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Writing 321

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WR 321- Negative Messages

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*Step 1 – Planning the Negative Message:*

**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. The system also protects employees from sexual harassment or otherwise inappropriate behavior. 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 even more 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 an employee’s wish to protect their privacy or freedom of speech, 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 for employees to 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
   1. Compliment employee efforts and build a mutual ground
   2. Explain the growth of technology and company as the reason to expand the program
3. Clear statement of bad news
   1. Include the date, who, and what this affects
   2. Assure employees that only what is stated in the policy will be observed in their blogs
4. Provide reasons and additional information
   1. Open with another statement that builds a mutual ground
   2. Explain how the system currently works and its successes
   3. Mention that the company also wants to protect employees who use online blogs
   4. Mention that I sympathize with their wishes to protect their privacy, but let them know that such systems are not uncommon
5. Positive close
   1. Make employees realize they have a responsibility to help protect the company
   2. Thank them for their cooperation
   3. Provide a link to more information and let them know they can email me with questions or concerns
6. Signature

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 clearly state the bad news. Thereafter, I will provide reasons and additional information. Lastly, I will 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.