

Writing Letters, Memos, E-Mail, and Other Brief Messages

CHAPTER 7

Writing Routine, Good-News,
and Goodwill Messages

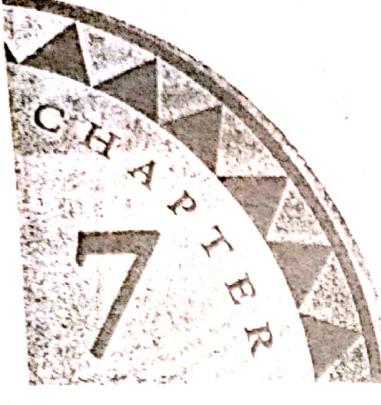
CHAPTER 8

Writing Bad-News Messages

CHAPTER 9

Writing Persuasive Messages





CHAPTER 7

After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- 1 Apply the three-step writing process to routine positive messages
- 2 Illustrate the strategy for writing routine requests
- 3 Discuss the differences among four types of routine requests
- 4 Explain the main differences in messages granting a claim when the company, the customer, or a third party is at fault
- 5 Outline how best to protect yourself when referring to a candidate's shortcoming in a recommendation letter
- 6 Describe the importance of goodwill messages, and describe how to make them effective

Writing Routine, Good-News, and Goodwill Messages

COMMUNICATION CLOSE-UP AT UNUMPROVIDENT CORPORATION

www.unumprovident.com



No one wants to think about the chance of disability from illness or injury. But UnumProvident has to. It's the nation's largest disability insurer, aiming to protect individuals' paychecks, assets, and lifestyles. Through programs such as LifeBalance, the company emphasizes return to work, offers highly responsive service, and addresses many of the life and work challenges facing people with a long-term disability or terminal illness. To succeed, the company must communicate effectively not only externally with brokers, benefit managers, and insured employees but also internally with its own people. UnumProvident must be sure that its internal messages are understandable to everyone, from CEO to newest employee, in every location, from Toronto to Los Angeles—and that's where Becky Bumgardner comes in.

As senior corporate writer in the corporate relations department, Bumgardner is responsible for writing and sending internal messages to more than 10,000 UnumProvident employees in nearly 60 offices across the United States and Canada. Many of these messages are routine and are sent by e-mail to employees in various states, countries, and time zones. Bumgardner writes on topics ranging from departmental meeting announcements to incentive programs for managers. She writes about departmental re-organizations, virus alerts, corporate earnings, and promotions. She also composes feature articles for the monthly newsletter and prepares daily updates for the company intranet.

But whether she's requesting routine information for the company newsletter or reminding employees about an upcoming deadline, Bumgardner is always careful to compose messages that are both concise and clear. Before writing anything, she makes sure that she fully understands the information she needs to communicate. As Bumgardner says, "I ask lots of questions before I begin to write. The old adage is true: The only dumb question is the one you don't ask. So don't be afraid to verify your information and make sure you understand a topic."

Clarity also depends on how much information you provide. For example, when preparing a routine request, "it helps your readers to know why you're making the request," explains Bumgardner. "It gives them an incentive to act. So I explain what needs to be done, why it needs to be done, and how the request affects the audience." To be as clear as possible, she tries to imagine all the ways a request might be misunderstood and then carefully chooses her words to avoid those pitfalls. For instance, knowing that Canadian insurance regulations often differ from U.S. regulations, Bumgardner is careful to address the needs of both U.S. and Canadian employees when sending mass e-mail messages to "all employees." That way, she eliminates any confusion.

Bumgardner keeps her messages brief and to the point. "With too much extra information," she advises, "your audience will stop reading your message." And to make it easier for audiences to absorb her messages, Bumgardner emphasizes important deadlines with bold or italic type and draws attention to important facts with bullet points. To close, she summarizes her message and includes any necessary deadlines, reminders, or contact information.



Each day some 24,000 workers are injured on the job, and each one of them must communicate with companies such as UnumProvident to receive disability payments. All claim requests must contain necessary details and a clear statement of the request before the claim can be processed.

Bumgardner strives to establish a feeling of partnership with her fellow employees by using a polite tone and by projecting enthusiasm into her writing. However, even though her tone is friendly and conversational, she carefully avoids using irony and sarcasm, especially in e-mail. "Don't joke about serious matters," she cautions. "Too often, your messages are interpreted differently from what you intend."

Bumgardner believes that clear, direct messages get positive results. As she puts it, "Effective communication creates a positive impression—and a positive impression will get more positive responses to your requests."¹ ■

USING THE THREE-STEP WRITING PROCESS FOR ROUTINE MESSAGES

Whether you're reminding employees about meetings or upcoming deadlines, like UnumProvident's Becky Bumgardner, congratulating an employee on a job well done, or requesting information from another firm, chances are that in the course of everyday business, you'll compose a lot of routine, good-news, and goodwill messages. In fact, most of a typical employee's communication is about routine matters: orders, information, company policies, claims, credit, employees, products, operations, and so on. Such messages are rarely long or complex. Even so, to produce the best messages possible, you'll want to apply the three-step writing process.

Step 1: Planning Routine Messages

As with longer, complex messages, you need to analyze your purpose and audience, investigate audience needs, and adapt your message to your readers. However, for routine messages, this planning step may take only a few moments. First, analyze your purpose to make sure that it's specific and it's worth pursuing at this time. Also, think a moment about your readers. Are you sure they'll receive your message positively (or at least neutrally)? Most routine messages are of interest to your readers because they contain information necessary to conduct day-to-day business. Even so, you may need to discover more about audience attitudes or needs in order to gauge your audience's probable reaction.

Second, investigate to learn exactly what your audience needs to know. Do you have all the relevant information? Do you need to take a little time to gather more?

Third, adapt your routine messages to your readers. Consider whether your message should be written, rather than handled in a quick phone call or by walking down

Learning Objective 1

Apply the three-step writing process to routine positive messages

Even for routine situations, you need to analyze, investigate, and adapt your messages.

Organize your routine messages according to the direct approach.



Perry Klebahn's company, Atlas Snowshoe, sells high-end snowshoes in more than 1,000 stores across the United States, ringing up annual sales of about \$12 million. Klebahn tells his employees to establish a good relationship with their audience by learning what they need to know and by using language that is positive and polite.

Just as you do for other messages, you need to revise, produce, and proofread routine messages.

Learning Objective 2

Illustrate the strategy for writing routine requests

For routine requests and positive messages

- State the request or main idea
- Give necessary details
- Close with a cordial request for specific action

Exactly what do you want your audience to understand or to do as a result of reading your request?

the hall for a brief chat. If written, select the most appropriate format (memo, letter, e-mail). Finally, you'll want to establish or maintain a good relationship with your audience, so be sure to use the "you" attitude and keep your language positive and polite.

Step 2: Writing Routine Messages

Organizing and composing routine messages can go rather quickly. Your main idea may already be fairly well defined. Just be sure you stick to it by limiting the scope of your message. Cover only relevant points, grouping them in the most logical fashion. Because your readers will be interested or neutral, you can usually adopt the direct approach for routine messages: Open with a clear statement of the main idea, include all necessary details in the body, and then close cordially.

However, even though these messages are the least complicated to write, communicating across cultural boundaries can be a challenge, especially if you're not familiar with the cultural differences involved. So before selecting the direct approach for your message, verify the customs of your audience, making sure your readers prefer direct organization. (See "Communicating Across Cultures: How Direct Is Too Direct?") When you're addressing an audience with minimal cultural differences, keep your tone conversational and use plain English.

Step 3: Completing Routine Messages

No matter how short or straightforward your message, make it professional by allowing plenty of time to revise, produce, and proofread it. First, revise your routine message for overall effect. Evaluate your content and organization to make sure you've said what you want to in the order you want to say it. Review your message's readability. Edit and rewrite routine messages for conciseness and clarity. Second, design your document to suit your audience. Choose effective design elements and appropriate delivery methods. Finally, proofread the final version of your routine message. Look for typos, errors in spelling and mechanics, alignment problems, poor print quality, and so on.

MAKING ROUTINE REQUESTS

Whenever you ask for something—information, action, products, adjustments, references—you are making a request. A request is routine if it's part of the normal course of business and you anticipate that your audience will want to comply. Be careful not to make unnecessary requests. If you can find information yourself, don't burden others and risk your credibility by asking someone else to find it for you. But when you must make a routine request, make sure it's efficient and effective.

Strategy for Routine Requests

Like all routine messages, routine requests may be thought of as having three parts: an opening, a body, and a close. Using the direct approach, you place your main idea (a clear statement of the request) in the opening. You use the middle to give details and justify your request. Then you close by requesting specific action and concluding cordially (see Figure 7.1 on page 188). As you prepare your routine requests, keep in mind that despite their simple organization, they can still cause ill will through ambiguous wording or a discourteous tone. In fact, even the briefest note can create confusion and hard feelings. As with any business message, keep your purpose in mind. Ask yourself what you want readers to do or to understand as a result of reading your message.



Communicating Across Cultures

How Direct Is Too Direct?

Being direct is civil, considerate, and honest—or so say people in the United States. Other folks view that same directness as being abrupt, rude, and intrusive—even dishonest and offensive. Countries such as France, Mexico, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Italy, and the Philippines all tend toward high-context cultures (see discussion in Chapter 3). That is, the people in these countries depend on shared knowledge and inferred messages to communicate; they gather meaning more from context and less from direct statement.

Offering a little constructive criticism may actually hurt your Mexican assistant's dignity. In fact, in high-context cultures, avoid saying outright, "You are wrong." You could cause the other person to lose face. When making requests, determine whether to use a direct or an implied approach by considering audience attitudes toward destiny, time, authority, and logic:

- **Destiny.** Do audience members believe they can control events themselves? Or do they see events as predetermined and uncontrollable? If you're supervising employees who believe that fate controls a construction deadline, your crisp e-mail message requesting them to stay on schedule may be hard for them to understand; it may even be insulting.
- **Time.** Do audience members view time as exact, precise, and not to be wasted? Or do they see time as relative, relaxed, and necessary for developing interpersonal relationships? If you see time as money and you get straight to business in your memo to your Mexican manager, your message may be overlooked in the confusion over your disregard for social propriety.

- **Authority.** Do audience members conduct business more autocratically or more democratically? In Mexico, rank and status are highly valued, so when communicating downward, you may need to be even more direct than you're used to being in the United States. And when communicating upward, you may need to be much less direct than usual.
- **Logic.** Do audience members pursue logic in a straight line, from point A to point B? Or do they communicate in circular or spiral patterns of logic? If you organize a speech or letter in a straightforward and direct manner, your message may be considered illogical, unclear, and disorganized.

You may want to decide not only how direct to be in written messages but also whether to write at all; perhaps a phone call or a visit would be more appropriate. By finding out how much or how little a culture tends toward high-context communication, you'll know whether to be direct or to rely on nuance when communicating with the people of that culture.

Career Applications

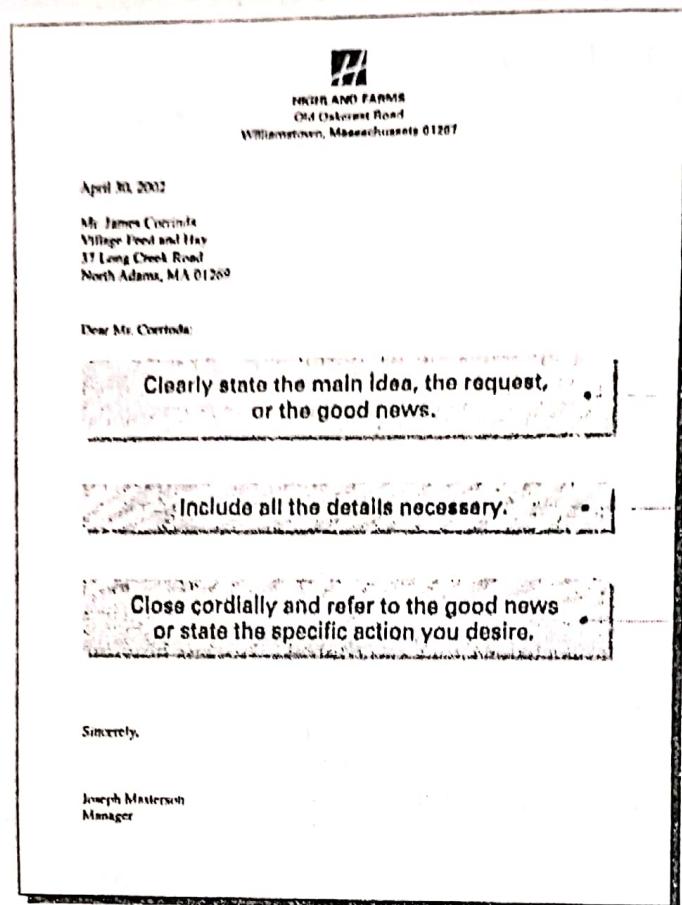
1. Research a high-context culture such as that of Japan, Korea, or China, and write a one- or two-paragraph summary of how someone in that culture would go about requesting information.
2. When you are writing in American English to someone in a high-context culture, would it be better to (a) make the request directly in the interest of clarity or (b) try to match your audience's unfamiliar logic and make your request indirectly? Explain your answer.

