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Writing 321

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WR 321- Negative Messages

*#3. Message Strategies: Making Negative Announcements*

You can certainly sympathize with employees when they complain about having their e-mail and instant messages monitored, but you're implementing a company policy that all employees will be asked to agree to abide by when they join the company. Your firm, Webcor Builders of San Mateo, California, is one of the estimated 60 percent of U.S. companies with such monitoring systems in place. More and more companies are using these systems (which typically operate by scanning messages for key words that suggest confidential, illegal, or otherwise inappropriate content) in an attempt to avoid instances of sexual harassment and other problems.

As the chief information officer, the manager in charge of the computer systems in the company, you're often the target when employees complain about being monitored. Consequently, you know you're really going to hear it when employees learn that the monitoring program will be expanded to personal blogs as well.

**Write an e-mail** to be distributed to the entire workforce, explaining that the automated monitoring program is about to be expanded to include employees' personal blogs. Explain that although you sympathize with employee concerns with regarding privacy and freedom of speech, the management team's responsibility is to protect the company's intellectual property and the value of the company name. Therefore, employees' personal blogs will be added to the monitoring system to ensure that employees don't intentionally or accidentally expose company secrets or criticize management in a way that could harm the company.

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*Step 1 – Planning Your Résumé:*

**Analyze the Situation***:*

My goal is to explain that the automated monitoring program is about to be expanded to include employees’ personal blogs. The monitoring system ensures that employees don’t intentionally or accidentally expose company secrets or criticize management in a way that could harm the company. With an increasing number of people creating personal blogs, I recognize the company’s need to expand the program to include the monitoring of employees’ personal blogs.

As the chief information officer, I will be the target when employees complain about this update. I understand that most employees are already concerned with their privacy or freedom of speech in the current monitoring program; therefore, it is likely that they will be very upset with this new update.

In delivering my message, I must:

* Convey the bad news
* Gain acceptance for it
* Maintain as much as goodwill as possible with employees
* Maintain a good image for Webcor Builders
* Reduce or eliminate the need for future correspondence on the matter

**Gather Information:**

Though I can certainly sympathize with employees, I understand that the monitoring system is a company policy that all employees are asked to agree to abide by when they join the company. Also, studies show an estimate of 60 percent of U.S. companies with such monitoring systems in place. Therefore, Webcor Builders is implementing a standard policy that is found in a majority of U.S. companies.

As this is an update to an existing company policy, it is not necessary explain the policy in extreme detail. However, I should still provide a means to which employees can review the company’s electronic communications policy.

**Select the Right Medium:**

I will use e-mail as the medium for delivering my message. E-mail is a primary medium for most companies, and they can be used to formally and clearly convey company announcements.

**Organize the Information:**

1. Salutation
2. Open with a buffer
3. Provide additional information
4. Clear statement of bad news
5. Positive close
6. Signature with contact information

My main priority is to maintain good relations between the company and employees while delivering the bad news. Since employees will likely be very upset with the news, I must use the indirect approach to soften the shock. Therefore, I will begin my message with a buffer and then provide reasons and additional information. Thereafter, I will clearly state the bad news and end the message with a positive close.

Though content is important, I must be careful with my grammar and wording to avoid ethical issues and problems of bias. Since this is a formal company announcement, I will use an e-mail subject line that will capture the employees’ attention and ensure that all employees’ will read the message. In addition, as courtesy, I will start with a salutation and end with a signature.