MEMO WRITING

What is Memo?

□ The word "memo" is short for memorandum .

□ A memo is a note to a group of people telling them to do something, or informing them of a new policy(plan of action).

A memo is:

- ✓A hard-copy (sent on paper) document.
- ✓Used for communicating inside an organization.
- ✓Usually short.
- ✓Contains **To**, **From**, **Date**, **Subject Headings** and **Message** sections.

- ✓Does not need to be signed, but **sometimes** has the **sender's name** at the bottom to be more friendly, or the sender's full name to be more formal.

Reasons to send out a memo could be:

- An IT guy sending a reminder that all passwords need to be updated every 60 days.

- An Office Manager reminding people to put all dishes in the sink by the end of the day.

- A CEO explaining a new bonus policy.

Memos can be...

- ☐ Memos can be
- ☐ instructional
- ☐ Informational
- ☐ directive
- ☐ persuasive & technical

Parts of a Memo

☐ Regardless of your purpose, memos are generally divided into segments in order to organize the information and to achieve your intention.

Heading

- The heading segment follows this general format:
  - **TO**: (readers' names and job titles)
  - **CC**: (in case any people you are copying the memo to)
  - **FROM**: (your name and job title)
  - **DATE**: (complete and current date)
  - **SUBJECT**: (what the memo is about, highlighted in some way)

Heading Format 1

Date: -------

To: ------------

From: ------------

Subject: ------------

Heading Format 2

Date: ------------

Subject: ------------

To: ------------

From: ------------

Heading Format 3

To: -----   Date: -------

From: -------   Subject: -----

Heading Format 4

To: -----

From: -------

Date: ------

Subject: -----

Opening Segment

□ The gist of a memo should occur in the opening sentences/paragraphs.

Discussion Segments

□The discussion segments are the parts in which you get to include all the juicy details that support your ideas. Keep two things in mind:

Begin with the information that is most important. This may mean that you will start with key findings or recommendations.

Start with your most general information and move to your specific or supporting facts. (Be sure to use the same format when including details: strongest--->weakest.)

For easy reading, put important points or details into lists rather than paragraphs when possible.

Be careful to make lists parallel in grammatical form.

Summary Segment

- If your memo is longer than a page, you may want to include a separate summary segment.
- This segment provides a brief statement of the key recommendations you have reached.
- These will help your reader understand the key points of the memo immediately.
- This segment may also include references to methods and sources you have used in your research, but remember to keep it brief.

Closing Segment

- □ You're almost done. After the reader has read your information, you want to close with a courteous ending stating what action you want your reader to take.

Necessary Attachments

- Make sure you document your findings or provide detailed information whenever necessary. You can do this by attaching lists, graphs, tables, etc. at the end of your memo. Be sure to refer to your attachments in your memo and add a notation about what is attached below your closing

Tips for Writing Memo…

□ Before writing your memo, just remember these tips:

Memo Tip #1:

18

☐ **Make sure you have a crazily-easy-to-understand request BEFORE writing your memo.**

☐ For this purpose, ask these questions to yourself...

"Does this even NEED to be a memo? "

"If I got this memo in my inbox, would I just roll my eyes? "

"If I could get people to take ONE action after reading this memo, what would it be? "

Memo Tip #1:

□If you cannot answer any of those questions, perhaps you need to re-think if you should send out this memo.

□Needless memos take up time, cause needless frustration, and pile more work onto already-busy people. So let's make sure the memo is 100% necessary before sending it out!

Memo Tip #2:

- ❑ Get the "essential info" in the shortest space possible.
- ❑ Try to give shorter and reasonable details.

Memo Tip #3:

Avoid Clunky Constructions

Weak

1-Significant are the number of poor people.

2-The reason why the planning process failed is because it did not have a strong outreach program.

Better

1-The number of poor people is significant.

2-The planning process failed because it did not have a strong outreach program.

Memo Tip #4: **Simplify**

- 22

- **Weak** → **Better**
- Assistance → Help
- Endeavor → Try
- Terminate → End
- For the reason that → Because

In the event that → If

- Perform the editing function → edit

Memo Tip #5:

□Repeat and bold the action people should take at the end (in one sentence).