State Your Request Up Front

Begin routine requests by placing your request first—up front is where it stands out and gets the most attention. Of course, getting right to the point should not be interpreted as a license to be abrupt or tactless:

- **Pay attention to tone.** Even though you expect a favorable response, the tone of your initial request is important. Instead of demanding action ("Send me your catalog no. 33A"), soften your request with words such as *please* and *I would appreciate*.
- **Assume your audience will comply.** An impatient demand for rapid service isn't necessary. Generally make the assumption that your audience will comply with your request once the reason for it is clearly understood.
- **Avoid beginning with personal introductions.** Don't be tempted to begin your request with a personal introduction such as "I am the senior corporate writer in the corporate relations department of UnumProvident, and I am looking for information that . . ." Becky Bumgardner knows that this type of beginning buries the main idea, so the request may get lost.

Keep your direct approach from being abrupt or tactless.

FIGURE 7.1 The Parts of Routine, Good-News, and Goodwill Messages

- Punctuate questions and polite requests differently. A polite request in question form requires no question mark: "Would you please help us determine whether Kate Kingsley is a suitable applicant for this position." A direct question within your message does require a question mark: "Did Kate Kingsley demonstrate an ability to work smoothly with clients?"
- Be specific. State precisely what you want. For example, if you request the latest census figures from a government agency, be sure to say whether you want a page or two of summary figures or a detailed report running several thousand pages.

Explain and Justify Your Request

Use the middle section of your message to explain your initial request. Make the explanation a smooth and logical outgrowth of your opening remarks. For example, you might show how your readers could benefit from complying. When Becky Bumgardner writes e-mail messages to managers, she's looking for information, but she's also telling them why she needs the information and explaining how they might benefit from granting the request. For instance, Bumgardner might write, "By participating in the quarterly incentive program for managers, you will become eligible to receive valuable incentive awards."

Whether you're writing a formal letter or a simple e-mail, you can use the middle section of your routine request to list a series of questions. This method is particularly useful if your inquiry concerns machinery or complex equipment. For instance, you might ask about technical specifications, exact dimensions, and the precise use of the equipment. Be sure to break down multiple requests, and when requesting several

In the middle section of the request, give the details of your request.

items or answers, number them and list them in logical order or in descending order of importance. When using a series of questions, just keep a few basics in mind:

- Ask the most important questions first. If cost is your main concern, you might begin with a question such as "What is the cost for shipping the merchandise by air versus truck?" Then you may want to ask more specific but related questions about, say, the cost of shipping partial orders.
- Ask only relevant questions. So that your request can be handled quickly, ask only questions central to your main request. If your questions require simple yes-or-no answers, you might provide readers with a form or with boxes to check. If you need more elaborate answers, pose open-ended questions. "How fast can you ship the merchandise?" is more likely to elicit the information you want than "Can you ship the merchandise?"
- Deal with only one topic per question. If you have an unusual or complex request, list the request and provide supporting details in a separate, short paragraph. You may even use paragraph headings to make your reader's job easier.

Numbered lists help readers sort through multiple related items or multiple requests.

Request Specific Action in a Courteous Close

Close your message with three important elements: (1) a specific request, (2) information about how you can be reached, and (3) an expression of appreciation or goodwill. Use the closing to request a specific action and to ask that readers respond by a specific and appropriate time ("Please send the figures by April 5 so that I can return first-quarter results to you before the May 20 conference"). Help your reader respond easily by including your phone number, office hours, and other contact information.

Conclude your message by sincerely expressing your goodwill and appreciation. However, don't thank the reader "in advance" for cooperating. If the reader's reply warrants a word of thanks, send it after you've received the reply. To review, see this chapter's "Checklist: Writing Routine Requests."

Close with

- A request for some specific action
- Information about how you can be reached
- An expression of appreciation

Types of Routine Requests

The various types of routine requests are innumerable, from asking favors to requesting credit. However, many of the routine messages that you'll be writing will likely fall into major categories. The following sections discuss four of these categories: placing orders, requesting information and action, making claims and requesting adjustments, and requesting recommendations and references.

Learning Objective 3

Discuss the differences among four types of routine requests

CHECKLIST: WRITING ROUTINE REQUESTS

A. Direct statement of the request

1. Use the direct approach, since your audience will respond favorably to your request.
2. Phrase the opening clearly and simply so that the main idea cannot be misunderstood.
3. Write in a polite, undemanding, personal tone.
4. Preface complex requests with a sentence or two of explanation.

B. Justification, explanation, and details

1. Justify the request, or explain its importance.
2. Explain the benefit of responding.
3. State desired actions in a positive and supportive (not negative or dictatorial) manner.
4. Itemize parts of a complex request in a logical or numbered series.

5. List specific questions that you can't answer through your own efforts.

6. Limit any question to one topic.

7. Word any questions to get the type of answers you need.

C. Courteous close with request for specific action

1. Courteously request a specific action.
2. Make it easy to comply by including your contact information: name, address, phone and fax numbers (with area code), and e-mail address.
3. Indicate gratitude.
4. Clearly state any important deadline or time frame for the request.

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Most companies today use computer-generated order forms.

When placing orders, be thorough and clear.

Placing Orders

Messages placing orders are considered some of the simplest types of routine messages. When placing an order, you need not excite your reader's interest; just state your needs clearly and directly. Most orders refer to a product that the reader knows about, so these messages are usually processed without objection.

Most companies today are moving toward paperless ordering by using computer-generated order forms. The forms provide a list of products with a description of each item and information such as the catalog number, name or trade name, color, size, and unit price. Your job is simple: Fill in the quantity, compute the total amount due, and provide the shipping address. Still, if you need to draft an order letter, follow the same format as you would on an order blank. Open with the general request. In the middle, include specific information about the items you want. Present this information in column form, double-space between the items, and total the price at the end. In the close, be sure to specify the delivery address, since it may differ from the billing address. Also indicate how the merchandise is to be shipped: by air or ground, by a specific delivery service, and so on. Otherwise, the seller chooses the mode of transportation. Finally, in any letter including a payment, mention the amount enclosed, explain how the amount was calculated, and if necessary, explain to what account the amount should be charged. Here's an example:

States general request first

— Please send the following items from your current spring-summer catalog:

Count	Stock I.D.	Description	Item Price	Total Price
3	139-24	Daily appointment books (black)	\$ 8.95	\$ 26.85
50	289-90	Mechanical pencils (0.5 mm/black)	1.69	84.50
5	905-18	Wrist pads (gray)	6.99	34.95
10	472-67	Bulk IBM-format 3 1/2" diskettes (50/box)	17.99	179.90
TOTAL SALE				\$326.20

Provides all necessary details in a format similar to an order form

SHIPPING **FREE**

Includes additional important information in the close

AMOUNT DUE \$326.20

— My check #1738 for \$326.20 is enclosed. Please ship these supplies UPS ground to the address in the letterhead.

When placing international orders, use the transposed format: day/month/year.

When placing orders with international companies, remember that in most countries, the day is placed before the month: 15 March 2002 (15.3.02) rather than March 15, 2002 (3/15/02).

Requesting Information and Action

When you need to know about something, to elicit an opinion from someone, or to suggest a simple action, you usually need only ask. In essence, simple requests say, "This is what I want to know or what I want you to do, why I'm making the request, and why it may be in your interest to help me." If your reader can do what you want, such a straightforward request gets the job done with a minimum of fuss. Follow the direct approach: Start with a clear statement of your reason for writing. In the middle, provide whatever explanation is needed to justify your request. Then close with a specific account of what you expect, and include a deadline if appropriate. In more complex situations, readers might be unwilling to respond unless they understand how the request benefits them, so be sure to include this information in your explanation.

Asking Company Insiders Requests to fellow employees are often oral and rather casual. However, as long as you avoid writing frequent, long, or unneeded messages, sending a clear, thoughtfully written memo or e-mail message can save time and questions by helping readers understand precisely what you want. But "don't try to be fancy in your e-mail messages or impress your boss with five-syllable words," advises UnumProvident's Becky Bumgardner.

The memo in Figure 7.2 was sent to all employees of Acc Hardware. It seeks employee input about a new wellness and benefits program and about a new fee. The tone is matter-of-fact, and the memo assumes some shared background, which is appropriate when communicating about a routine matter to someone in the same company. Both memos and e-mail messages have efficient headings that spell out who the message is for ("To:"), who wrote it ("From:"), when it was written ("Date:"), and what it's about ("Subject:"). For more information on formatting memos and other business messages, see Appendix I.

Asking Company Outsiders Business writers often ask businesses, customers, or others outside their organization to provide information or to take some simple action: attend a meeting, return an information card, endorse a document, confirm an address, or supplement information on an order. Such requests are often in letter form, although some are sent via e-mail. These messages are usually short and simple, like this request for information:

Would you please supply me with information about the lawn services you provide. Pralle Realty owns approximately 27 pieces of rental property in College Station, and we're looking for a lawn service to handle all of them. We are making a commitment to provide quality housing in this college town, and we are looking for an outstanding firm to work with us.

1. **Lawn care:** What is your annual charge for each location for lawn maintenance, including mowing, fertilizing, and weed control?
2. **Shrubbery:** What is your annual charge for each location for the care of deciduous and evergreen bushes, including pruning, fertilizing, and replacing as necessary?
3. **Contract:** How does Agri-Lawn Service structure such large contracts? What additional information do you need from us?

Please let us hear from you by February 15. We want to have a lawn-care firm in place by March 15.

A more complex request might require not only greater detail but information on how funding will benefit the reader.

When making a routine request, say

- What you want to know
- Why you want to know
- Why it is in the reader's interest to help you



Jyoti Gupta, owner of Jyoti Cuisine India, doesn't spend her entire day making specialty frozen meals for passengers of British Airways and US Airways. Most of the time she's running her business and communicating with her suppliers, customers, and employees. Gupta routinely sends memos to these parties requesting information and action or responding to their information requests. For routine communications, Gupta uses a direct approach and a cordial tone.

- Makes overall request in polite question form (no question mark)
- Keeps reader's interest by hinting at possibility of future business
- Avoids making an overly broad request by using a series of specific questions
- Itemizes questions in a logical sequence
- Avoids useless yes-or-no answers by including open-ended questions
- Specifies a time limit in the courteous close

1 Planning

Analyze

Purpose is to request feedback from fellow employees.

Investigate

Gather accurate, complete information on program benefits and local gym.

Adapt

Office memo or e-mail is appropriate medium. Use "you" attitude, and make responding easy.

2 Writing

Organize

Main idea is saving money while staying healthy. Save time and meet audience expectations using the direct approach.

Compose

Keep style informal but business-like. Using a "we" attitude includes readers in the decision-making process.

3 Completing

Revise

Keep it brief—weed out overly long words and phrases. Avoid unnecessary details.

Produce

No need for fancy design elements in this memo; include a response form.

Proofread

Review carefully for both content and typographical errors.

FIGURE 7.2 In-Depth Critique: Memo Requesting Action from Company Insiders

ACE
Ace Hardware Corporation

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

Routes message efficiently, with all needed information

TO: All Employees
 FROM: Tony Ramirez, Human Resources
 DATE: October 15, 2002
 SUBJ: New Wellness Program Opportunity

The benefits package committee has asked me to contact everyone about an opportunity to save money and stay healthier in the bargain. As you know, we've been meeting to decide on changes in our benefits package. Last week, we sent you a memo detailing the Synergy Wellness Program.

In addition to the package as described in the memo (life, major medical, dental, hospitalization), Synergy has sweetened the pot by offering IDD a 10 percent discount. To meet the requirements for the discount, we have to show proof that at least 25 percent of our employees participate in aerobic exercise at least three times a week for at least 20 minutes. (Their actuarial tables show a resulting 10 percent reduction in claims.)

States purpose in opening to avoid wasting busy readers' time

Presents the situation that makes the inquiry necessary

After looking around, we discovered a gymnasium just a few blocks south on Haley Boulevard. Sports Midwest will give our employees unlimited daytime access to their indoor track, gym, and pool for a group fee that comes to approximately \$4.50 per month per employee if at least half of us sign up.

