodwill.
- The first goal is easy; the second requires tact.
- You must present reasons that will convince.

Refusing Routine Requests



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Buffer-

- ☐ Pay a compliment, show appreciation for past action, or refer to something mutually understood.
- ☐ Avoid raising false hopes.

Reasons-

- ☐ Explain why the request must be denied, without revealing the refusal.
- ☐ Avoid negativity (*unfortunately, impossible*).
- ☐ Show how your decision benefits the receiver or others, if possible.

Bad News-

- ☐ Soften the bad news by
 - (1) subordinating it (*although we can't loan our equipment, we wish you well in . . .*).
 - (2) using the passive voice (*office equipment can't be loaned, but . . .*).
 - (3) embedding it in a long sentence or paragraph.
- ☐ Consider implying the refusal, but be certain it is clear.
- ☐ Suggest an alternative, if one exists.

Closing-

- ☐ Supply more information about an alternative, if one is offered.
- ☐ Look forward to future relations.
- ☐ Offer good wishes and compliments.
- ☐ Avoid referring to the refusal.

Claim Refusal

"Before" Version



The bad email shows little concern for the reader's feelings.

Subject: Your May 3 claim for damages

Ms. Sanderson,

I regret to report that we must reject your request for money back on the faded Do-Craft fabric.

We must refuse because Do-Craft fabrics are not made for outside use. It is difficult for me to understand how you failed to notice this limitation. It was clearly stated in the catalog from which you ordered. It was even stamped on the back of every yard of fabric. Since we have been more than reasonable in trying to inform you, we cannot possibly be responsible.

We trust that you will understand our position. We regret very much the damage and inconvenience our product has caused you.

Marilyn Cox, Customer Relations

Claim Refusal

"After" Version



This better email is indirect, tactful, and helpful.

Subject: Your May 3 message about Do-Craft fabric

Ms. Sanderson,

Certainly, you have a right to expect the best possible service from Do-Craft fabrics. Every Do-Craft product is the result of years of experimentation. And we manufacture each yard under the most careful controls. We are determined that our products will do for you what we say they will do.

Because we do want our fabrics to please, we carefully inspected the photos of Do-Craft Fabric 103 you sent us. It is apparent that each sample has been subjected to long periods in extreme sunlight. Since we have known from the beginning that Do-Craft fabrics cannot withstand exposure to sunlight, we have clearly noted this in all our advertising, in the catalog from which you ordered, and in a stamped reminder on the back of every yard of the fabric. Under the circumstances, all we can do concerning your request is suggest that you change to one of our outdoor fabrics. As you can see from our catalog, all of the fabrics in the 200 series are recommended for outdoor use.

You may also be interested in the new Duck Back cotton fabrics listed in our 500 series. These plastic-coated cotton fabrics are most economical, and they resist sun and rain remarkably well. If we can help you further in your selection, please contact us at service@pinnacle.com.

Marilyn Cox, Consumer Relations

Claim Refusal

"After" Version

Dear Mr. Waters:

We're happy to learn that you are enjoying the use of the Sako copier you've been leasing for the past ten months. Like our many other customers, you have discovered that Sako copiers offer remarkable versatility and reliability.

One of the reasons we're able to offer these outstanding copiers at such low leasing rates and equally low purchase prices is that we maintain a slim profit margin. If our program included a provision for applying lease payments toward the purchase price, our overall prices would have to be higher. Although lease payments cannot be credited toward purchase price, we can offer you other Sako models that are within your price range. The Sako 400 delivers the same reliability with nearly as many features as the Sako 600.

Please let us demonstrate the Sako 400 to your staff in your office, Mr. Waters. Our representative, Tracy Wilson, will call you soon to arrange a time if it does for you.

Sincerely,

Brief Review of Procedure for Credit Refusals

Opening

- Begin with words that
 - are neutral, and
 - tie in with document being answered.
 - set up the strategy (explanation).

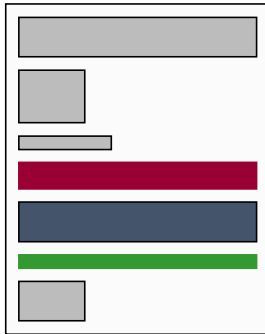
Body

- Present the explanation and/or justification.
- As a logical follow-up--refuse tactfully.
 - If to a bad moral risk, may be by implication.
 - If to one with weak finances,
 - should refuse positively, and
 - look hopefully to the future.

Closing

- Close with goodwill words that fit the one case and are friendly and forward-looking.

Credit Refusal

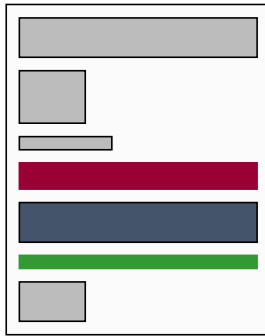


Opening

Dear Ms. Tressy:

We are really pleased to know that your company liked our product sample and appreciate your March 29 order for the products. The statements, trade references, and explanations accompanying the order were really helpful to assess your request.

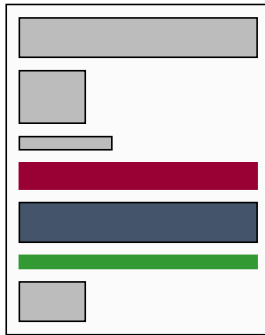
Credit Refusal (Contd.)



Body

In checking over them, we find that you have an unusually heavy burden of invoices to pay within the next few months. As we see it, burdening you with more bills to pay at this time simply would not make good business sense. Thus, we can sell to you only for cash now. By buying for cash and taking advantage of the cash discount, you would be taking a sound step toward improving the financial health of your business. Just as soon as your situation is improved, we shall open your account.

Credit Refusal (Contd.)



Closing

We look forward to receiving your check for BDT 95000 (BDT 100000 less the BDT 5000 discount). When we get it, we'll rush your merchandise to you.

Sincerely,

Susan Yassine

Susan Yassine

Any problem with this?

- Since you are supposed to place your request by September 30, 2023, we cannot accommodate the changes you requested at this last hour.

What about this?

- For the timely delivery of your system, we can accommodate changes that are placed before September 30, 2023.

**“ To speak kindly does not
hurt the tongue.”**

--Unknown

Any questions?

khaled@iba-du.edu