_____

_____

WHAT I NEED FROM EVERYONE:

Email me your favorite type of cake by 5pm today!

_____
_____

□Simply stating what you need from people at the end will dramatically increase how many people take the action.

Memo Tip #6:

- **If action doesn't need to be taken, then tell them.**

- Let's save a massive amount of time for everyone, if something needs to no action, just say it!

- At the end of your memo, just write at the end:

No action required.

- Those three words let everyone know there's nothing further they have to do.

Memo Tip #7:

Avoid the "naked this" unclear references

Weak

Engineers often view community involvement as an after thought. This <u>shortsightedness</u> can cause long-term problems in the planning process

Better

Engineers often view community involvement as an afterthought. **This** can cause long-term problems in the planning process

- Weak
- Programmers often view code reuse as an excuse to avoid testing and documenting particular parts of a system. This can allow minor bugs to go undetected.

- Better
- Programmers often view code reuse as an excuse to avoid testing and documenting particular parts of a system. <u>This improper reuse</u> can allow minor bugs to go undetected.

Memo Tip #8:

Stress Active, not Passive Voice

The weaknesses were not documented. **(Passive)**

Mistakes were made. **(Passive)**
I think that this design is problematic. I think designs could have been improved by…. **(Active – overuse of personal pronouns)**

The planners did not document the weaknesses. **(Active)**
I made a mistake. **(Active)**
The planners could have improved the design. by…**(Active)**

Characteristics of a great memo:

- ☐ Very first section reminds them what action to take.
- ☐ Main message is super short and to-the-point.
- ☐ Very last section re-reminds them what action to take.

Characteristics of a bad memo:

☐Super long header

☐Speaks in very "corporate-y tone" which bores people

☐Super long body of text that's hard to read

☐Lots of unnecessary details

☐Main point of memo is not immediately obvious

☐Last section does not re-state the action people need to take

Quick Guidelines:

So before sending a memo, just remember to follow these quick guidelines:

☐Make sure the action you're requesting is worthy of an entire memo

☐Give a one-sentence explanation of the memo in the header

▪ **Shorter = Better.**

☐Get to the point right away

☐Re-read your memo and eliminate needless chatter

☐The last part of the memo should say exactly what action you want people to take

Example Memo 1

To:
Health and Safety Committee

From:
Rana Ali
Chairperson, H&S Ctte

Date:
6 Jan, 2017

Subject:
Room Change for Next Meeting

The meeting on Saturday, 7 February has been changed to Room 101

Example Memo 2

To: Department Chairs

From: Dr. Kerns, CEO

Date: March 13, 2016

Subject: **<u>Budgeted Fund for Office Supplies</u>**

Please note that we have used more than 80% of the budgeted funds for office supplies for this fiscal year. We have over 3 months left in the fiscal year. Plan accordingly so that you do not overspend in this area.

Please see me to discuss circumstances.

Example Memo 3

To: All Staff

From: Dr. Jeff Joyner, President Date: March 13, 2016

Subject: **Annual Company Picnic**

The annual company picnic will be held at Memorial Park on May 27, 2016. The event will be catered by Fresh Air Barbeque, with desserts by Nancy's Sweet Things. Immediate family members are invited. Please plan to join us! RSVP with Mrs. Taylor by May 1, 2016.

Example Memo 4

To: All Staff

From: The Boss Date: June 1, 2006

Subject: **New Memo Format**

In order to make interoffice communications easier, please adhere to the following guidelines for writing effective memos:

□Clearly state the purpose of the memo in the subject line and in the first paragraph.

□Keep language professional, simple and polite.

□Use short sentences.

□Use bullets if a lot of information is conveyed.

□Proofread before sending.

□Address the memo to the person(s) who will take action on the subject, and CC those who need to know about the action.

□Attach additional information: don't place it in the body of the memo if possible.

□Please put this format into practice immediately. We appreciate your assistance in developing

clear communications. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me.

□Thank you.