In addition to using the track and pools, we can play volleyball, jazzercise, form our own intramural basketball teams, and much more. Our spouses and children can also participate at a deeply discounted monthly fee. If you have questions, please e-mail or call me (or any member of the committee). Let us know your wishes on the following form.

Provides an easy-to-use response form

Sign and return the following no later than Friday, October 29.

Yes, I will participate in the Synergy Wellness program and pay \$4.50 a month.
 Yes, I am interested in a discounted family membership.
 No, I prefer not to participate.

Lists reader benefits and requests action

Signature _____

Employee ID Number _____

Sometimes businesses need to reestablish a relationship with former customers or suppliers. In many cases, when customers are unhappy about some purchase or about the way they were treated, they don't complain; they simply stay away from the offending business. Thus, a letter of inquiry might encourage customers to use idle credit accounts, offering them an opportunity to register their displeasure and then move on to a good relationship. In addition, a customer's response to such an inquiry may provide the company with insights into ways to improve its products and customer service. Even if they have no complaint, customers still welcome the personal attention. Such an inquiry to a customer might begin this way:

When a good charge customer like you has not bought anything from us in six months, we wonder why. Is there something we can do to serve you better?

Similar inquiry letters are sent from one business to another. For example, a sales representative of a housewares distributor might send the same type of letter to a retailer.

Making Claims and Requesting Adjustments

When you're dissatisfied with a company's product or service, you make a claim (a formal complaint) or request an adjustment (a claim settlement). Although a phone call or visit may solve the problem, a written claim letter is better because it documents your dissatisfaction. Moreover, even though your first reaction to a clumsy mistake or a defective product is likely to be anger or frustration, the person reading your letter probably had nothing to do with the problem. So a courteous, clear, concise explanation will impress your reader much more favorably than an abusive, angry letter.

In most cases, and especially in your first letter, assume that a fair adjustment will be made, and follow the plan for direct requests. Begin with a straightforward statement of the problem. In the middle section, give a complete, specific explanation of the details. Provide any information an adjuster would need to verify your complaint about faulty merchandise or unsatisfactory service. In your closing, politely request specific action or convey a sincere desire to find a solution. And don't forget to suggest that the business relationship will continue if the problem is solved satisfactorily.

Companies usually accept the customer's explanation of what's wrong, so ethically it's important to be entirely honest when filing claims. Also, be prepared to back up your claim with invoices, sales receipts, canceled checks, dated correspondence, catalog descriptions, and any other relevant documents. Send copies and keep the originals for your files.

If the remedy is obvious, tell your reader exactly what will return the company to your good graces—for example, an exchange of merchandise for the right item or a refund if the item is out of stock. In some cases you might ask the reader to resolve the problem. However, if you're uncertain about the precise nature of the trouble, you could ask the company to make an assessment. But be sure to supply your contact information and the best time to call, so that the company can discuss the situation with you if necessary.

The following letter was written to a gas and electric company. As you read it, compare its tone with the tone of the letter in Figure 7.3. If you were the person receiving the complaint, which version would you respond to more favorably?

First Draft

We have been at our present location only three months, and we don't understand why our December utility bill is \$815.00 and our January bill is \$817.50. Businesses on both sides of us, in offices just like ours, are paying only \$543.50 and \$545.67 for the same months. We all have similar computer and office equipment, so something must be wrong.

Small businesses are helpless against big utility companies. How can we prove that you read the meter wrong or that the November bill from before we even moved in here got added to our December bill? We want someone to check this meter right away. We can't afford to pay these big bills.

The purpose of some routine requests to customers is to reestablish communication.

Putting your claim in writing

- Documents your dissatisfaction
- Requires courtesy, clarity, and conciseness

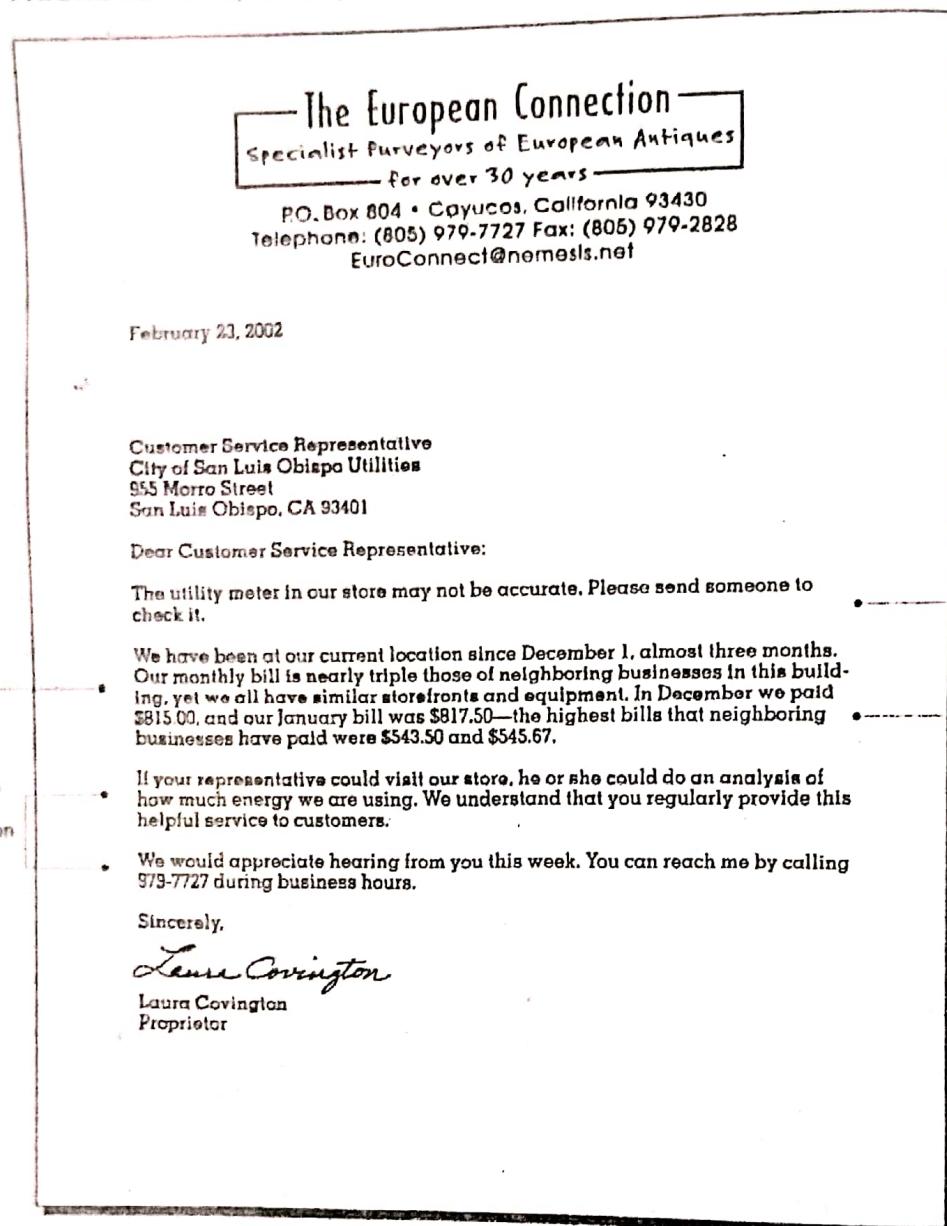
In your claim letter

- Explain the problem and give details
- Provide backup information
- Request specific action

Be prepared to document your claim. Send copies and keep the original documents.

Be as specific as possible about what you want to happen next.

FIGURE 7.3 In-Depth Critique: Claim Letter



Most people would react more favorably to the version in Figure 7.3. A rational, clear, and courteous approach is best for any routine request. To review the tasks involved in making claims and requesting adjustments, see this chapter's "Checklist: Making Claims and Requesting Adjustments."

Requesting Recommendations and References

The need to inquire about people arises often in business. For example, before awarding credit, contracts, jobs, promotions, scholarships, and so on, some companies ask applicants to supply references. If you're applying for a job and your potential employer asks for references, you may want to ask a close personal or professional associate to write a letter of recommendation. Or, if you're an employer considering whether to hire an applicant, you may want to write directly to the person the applicant named as a reference.

Companies ask applicants to supply references who can vouch for their ability, skills, integrity, character, and fitness for the job. Before you volunteer someone's name as a reference, ask that person's permission. Some people won't let you use their names, perhaps because they don't know enough about you to feel comfortable writing a letter or because they have a policy of not providing recommendations. In any event, you are

Always ask for permission before using someone's name as a reference.

✓ CHECKLIST: MAKING CLAIMS AND REQUESTING ADJUSTMENTS*

A. Organizing your request

1. Write a claim letter as soon as possible after the problem has been identified.
2. Include a straightforward statement of the problem in the opening.
3. Tell specifics of the problem and include any necessary details in the body.
4. Provide copies of necessary documents (invoices, canceled checks, confirmation letters, and the like); keep the originals.
5. Gain the reader's understanding by praising some aspect of the good or service, or at least by explaining why the product was originally purchased.

6. Summarize desired action in the closing.

7. If appropriate, clearly state what you expect as a fair settlement, or ask the reader to propose a fair adjustment.

B. Adopting an effective tone

1. Maintain a confident, factual, fair, unemotional tone.
2. Present facts honestly, clearly, and politely.
3. Eliminate threats, sarcasm, exaggeration, and hostility, and use a nonargumentative tone to show confidence in the reader's fairness.
4. Make no accusation against any person or company, unless you can back it up with facts.

likely to receive the best recommendation from people who agree to write about you, so check first.

Because requests for recommendations and references are routine, you can assume your reader will honor your request, and you can organize your inquiry using the direct approach. Begin your message by clearly stating that you're applying for a position and that you would like your reader to write a letter of recommendation. If you haven't had contact with the person for some time, use the opening to recall the nature of the relationship you had, the dates of association, and any special events that might bring a clear, favorable picture of you to mind.

If you're applying for a job, a scholarship, or the like, include a copy of your résumé to give the reader an idea of the direction your life has taken. After reading the résumé, your reader will know what favorable qualities to emphasize and will be able to write the recommendation that best supports your application. If you don't have a résumé, use the middle of your letter to include any information about yourself that the reader might use to support a recommendation, such as a description of related jobs you've held.

Close your letter with an expression of appreciation and the full name and address of the person to whom the letter should be sent. When asking for an immediate recommendation, you should also mention the deadline. You'll make a response more likely if you enclose a stamped, preaddressed envelope. The letter from Joanne Tucker in Figure 7.4 covers all these points and adds important information about some qualifications that might be of special interest to her potential employer.

Refresh the memory of any potential reference you haven't been in touch with for a while.

Provide your reader with as much information as possible about your qualifications.

SENDING ROUTINE ANNOUNCEMENTS, REPLIES, AND POSITIVE MESSAGES

When sending routine announcements, responding positively to a request, or sending a good-news or goodwill message, you have several goals: to communicate the information or good news, answer all questions, provide all required details, and leave your reader with a good impression of you and your firm. Routine messages can be quite brief and to the point. And even though you may be doing someone a favor by responding to a request, you want to be courteous and upbeat and maintain a you-oriented tone.

Strategy for Routine Announcements, Replies, and Positive Messages

Like requests, routine announcements, replies, and positive messages have an opening, a body, and a close. Readers receiving these messages will generally be interested in

Use the direct organizational plan for positive messages.

① Planning

Analyze

Purpose is to request a recommendation letter from your college professor.

Investigate

Gather information to help the reader recall you and to clarify the position you want.

Adapt

A letter format will give your message the formality you need. Be polite.

FIGURE 7.4 In-Depth Critique: Letter Requesting a Recommendation

Includes information in the opening to refresh reader's memory about this former student

Gives a deadline for response in the closing and includes information about the person expecting the recommendation

② Writing

Organize

Main idea is to convince your professor to send a glowing recommendation to a potential employer. Use the direct approach.

Compose

Make message friendly but businesslike and slightly more formal than usual. Use plain English and an active voice.

③ Completing

Revise

Be concise but thorough. Make sure that concrete detail flows logically.

Produce

Use simple typeface with ample margins and spacing between text. Enclose SASE and perhaps your résumé.

Proofread

Review letter and enclosures for errors.

1181 Ashport Drive
Tate Springs, TN 38101
March 14, 2003

Professor Lyndon Kenton
School of Business
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Knoxville, TN 37916

Dear Professor Kenton:

May I have a letter of recommendation from you? I recently interviewed with Strategic Investments and have been called for a second interview for their Analyst Training Program (ATP). They have requested at least one recommendation from a professor, and I immediately thought of you.

As you may recall, I took BUS 485, Financial Analysis, from you in the fall of 2000. I enjoyed the class and finished the term with an "A." Professor Kenton, your comments on assertiveness and cold-calling impressed me beyond the scope of the actual course material. In fact, taking your course helped me decide on a future as a financial analyst.

My enclosed résumé includes all my relevant work experience and volunteer activities. But I'd also like to add that I've handled financial planning for our family since my father passed away several years ago. Although initially, I learned by trial and error, I have increasingly applied my business training in deciding what stocks or bonds to trade. This, I believe, has given me a practical edge over others who may be applying for the same job.

If possible, Ms. Blackmon in Human Resources needs to receive your letter by March 30. For your convenience, I've enclosed a preaddressed, stamped envelope.

I appreciate your time and effort in writing this letter of recommendation for me. It will be great to put my education to work, and I'll keep you informed of my progress.

Sincerely,

Joanne Tucker

Joanne Tucker

Enclosure

Includes information in the opening to refresh reader's memory about this former student

Gives a deadline for response in the closing and includes information about the person expecting the recommendation

Opens with the request, assumes the reader will honor the request, and names the potential employer

Refers to résumé in the body and mentions experience that could set applicant apart from other candidates

what you have to say, so you'll usually use the direct approach. Place your main idea (the positive reply or the good news) in the opening. Use the middle to explain all the relevant details, and close cordially, perhaps highlighting a benefit to your reader.

Start with the Main Idea

By beginning your positive message with the main idea or good news, you're preparing your audience for the detail that follows. Try to make your opening clear and concise. Although the following introductory statements make the same point, one is cluttered with unnecessary information that buries the purpose, whereas the other is brief and to the point:

Instead of This

I am pleased to inform you that after deliberating the matter carefully, our human resources committee has recommended you for appointment as a staff accountant

The best way to write a clear opening is to have a clear idea of what you want to say. Before you put one word on paper, ask yourself, "What is the single most important message I have for the audience?"

Write This

Congratulations. You've been selected to join our firm as a staff accountant, beginning March 20.

Prepare your audience for the detail that follows by beginning your positive message with the main idea or good news.

Before you begin, have a clear idea of what you want to say.

Provide Necessary Details and Explanation

The middle part of a positive message is typically the longest. You need the space to explain your point completely so that the audience will experience no confusion or lingering doubt. In addition to providing details in the middle section, maintain the supportive tone established at the beginning. This tone is easy to continue when your message is purely good news, as in this example:

Your educational background and internship have impressed us, and we believe you would be a valuable addition to Green Valley Properties. As discussed during your interview, your salary will be \$3,300 per month, plus benefits. In that regard, you will meet with our benefits manager, Paula Sanchez, at 8:00 a.m. on Monday, March 20. She will assist you with all the paperwork necessary to tailor our benefit package to your family situation. She will also arrange various orientation activities to help you acclimate to our company.

Embed negative information in a positive context.

However, if your routine message is mixed and must convey mildly disappointing information, put the negative portion of your message into as favorable a context as possible:

Instead of This

No, we no longer carry the Sportsgirl line of sweaters.

Write This

The new Olympic line has replaced the Sportsgirl sweaters that you asked about. Olympic features a wider range of colors and sizes and more contemporary styling.

The more complete description is less negative and emphasizes how the audience can benefit from the change. Be careful, though: You can use negative information in this type of message *only* if you're reasonably sure the audience will respond positively. Otherwise, use the indirect approach (discussed in Chapter 8).

If you are communicating to customers, you might also want to use the body of your message to assure the customer of the wisdom of his or her purchase selection.

Use resale material to assure customers of the wisdom of their purchases.

Talking favorably about something the customer has bought even though it may not have been delivered is a good way to build customer relationships. Such favorable comments, or resale, is commonly included in order acknowledgments and routine announcements to customers and is most effective when it is relatively short and specific:

The zipper on the carrying case you purchased is double-stitched and guaranteed for the life of the product.

The Kitchen Aid mixer you ordered is our best-selling model. It should service your cooking needs for many years.

Use sales promotion material to build sales and to show your company wants to be of further service.

Keep in mind that the purpose of resale is to increase the buyer's faith in goods or services already purchased or ordered. Sales promotion material is similar to resale, but it seeks to promote interest in goods or services where a purchase commitment does not already exist.

Make sure the audience understands what to do next and how that action will benefit them.

End with a Courteous Close

Your message is most likely to succeed if your readers are left feeling that you have their personal welfare in mind. You accomplish this task either by highlighting a benefit to the audience or by expressing appreciation or goodwill. If follow-up action is required, clearly state who will do what next. See this chapter's "Checklist: Writing Routine Replies and Positive Messages" to review the primary tasks involved in this type of business message.

Types of Routine Announcements, Replies, and Positive Messages

Innumerable types of routine announcements, replies, and positive messages are used in business every day. Most of these messages fall into six main categories: informative

CHECKLIST: WRITING ROUTINE REPLIES AND POSITIVE MESSAGES

A. Initial statement of the good news or main idea

1. If message is mixed, present the good news first.
2. Respond promptly.
3. Avoid trite and obvious statements such as "I am pleased to," "We have received," "This is in response to," or "Enclosed please find."
4. Convey an upbeat, courteous, you-oriented tone.

B. Middle, informational section

1. Imply or express interest in the request, or provide details of the good news.
2. List all information in an orderly manner.
3. If possible, answer all questions and requests in the order posed.
4. Adapt replies to the reader's needs.
5. Indicate what you have done and what you will do.
6. Include any necessary details or interpretations that the reader may need in order to understand your answers.

7. If you cannot comply with part of the request (perhaps because the information is unavailable or confidential), tell the reader why and then offer other assistance.

8. Embed negative statements in positive contexts or balance them with positive alternatives.

9. Inform or remind the reader of the general benefits of doing business with your firm. Avoid exaggerations and flamboyant language.

C. Warm, courteous close

1. If further action is required, tell the reader how to proceed and encourage the reader to act promptly.
2. Avoid clichés (such as "Please feel free to").
3. Offer additional service but avoid implying that your answer is inadequate (by using doubtful statements such as "I trust that" or "I hope").
4. Express goodwill or take an optimistic look into the future, if appropriate.

messages, grants of requests for information and action, grants of claims and requests for adjustments, recommendations and references, good-news announcements, and goodwill messages.

Sending Informative Messages

All companies send routine informative messages such as reminder notices and policy statements. Employees must be informed of organizational changes, upcoming events, new procedures, and changing policies. Customers and suppliers must be informed of shipping and return policies, sales discount procedures, and company developments that might be helpful when doing business with the company or when using the company's products. When writing informative messages, use the beginning of the message to state the purpose (to inform) and briefly mention the nature of the information you are providing; use the body to provide the necessary details; and end with a courtesy close.

Most informative communications are neutral. That is, they stimulate neither a positive nor a negative response from readers. Becky Bumgardner's departmental meeting announcements and reminder notices, for example, generally receive a neutral response from employees. Bumgardner simply presents the factual information in the body of the message and does not care about the reader's attitude toward the information.

Some informative messages, however, require additional care. Policy statements or procedural changes, for instance, may be good news for both the company and employees—the company can save money, which will provide additional resources and even raises for employees—but such benefits may not be obvious to employees. In instances where the reader may not initially view the information positively, use the body of the message to highlight the benefits from the reader's perspective. In other words, show the reader exactly how the policy or procedure will enhance their work or personal life.

Granting Requests for Information and Action

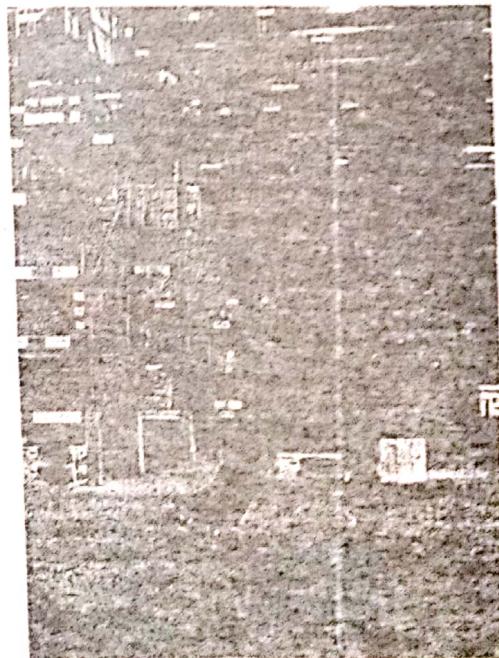
If your answer to a request is yes or is straightforward information, the direct plan is appropriate. Your prompt, gracious, and thorough response will positively influence how people think about your company, its products, your department, and you. Readers' perceptions are the reason that UnumProvident's Becky Bumgardner is so sensitive to the tone of her memos, letters, and other messages. Bumgardner makes it a point to adopt the "you" attitude in all her business correspondence.

Many requests are similar. For example, a human resources department gets numerous routine inquiries about job openings. To handle repetitive queries like these, companies usually develop form responses. Although these messages are often criticized as being cold and impersonal, you can put a great deal of thought into wording them, and you can use computers to personalize and mix paragraphs. Thus, a computerized form letter prepared with care may actually be more personal and sincere than a quickly dictated, hastily typed "personal" reply. E-mail messages may be standardized as well. For Example, Julian Zamakis sent an e-mail to Herman Miller asking for information about employment opportunities and received the encouraging e-mail reply in Figure 7.5.

When you're answering requests and a potential sale is involved, you have three main goals: (1) to respond to the inquiry and answer all questions, (2) to leave your reader with a good impression of you and your firm, and (3) to encourage the future sale. The following letter succeeds in meeting all three objectives:

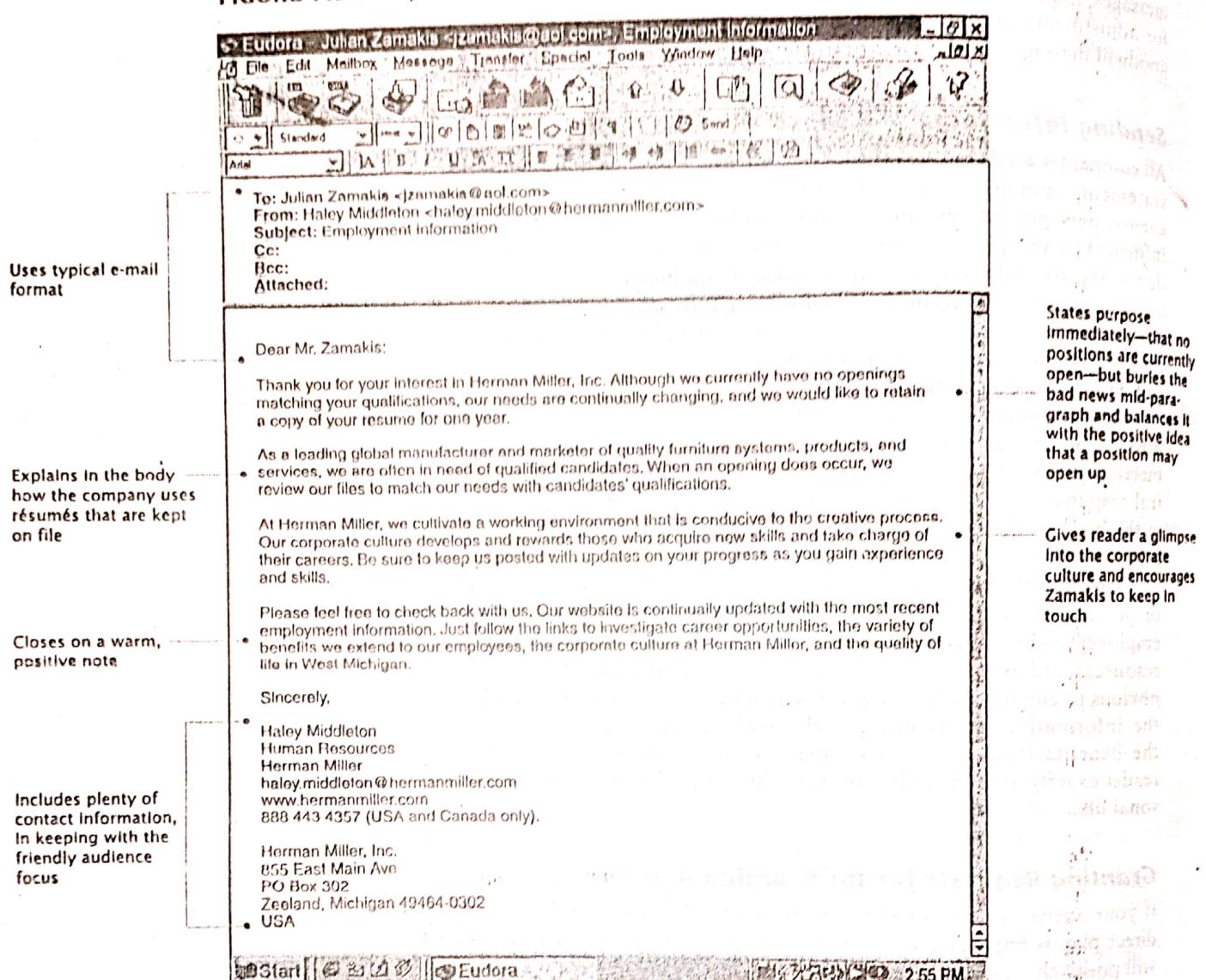
When writing informative messages:

- State the purpose at the beginning and briefly mention the nature of the information you are providing
- Provide the necessary details
- End with a courtesy note



Patrick Byrne, CEO of Overstock.com, is one of the few people cashing in on the surplus of high-tech equipment from manufacturers—and dead dot.coms. But finding the equipment at liquidation prices and selling it to consumers at a substantial discount means Byrne must answer numerous daily requests for information and action. Moreover, because a potential sale is usually involved, Byrne uses his letters to explain how customers will benefit by purchasing from Overstock.com.

FIGURE 7.5 In-Depth Critique: E-mail Replying to Request for Information



Starts with a clear statement of the main point

Here is the brochure "Entertainment Unlimited" that you requested. This booklet describes the vast array of entertainment options available to you with an Ocean Satellite Device (OSD).

Presents key information immediately, along with resale and sales promotion

On page 12 of "Entertainment Unlimited" you'll find a list of the 338 channels that the OSD brings into your home. You'll have access to movie, sport, and music channels; 24-hour news channels; local channels; and all the major television networks. OSD gives you a clearer picture and more precise sound than those old-fashioned dishes that took up most of your yard—and OSD uses only a small dish that mounts easily on your roof.

Encourage readers to take one more step toward a purchase by highlighting product benefits

More music, more cartoons, more experts, more news, and more sports are available to you with OSD than with any other cable or satellite connection in this region. Yes, it's all there, right at your fingertips.

Points toward the sale confidently

Just call us at 1-800-786-4331, and an OSD representative will come to your home to answer your questions. You'll love the programming and the low monthly cost. Call us today!

Granting Claims and Requests for Adjustment

Satisfied customers bring additional business to a firm; angry or dissatisfied customers do not. In addition, angry customers complain to anyone who will listen, creating poor public relations. So even though claims and adjustments may seem unpleasant, pro-

gressive businesspeople treat claims and requests for adjustment as golden opportunities to build customer loyalty.²

Few people go to the trouble of requesting an adjustment unless they actually have a problem. So the most sensible reaction to a routine claim is to assume that the claimant's account of the transaction is an honest statement of what happened—unless the same customer repeatedly submits dubious claims or the dollar amount is very large. When you receive a complaint, you'll want to investigate the problem first to determine what went wrong and why. You'll also want to determine whether your company, your customer, or a third party is at fault.

When Your Company Is at Fault The usual human response to a bad situation is to say, "It wasn't my fault!" However, businesspeople can't take that stance. When your company is at fault and your response to a claim is positive, you must protect your company's image and try to regain the customer's goodwill by referring to company errors carefully. Don't blame an individual or a specific department. And avoid lame excuses such as "Nobody's perfect" or "Mistakes will happen." Don't promise that problems will never happen again; such guarantees are unrealistic and often beyond your control. Instead, explain your company's efforts to do a good job, implying that the error was an unusual incident.

For example, a large mail-order clothing company has created the following form letter to respond to customers who claim they haven't received exactly what was ordered. The form letter can be customized through word processing and then individually signed:

Your letter concerning your recent Klondike order has arrived and has been forwarded to our director of order fulfillment. Your complete satisfaction is our goal; when you are satisfied, we are satisfied. Our customer service representative will contact you soon to assist with the issues raised in your letter.

Whether you're skiing or driving a snowmobile, Klondike Gear offers you the best protection from wind, snow, and cold—and Klondike has been taking care of customers' outdoor needs for over 27 years! Because you're a loyal customer, enclosed is a \$5 gift certificate. You may wish to consider our new line of quality snow goggles.

Thank you for taking the time to write to us. Your input helps us better serve you and all our customers.

In contrast, a response letter written as a personal answer to a unique claim would start with a clear statement of the good news: the settling of the claim according to the customer's request. Here is a more personal response from Klondike Gear:

Here is your heather-blue wool-and-mohair sweater (size large) to replace the one returned to us with a defect in the knitting on the left sleeve. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to correct this situation. Customers' needs have come first at Klondike Gear for 27 years. Our sweaters are handmade by the finest knitters in this area.

Our newest catalog is enclosed. Browse through it, and you'll see what wonderful new colors and patterns we have for you. Whether you are skiing or driving a snowmobile, Klondike Gear offers you the best protection available from wind, snow, and cold. Let us know how we may continue to serve you and your sporting needs.

When the Customer Is at Fault When your customer is at fault (perhaps washing a dry-clean-only sweater in hot water), you can (1) refuse the claim and attempt to justify your refusal or (2) simply do what the customer asks. But remember, if you refuse the claim, you may lose your customer—as well as many of the customer's friends, who will hear only one side of the dispute. You must weigh the cost of making the adjustment against the cost of losing future business from one or more customers.

Learning Objective 4

Explain the main differences in messages granting a claim when the company, the customer, or a third party is at fault

An ungracious adjustment may increase customer dissatisfaction.

- Starts with a "good attitude" statement (not the usual good-news statement) because it's going to people with various complaints
- Puts customer at ease with "you" attitude
- Avoids suggesting that customer was wrong to write to Klondike
- Includes resale and sales promotion
- Closes with statement of company's concern for all its customers

When complying with an unjustified claim, let the customer know that the merchandise was mistreated, but maintain a respectful and positive tone.

You have three options when a third party is at fault.

If you choose to grant the claim, you can start off with the good news: You're replacing the merchandise or refunding the purchase price. However, the middle section needs more attention. Your job is to make the customer realize that the merchandise was mistreated, but you want to avoid being condescending ("Perhaps you failed to read the instructions carefully") or preachy ("You should know that wool shrinks in hot water"). The dilemma is this: If the customer fails to realize what went wrong, you may commit your firm to an endless procession of returned merchandise; but if you insult the customer, your cash refund will have been wasted because you'll lose your customer anyway. Without being offensive, the letter in Figure 7.6 educates a customer about how to treat his in-line skates.

When a Third Party Is at Fault Sometimes neither you nor the claimant is at fault. Perhaps the carrier damaged merchandise in transit. Or perhaps the original manufacturer is responsible for some product defect. When a third party is at fault, you have three options:

- Simply honor the claim. This option is the most attractive. You can satisfy your customer with the standard good-news letter and no additional explanation. This way you maintain your reputation for fair dealing and bear no cost (because the carrier, manufacturer, or other third party will reimburse you for the damage).
- Honor the claim, but explain you're not at fault. This option corrects any impression that the damage was caused by your *negligence*. You can still write the standard good-news letter, but stress the explanation.
- Refer the claimant to the third party. This option is almost always a bad choice. When you suggest filing a claim with the firm that caused the defect or damage, you fail to satisfy the claimant's needs. The exception is when you're trying to dissociate yourself from any legal responsibility for the damaged merchandise, especially if it has caused a personal injury, in which case you would send a bad-news message (see Chapter 8).

This chapter's "Checklist: Granting Claims and Adjustment Requests" reviews the tasks involved in these kinds of business messages.

Providing Recommendations and References

When writing a letter of recommendation, your goal is to convince readers that the person being recommended has the characteristics necessary for the job or benefit being sought. Your letter must contain all the relevant details:

- Candidate's full name
- Job or benefit being sought
- Nature of your relationship with the candidate
- Whether you're answering a request or taking the initiative
- Facts relevant to the position or benefit sought
- Your overall evaluation of the candidate's suitability for the job or benefit

Oddly enough, the most difficult recommendation letters to write are those for truly outstanding candidates. Your audience will have trouble believing uninterrupted praise for someone's talents and accomplishments. So illustrate your general points with a specific example or two that point out the candidate's abilities. Be sure to discuss the candidate's abilities in relation to the "competition."

Most candidates aren't perfect, however. Omitting reference to a candidate's shortcomings may be tempting, especially if the shortcomings are irrelevant to the demands of the job in question. Even so, you have an obligation to refer to any shortcoming that is serious and related to job performance. You owe it to your audience, to your own conscience, and even to the better-qualified candidate who's relying on honest references.

Of course, the danger in writing a critical letter is that you might engage in libel (making a false and malicious written statement that injures the candidate's reputation). On the other hand, if that negative information is truthful and relevant, it may be unethical and illegal to omit it from your recommendation. So if you must refer to a

Learning Objective 5

Outline how best to protect yourself when referring to a candidate's shortcoming in a recommendation letter

A serious shortcoming cannot be ignored, but beware of being libelous:

- Include only relevant, factual information
- Avoid value judgments
- Balance criticisms with favorable points

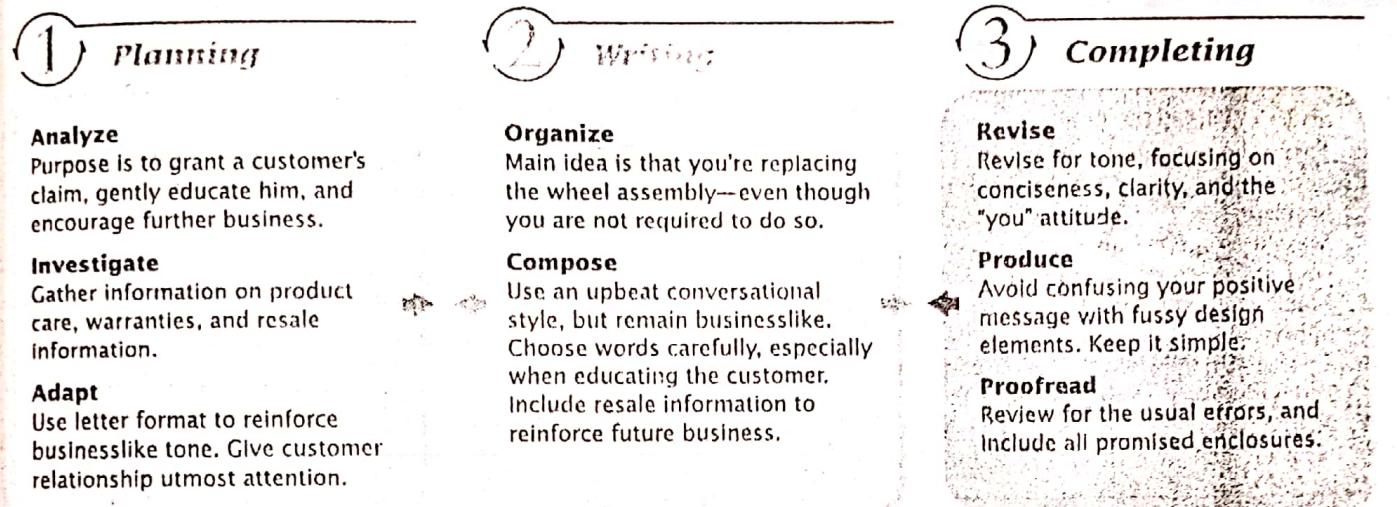


FIGURE 7.6 In-Depth Critique: Letter Responding to a Claim When the Buyer Is at Fault

*Skates
Alive!*

20901 El Dorado Hills
Laguna Niguel, CA 92677
(714) 332-7474 • Fax: (714) 336-5297
skates@ispeed.net

February 7, 2002

Mr. Steven Cox
1172 Amber Court
Jacksonville, FL 32073

Dear Mr. Cox:

Thank you for contacting us about your in-line skates. Even though your six-month warranty has expired, Skates Alive! is mailing you a complete wheel assembly replacement free of charge. The enclosed instructions make removing the damaged wheel line and installing the new one relatively easy.

The "Fastrax" (model NL 562) you purchased is our best selling and most reliable skate. However, wheel jams may occur when fine particles of sand block the smooth rotating action of the wheels. These skates perform best when used on roadways and tracks that are relatively free of sand. We suggest that you remove and clean the wheel assemblies (see enclosed directions) once a month and have them checked by your dealer about every six months.

Because of your Florida location, you may want to consider our more advanced "Glisto" (model NL 988) when you decide to purchase new skates. Although more expensive than the Fastrax, the Glisto design helps shed sand and dirt quite efficiently and should provide years of carefree skating.

Enjoy the enclosed copy of "Rock & Roll," with our compliments. Inside, you'll read about new products, hear from other skaters, and have an opportunity to respond to our customer questionnaire.

We love hearing from our skaters, so keep in touch. All of us at Skates Alive! wish you good times and miles of healthy skating.

Sincerely,

Candace Parker
Candace Parker
Customer Service Representative

Enclosure

Explains the problem without blaming the customer by avoiding the pronoun "you" and by suggesting ways to avoid future problems

Adds value by enclosing a newsletter that invites future response from customer

Acknowledges reader communication, keeps opening positive by avoiding words such as "problem," and conveys the good news right away

Includes sales promotion in the body, encouraging the customer to "trade up"

Closes positively, ending on a "feel good" note that conveys an attitude of excellent customer service

✓ CHECKLIST: GRANTING CLAIMS AND ADJUSTMENT REQUESTS

1. In the opening, state your willingness to honor the reader's claim, without negative comment.
2. Thank the claimant for taking the time to write.
3. In the body, explain how you will remedy the problem.
4. Minimize or, if possible, omit any disagreements with your reader's interpretation of events.
5. Make your explanation objective, nonvindictive, and impersonal.
6. Apologize only when appropriate; then do so crisply and without an overly dramatic tone.
7. Maintain a supportive tone: "Thank you for," "May we ask," and "We are glad to work with you."

8. Admit your firm's faults carefully: Don't shift blame, imply inefficiency, or make unrealistic promises.
9. Be careful when discussing the claimant's role in creating the problem.
10. In the closing, remind the reader how you are honoring the claim.
11. Encourage the claimant to look favorably on your company or the product in question.
12. Clarify any actions that your reader must take.

*These items are in addition to the basic tasks associated with writing positive responses.

A recommendation letter presenting negatives can be carefully worded to satisfy both the candidate and the person or company requesting information.

shortcoming, you can best protect yourself by sticking to the facts, avoiding value judgments, and placing your criticism in the context of a generally favorable recommendation, as in Figure 7.7. In this letter, the writer supports all statements with facts and steers clear of vague, critical judgments.

Recommendation letters are usually confidential; that is, they're sent directly to the person or committee who requested them and are not shown to the candidate. However, recent litigation has made it advisable in some situations to prepare a carefully worded letter that satisfies both parties. To explore the topic further, see "Focusing on Ethics—Recommendation Letters: What's Right to Write?" You can also avoid trouble by asking yourself the following questions before mailing a recommendation letter:

- Does the person receiving this personal information have a legitimate right to it?
- Does all the information I've presented relate directly to the job/benefit being sought?
- Have I put the candidate's case as strongly and as honestly as I can?
- Have I avoided overstating the candidate's abilities or otherwise misleading the reader?
- Have I based all my statements on firsthand knowledge and provable facts?

Announcing Good News

To develop and maintain good relationships, savvy companies such as UnumProvident recognize that it's good business to spread the word about positive developments, whether the company is opening new facilities, appointing a new executive, introducing new products or services, or sponsoring community events. Because good news is always welcome, use the direct approach.

About Employment Writing a letter to the successful job applicant is a pleasure. Such a letter is eagerly awaited, so the direct approach is appropriate:

Announces news in a friendly, welcoming tone

Welcome to Lake Valley Rehabilitation Center. A number of excellent candidates were interviewed, but your educational background and recent experience at Memorial Hospital make you the best person for the position of medical records coordinator.

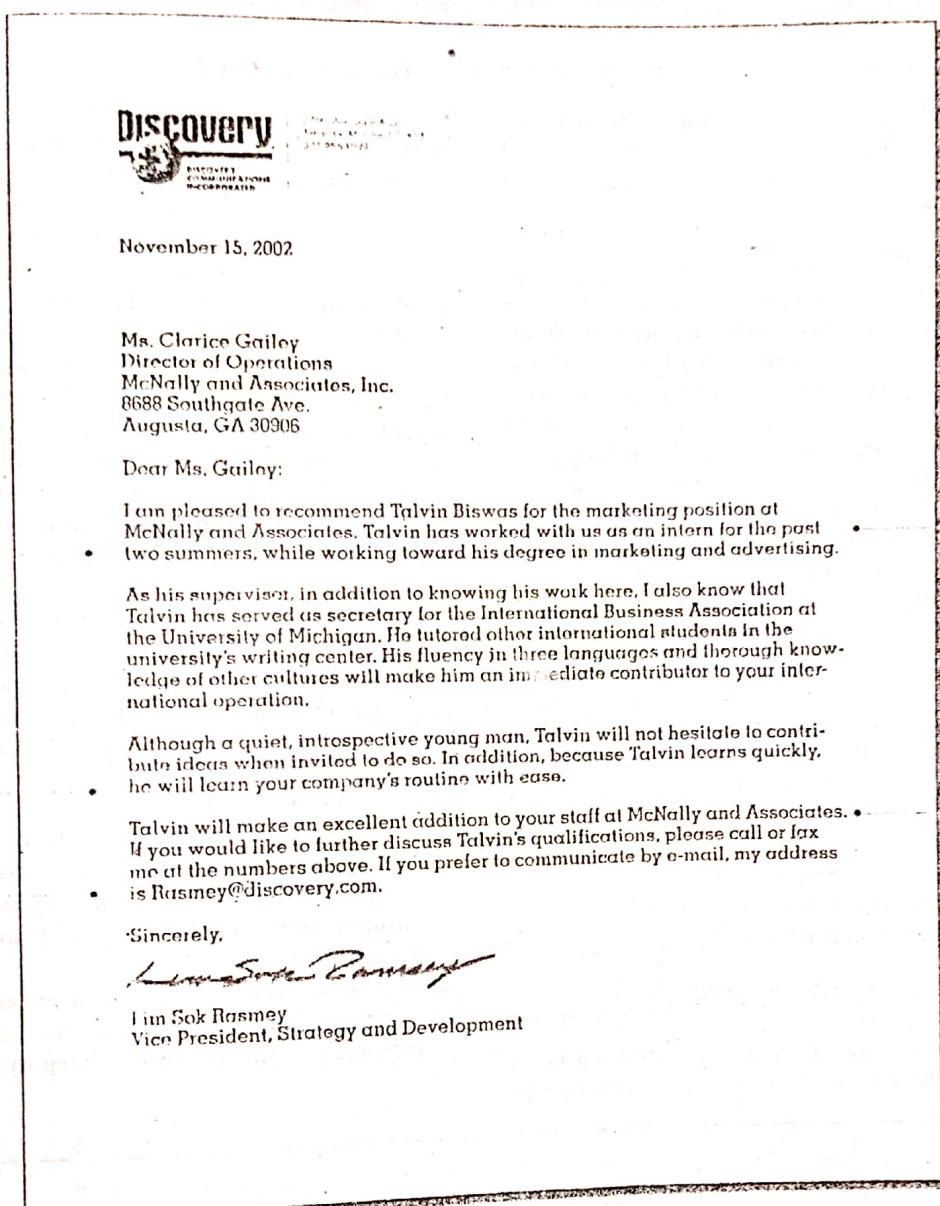
Explains all necessary details

As we discussed, your salary is \$26,200 a year. We would like you to begin on Monday, February 1. Please come to my office at 8:00 a.m. I will give you an in-depth orientation to Lake Valley and discuss the various company benefits available to you. You can also sign all the necessary employment documents.

Explains first day's routine to ease new employee's uncertainty

After lunch, Vanessa Jackson will take you to the medical records department and help you settle into your new responsibilities at Lake Valley Rehabilitation Center. I look forward to seeing you first thing on February 1.

FIGURE 7.7 In-Depth Critique: Recommendation Letter



Specifies duration and nature of relationship in the body to give weight to the evaluation

Closes by inviting reader to discuss the candidacy further

Clearly states candidate's full name and main point in the opening

Begins the close by summarizing the supportive evaluation

Although letters like these are pleasant to write, they constitute a legal job offer. You and your company may be held to any promises you make. So attorneys sometimes recommend stating salary as a monthly amount and keeping the timing of performance evaluations and raises vague; you want to avoid implying that the newly hired employee will be kept on, no matter what, for a whole year or until the next scheduled evaluation.³

About Products and Operations A company announcing a new discount program to customers would begin the letter by trumpeting the news. The middle section would fill in the details of the discount program, and the close would include a bit of resale information and a confident prediction of a profitable business relationship.

However, when the audience for a good-news message is large and scattered, companies often communicate through the mass media. When McDonald's opened its first restaurant in Moscow, it sent announcements to newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television networks. The specialized documents used to convey such information to the media are called news releases. Written to match the style of the medium they are intended for, news releases are typed on plain 8½-by-11-inch paper or on special letterhead (not on regular letterhead). They are double spaced for print media or triple spaced for electronic media.

A letter telling someone that she or he got the job is a legal document, so make sure all statements are accurate.

Specially formatted news releases convey good news to the media, which in turn disseminate it to the public.



Focusing on Ethics

Recommendation Letters: What's Right to Write?

You were Frank Walker's supervisor for four years. When he left the company recently, he asked you to write a letter of recommendation for him. However, your company's legal experts said no.

Why No Give Recommendations?

Thousands of lawsuits have been filed (and won) by employees, charging former employers with making slanderous (oral) and libelous (written) statements in job recommendations. During one seven-year period in California, employees won 72 percent of the libel and related suits they brought against employers, and their average award was \$582,000. One employer lost for saying an employee had "suddenly resigned," which implied the employee had resigned under "a veil of suspicion," said the court. Another employer lost for saying an employee was fired "for causes." Plus, when employees prove actual malice, damage awards skyrocket.

To complicate matters, one court ruling held an employer liable for *omitting* information about a former employee. So what sort of information should or should not be included in a recommendation? Even though some states have passed laws protecting companies against lawsuits when the employer acts in good faith, legal and human resources experts often advise companies to control what's being said by centralizing all recommendations. The cautious approach is to supply only dates of employment and titles of positions held—and to give that information only to people who have written authorization from former employees.

But What If You Want to Give a Recommendation?

Even so, Frank Walker was a terrific employee—a good friend—and you believe he really deserves a recommenda-

tion. You have two options. The first is to write the letter with Walker so that the contents satisfy you both and then to discuss the letter with your human resources department before releasing it. The second option is to ask Walker to list you as a *personal* reference, which removes your company from any responsibility for statements you make. But be careful—you can still be held personally responsible for your comments.

Of course, if it had been Sharon Brown who had asked for your recommendation, you'd be facing a different dilemma. Brown wasn't the greatest employee. So would you owe her potential employer the whole story? Including negative information could get you sued by Brown, and omitting negative information could get you sued by the hiring company for "failure to disclose" or "negligent referral."

Regardless of the circumstances, consult your human resources or legal department, and be sure to (1) comment only on your own experience working with a former employee, (2) make all comments in writing, and (3) limit your remarks to provable facts (don't exaggerate).

Career Applications

1. A former employee was often late for work but was an excellent and fast worker who got along well with everyone. Do you think it's important to mention the tardiness to potential employers? If so, how will you handle it?
2. Step outside yourself for a moment and write a letter of recommendation about you from a former employer's perspective. Practice honesty, integrity, and prudence.

Figure 7.8 illustrates the correct format for print media. The content follows the customary pattern for a good-news message: good news, followed by details and a positive close. However, it avoids explicit references to any reader and displays the "you" attitude by presenting information presumed to be of interest to all readers. To write a successful news release, keep the following points in mind:⁴

- Include no marketing or sales material in your news release.
- Put your most important idea first. (Don't say "Calco's president James Grall announced today that the company will move its headquarters to the Main Street office." Instead, start with the news: "Calco will move its headquarters to the Main Street office, President James Grall announced today.")
- Be brief: Break up long sentences and keep paragraphs short.
- Eliminate clutter such as redundancy and extraneous facts.
- Be as specific as possible.
- Avoid adjectives and adverbs (understatement goes a long way with the media).

In addition to issuing written news releases, many large companies hold news conferences or create their own videotapes, which are sent to television stations and networks.

FIGURE 7.8 In-Depth Critique: News Release Format

Opens with a dateline and a summary

Fleshes out detail in the body in descending order of importance

Provides basic facts about Target at the end of the piece

Target Stores
33 South Sixth Street
P.O. Box 1392
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440-1392

News Release: 15-Jun-2001
SOURCE: Target Corporation **CONTACT: Mike Evans 713-827-5801**

Target Corporation Donates \$25,000 to Help Tropical Storm Allison Victims In Texas

- MINNEAPOLIS—June 15 2001—Target Corporation (NYSE: TGT) today announced it has donated \$25,000 to the American Red Cross to help victims of Tropical Storm Allison in Texas. In addition, team members from local Target and Mervyn's stores are volunteering to help with area clean-up efforts.
- The storm first struck the Houston area on June 5 and returned June 9, dumping more than two feet of rain in less than 24 hours and killing 22 people. The rains and resulting flooding have devastated parts of Texas, damaging 20,000 homes and leaving thousands of families displaced. Tropical Storm Allison is one of the worst storms to hit Texas, causing billions of dollars in damage to the Houston area alone.
- Target Corporation's \$25,000 donation will be used to provide relief items, including blankets, water, and other necessities. Target Stores has also donated 500 Helping Hugs plush bears to comfort children during this difficult time.
- "This is a difficult time for all those affected by the storm," said Laysha Ward, director of community relations for Target Corporation. "As a community partner, we want to do our part to help the residents of Texas move forward after this disaster."
- **About Target Corporation**
Target Corporation operates large-store general merchandise formats, including discount stores, moderate-priced promotional stores and traditional department stores. The company currently operates 1,320 stores in 46 states. This includes 990 Target stores, 266 Mervyn's stores and 64 Marshall Field's.

A Division of the Target Corporation Printed on recycled paper. 

Provides a suggestion for the title (otherwise, leave two inches for the editor to insert a headline)

Limits release to one page (otherwise, you indicate a carryover to second page)

Closes positively but bears no signature, since this release is not addressing a specific person

Sending Goodwill Messages

You can enhance your relationships with customers, colleagues, and other businesspeople by sending friendly, unexpected notes with no direct business purpose. Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric, is known for his handwritten notes to all employees, from managers to hourly workers. He once wrote a congratulatory note to one manager who had turned down a promotion because he didn't want to move his teenager to a different school: "Bill," wrote Welch, "we like you for a lot of reasons—one of them is that you are a very special person. You proved it again this morning. Good for you and your lucky family . . ."⁵

Effective goodwill messages must be sincere and honest. Otherwise, the writer appears interested in personal gain rather than in benefiting customers or fellow workers. To come across as sincere, avoid exaggeration and back up any compliments with specific points. In addition, readers often regard more restrained praise as being more sincere.

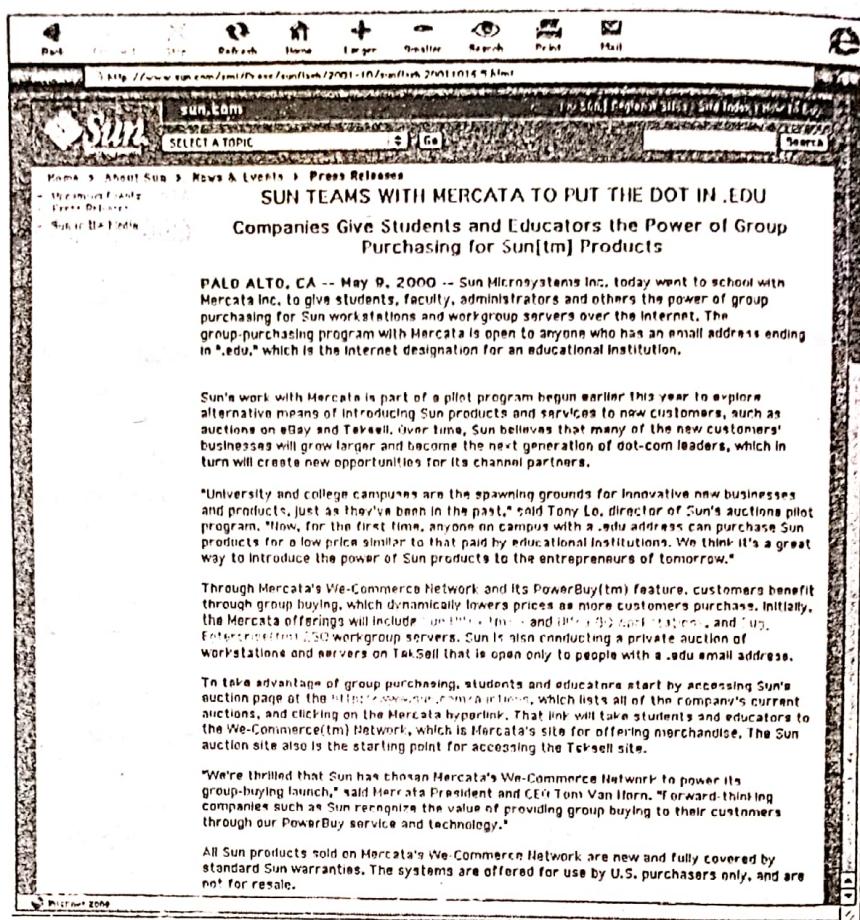
Learning Objective 6

Describe the importance of goodwill messages, and describe how to make them effective

Goodwill is the positive feeling that encourages people to maintain a business relationship.

Make sure your compliments are grounded in reality.

When writing an online news release, be sure to include lots of links so those interested can get additional information with just a click or two.



Instead of This

Words cannot express my appreciation for the great job you did. Thanks. No one could have done it better. You're terrific! You've made the whole firm sit up and take notice, and we are ecstatic to have you working here.

Write This

Thanks again for taking charge of the meeting in my absence. You did an excellent job. With just an hour's notice, you managed to pull the legal and public relations departments together so that we could present a united front in the negotiations. Your dedication and communication abilities have been noted and are truly appreciated.

Congratulations One prime opportunity for sending goodwill messages is to congratulate someone for a significant business achievement—perhaps for being promoted or for attaining an important civic position. The congratulatory note in Figure 7.9 moves swiftly to the subject: the good news. It gives reasons for expecting success and avoids extravagances such as “Only you can do the job!”

Other reasons for sending congratulations include the highlights in people's personal lives—weddings, births, graduations, success in nonbusiness competitions. You may congratulate business acquaintances on their own achievements or on the accomplishments of a spouse or child. You may also take note of personal events, even if you don't know the reader well. Of course, if you're already friendly with the reader, you can get away with a more personal tone.

Some companies even develop a mailing list of potential customers by assigning an employee to clip newspaper announcements of births, engagements, weddings, and graduations or to obtain information on real estate transactions in the local

Taking note of significant events in someone's personal life helps cement the business relationship.

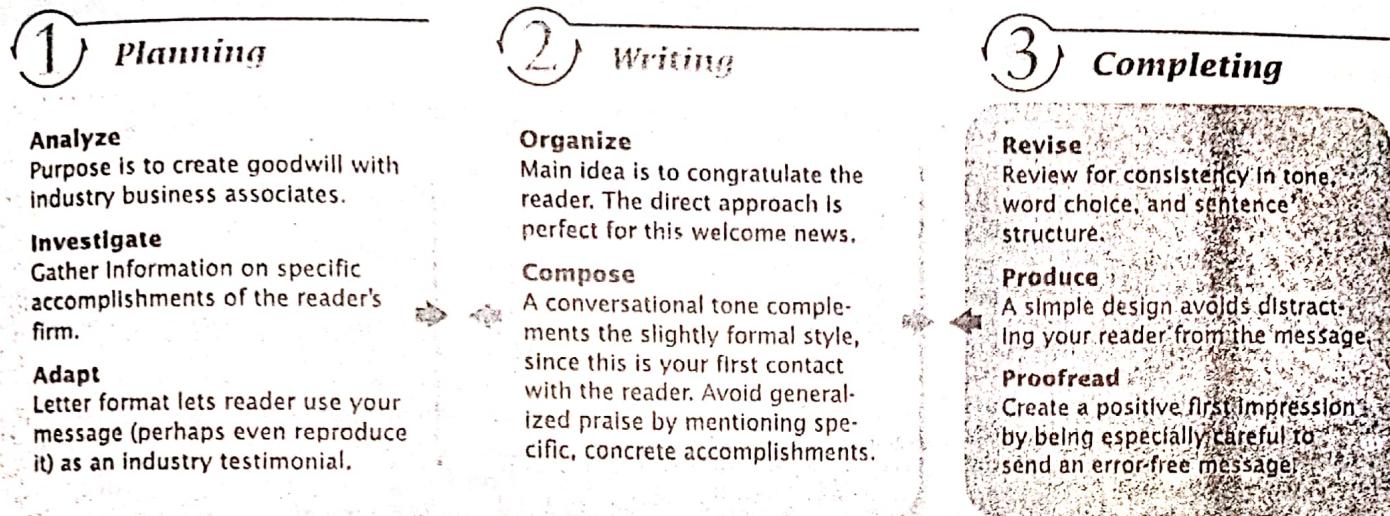
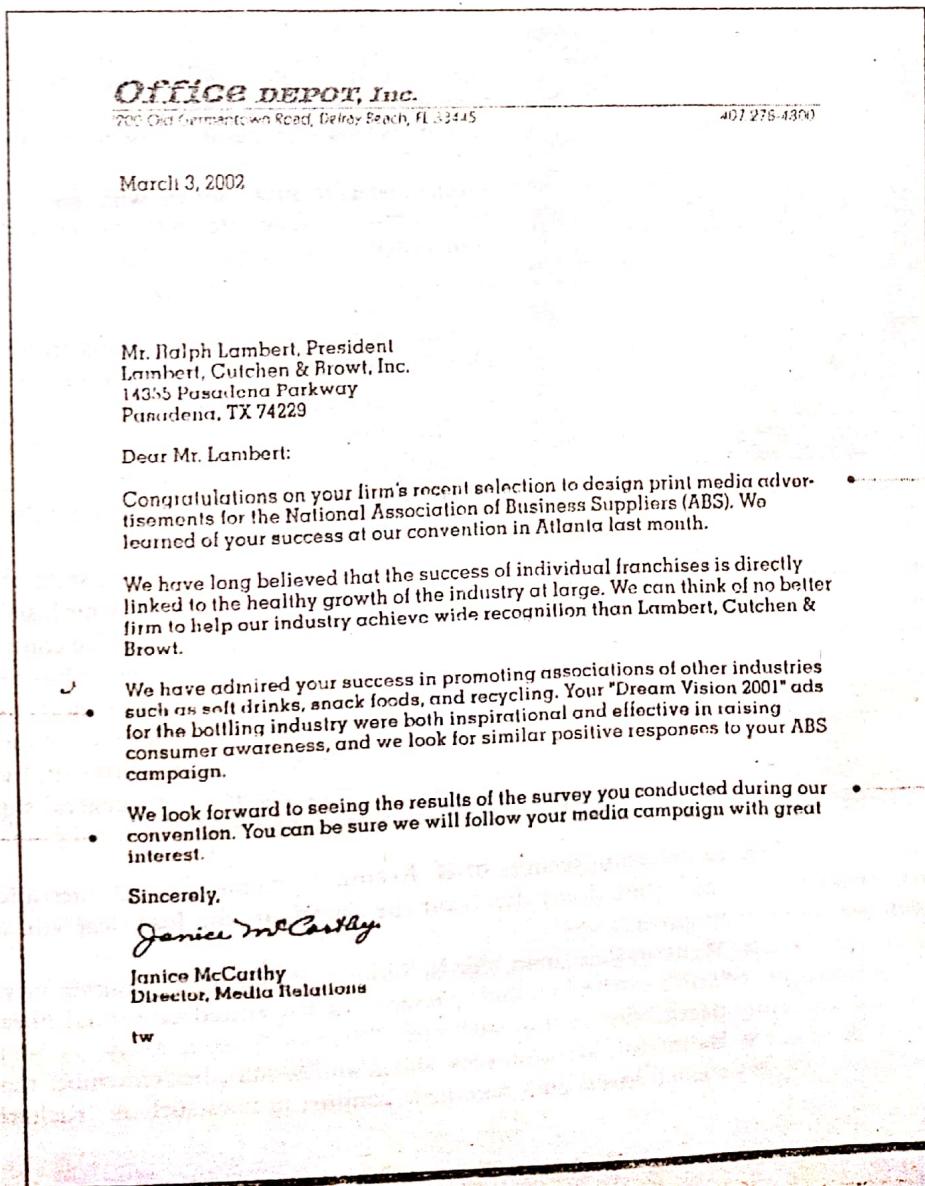


FIGURE 7.9 In-Depth Critique: Letter Congratulating a Business Acquaintance



Uses body to make compliment more effective by showing knowledge of the reader's work

Includes a personal note of congratulations in the closing

Immediately expresses the reason for congratulating the reader

Closes by expressing interest in following the future success of the firm

community. Then they introduce themselves by sending out a form letter that might read like this:

Congratulations on your new home! Our wish is that it brings you much happiness.

To help you commemorate the occasion, we've enclosed a key chain with your new address engraved on the leather tab. Please accept this with our best wishes.

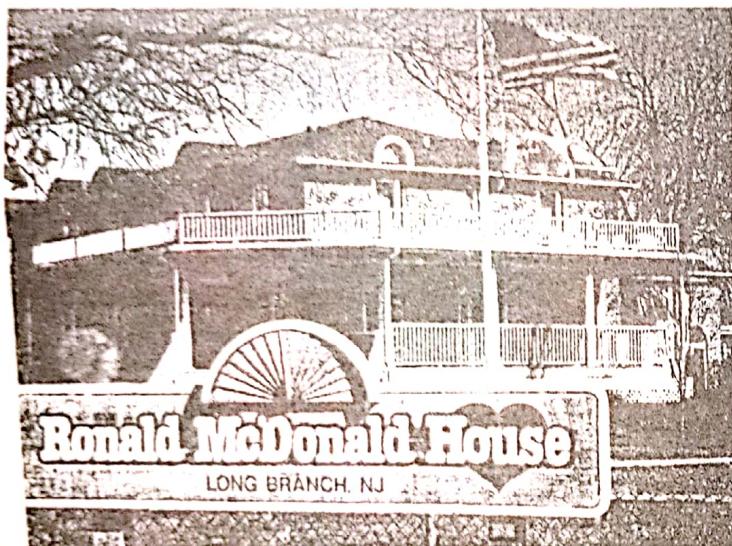
In this case, the company's letterhead and address are enough of a sales pitch. This simple message has a natural, friendly tone, even though the sender has never met the recipient.

A message of appreciation documents a person's contributions.

Messages of Appreciation An important business quality is the ability to recognize the contributions of employees, colleagues, suppliers, and other associates. Your praise does more than just make the person feel good; it encourages further excellence. Moreover, a message of appreciation may become an important part of someone's personnel file. So when you write a message of appreciation, try to specifically mention the person or people you want to praise. The brief message that follows expresses gratitude and reveals the happy result:

Thank you for sending the air-conditioning components by overnight delivery. You allowed us to satisfy the needs of two customers who were getting very impatient with the heat.

Special thanks to Susan Brown, who took our initial call and never said, "It can't be done." Her initiative on our behalf is greatly appreciated.



Both oral and written messages from organizations can promote good relationships with colleagues, customers, and the community. For example, Ronald McDonald House has become known worldwide as a home away from home for the families of seriously ill children. But when employees of the global office send congratulations, thank-you notes, or condolences to associates inside or outside the organization, they don't boast about all the good their organization accomplishes; they focus on the situation of the person receiving the message.

In condolence messages, try to find a middle path between being superficial and causing additional distress.

Condolences In times of serious trouble and deep sadness, written condolences and expressions of sympathy leave their mark. Granted, this type of message is difficult to write, but don't let the difficulty of the task keep you from responding promptly. Those who have experienced a health problem, the death of a loved one, or a business misfortune like to know that they're not alone.

Begin condolences with a brief statement of sympathy, such as "I was deeply sorry to hear of your loss." In the middle, mention the good qualities or the positive contributions made by the deceased. State what the person or business meant to you. In closing, you can offer your condolences and your best wishes. One considerate way to end this type of message is to say something that will give the reader a little lift, such as a reference to a brighter future. Here are a few general suggestions for writing condolence messages:

- **Keep reminiscences brief.** Recount a memory or an anecdote (even a humorous one), but don't dwell on the details of the loss, lest you add to the reader's anguish.
- **Write in your own words.** Write as if you were speaking privately to the person. Don't quote "poetic" passages or use stilted or formal phrases. If the loss is a death, refer to it as such rather than as "passing away" or "departing."
- **Be tactful.** Mention your shock and dismay, but remember that bereaved and distressed loved ones take little comfort in lines such as "Richard was too young to

✓ CHECKLIST: SENDING GOODWILL MESSAGES*

1. Be prompt when sending out goodwill messages so that they lose none of their impact.
2. Send a written message whenever possible (it can be savored more than once), but a telephone call is better than no message at all.
3. Use letter format for all condolences and any other goodwill message sent to outsiders or mailed to an employee's home.
4. Except for condolences, use the memo format for any goodwill messages sent through interoffice mail.
5. Hand-write condolences and replies to handwritten invitations.
6. Use special stationery, if available.
7. For added impact, present congratulations in a folder with a clipping or photo commemorating the special event.
8. In the beginning, incorporate a friendly statement that builds goodwill.
9. Focus on the good qualities of the person or situation.
10. In the middle, express personalized details in sincere, not gushy, language.
11. Be warm but concise.
12. Make the reader the focus of all comments.
13. Close with a positive or forward-looking statement.
14. Restate the important idea in the close, when appropriate.

*These items are in addition to the basic tasks associated with writing positive responses.

- die" or "Starting all over again will be so difficult." Try to strike a balance between superficial expressions of sympathy and heart-rending references to a happier past or the likelihood of a bleak future.
- **Take special care.** Be sure to spell names correctly and to be accurate in your review of facts. Try to be prompt.
 - **Write about special qualities of the deceased.** You may have to rely on reputation to do this, but let the grieving person know you valued his or her loved one.
 - **Write about special qualities of the bereaved person.** A pat on the back helps a bereaved family member feel more confident about handling things during such a traumatic time.⁶

Supervisor George Bigelow sent the following condolence letter to his administrative assistant, Janice Case, after learning of the death of Janice's husband:

My sympathy to you and your children. All your friends at Carter Electric were so very sorry to learn of John's death. Although I never had the opportunity to meet him, I do know how very special he was to you. Your tales of your family's camping trips and his rafting expeditions were always memorable.

To review the tasks involved in writing goodwill messages, see "Checklist: Sending Goodwill Messages."

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AT UNUMPROVIDENT CORPORATION



Business is booming at UnumProvident Corporation. Quarterly sales of group disability insurance plans have increased by 20 percent, and the company is hiring new personnel to keep up with the growth. As the company expands, Becky Bumgardner's projects keep mounting, and she has asked for your help writing several routine messages.

Individual Challenge: Bumgardner wants to hire Jim Moody as a new staff member in the corporate relations department. She's impressed with his résumé and interview. Bumgardner thinks Moody may be a "good fit" for her department, and she'd like to know whether he responds well under pressure. As public relations coordinator for Brentwell Insurance in Snohomish, Washington, Moody may have dealt with stressful situations. Write a letter to Moody's

Brentwell supervisor, requesting information about Moody, especially about his behavior under pressure. Make up any necessary details, and address the letter to Henry Watrous, Brentwell Insurance, 1552 10th Avenue, Snohomish, WA 98290.

Team Challenge: Managers at UnumProvident Corporation participate in incentive programs, receiving rewards for achieving or exceeding their sales quotas. This quarter, the

number of managers entitled to rewards has increased by 20 percent. Winners of incentive programs can select (1) four tickets to a Seattle Mariners' major league baseball home game, (2) a DVD player, or (3) a gift basket of gourmet foods. Bumgardner asks your team to develop a form letter to be sent to the winners, congratulating them on their outstanding performance and requesting winners to notify Bumgardner via e-mail of their prize selection. Be sure to state in your form letter how prizes will be distributed to winners. ■

SUMMARY OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1 Apply the three-step writing process to routine positive messages. Even though routine messages are usually short and simple, they benefit from the three-step writing process. Planning routine messages may take only a few moments to (1) analyze your purpose and audience, (2) investigate your readers' needs and make sure that you have all the facts to satisfy them, and (3) adapt your message to your audience through your choice of medium and your use of the "you" attitude. When writing routine messages, use the direct approach, as long as your readers will be positive (or neutral) and have minimal cultural differences. Completing routine messages means making them as professional as possible by (1) revising for clarity and conciseness, (2) selecting appropriate design elements and delivery methods, and (3) careful proofreading.
- 2 Illustrate the strategy for writing routine requests. When writing a routine request, open by stating your specific request. At the same time, avoid being abrupt or tactless; pay attention to tone, assume your audience will comply, avoid personal introductions, end polite requests with a period, and be specific. Use the middle of a routine request to justify your request and explain its importance. Close routine requests by asking for specific action (including a deadline as often as possible), and expressing goodwill. Be sure to include all contact information so that your reader can respond easily.
- 3 Discuss the differences among four types of routine requests. Each type of routine request has distinguishing features. All start with a statement of the main idea. But in letters placing orders, the body includes columns for product information, just like any good order blank. The close includes the delivery address, the preferred method of shipment, and information about any enclosed payment. When the request is for information or action, the middle explains or justifies your request, and the close specifies what you need and when you need it. When the message is a claim or request for adjustment, the mid-

dle includes whatever facts your reader needs to verify your complaint. The close requests a specific solution or conveys a sincere desire to find one, and it suggests that future business depends on a satisfactory resolution. In a request for recommendation, the opening states the position or award being applied for and, if necessary, recalls the nature and dates of your relationship with the reader. The middle refers to your résumé or includes information that would support a recommendation, and the appreciative close includes the name and address of the person to whom the recommendation will be sent.

- 4 Explain the main differences in messages granting a claim when the company, the customer, or a third party is at fault. In messages granting a claim, the explanatory section differs depending on who is at fault. If your company is at fault, avoid reacting defensively, and be careful when referring to company errors. Rather than placing blame, explain your company's efforts to do a good job. Remember not to make any unrealistic promises or guarantees. If your customer is at fault, you must help your reader realize what went wrong so that it won't happen again and again. However, you don't want to sound condescending, preachy, or insulting. If a third party is at fault, you can honor the claim with no explanation—or you can honor the claim and explain that the problem is not your fault.
- 5 Outline how best to protect yourself when referring to a candidate's shortcoming in a recommendation letter. When you find that you must refer to a candidate's shortcoming, stick to the facts. Try to give your criticism in the context of a generally favorable recommendation. Also ask yourself the following questions: Does the person receiving this personal information have a legitimate right to it? Does all the information I've presented relate directly to the job/benefit being sought? Have I put the candidate's case as strongly and as I honestly can? Have I avoided overstating the candidate's abilities or otherwise misleading the reader? Have I based all my statements on firsthand knowledge and provable facts?

6 Describe the importance of goodwill messages, and describe how to make them effective. Goodwill messages are important for building relationships with customers, colleagues, and other businesspeople. These friendly, unexpected notes have no direct business purpose, but they make people feel good about doing business with the sender. To make goodwill messages effective, make them honest and sincere. Avoid exaggerating. Back up compliments with specific points, and give restrained praise.

- Ethical Choices You have a complaint against one of your suppliers, but you have no documentation to back it up. Should you request an adjustment anyway? Why or why not?

PRACTICE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Documents for Analysis

Read the following documents; then (1) analyze the strengths and weaknesses of each sentence and (2) revise each document so that it follows this chapter's guidelines.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- When is a request routine?
- What are some of the guidelines for asking a series of questions in a routine request?
- What information should be included in an order request?
- Should you use the direct or indirect approach for most routine messages? Why?
- Where in a routine message should you state your actual request?
- How does a claim differ from an adjustment?
- How does the question of fault affect what you say in a message granting a claim?
- What is the appropriate strategy for responding to a request for a recommendation about a job candidate whose performance was poor?
- How can you avoid sounding insincere when writing a goodwill message?
- What are some of the guidelines for writing condolence messages?

APPLY YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- When organizing request messages, why is it important to know whether any cultural differences exist between you and your audience? Explain.
- Your company's error cost an important business customer a new client; you know it and your customer knows it. Do you apologize, or do you refer to the incident in a positive light without admitting any responsibility? Briefly explain.
- You've been asked to write a letter of recommendation for an employee who is disabled and uses a wheelchair. The disability has no effect on the employee's ability to do the job, and you feel confident about writing the best recommendation possible. Nevertheless, you know the prospective company and its facilities aren't well suited to wheelchair access. Do you mention the employee's disability in your letter? Explain.
- Every time you send a direct-request memo to Ted Jackson, he delays or refuses to comply. You're beginning to get impatient. Should you send Jackson a memo to ask what's wrong? Complain to your supervisor about Jackson's uncooperative attitude? Arrange a face-to-face meeting with Jackson? Bring up the problem at the next staff meeting? Explain.

Document 7.A: Requesting Routine Information from a Business

Our college is closing its dining hall for financial reasons, so we want to do something to help the students prepare their own food in their dorm rooms if they so choose. Your colorful ad in *Collegiate Magazine* caught our eye. We need the following information before we make our decision.

- Would you be able to ship the microwaves by August 15th? I realize this is short notice, but our board of trustees just made the decision to close the dining hall last week and we're scrambling around trying to figure out what to do.
- Do they have any kind of a warranty? College students can be pretty hard on things, as you know, so we will need a good warranty.
- How much does it cost? Do you give a discount for a big order?
- Do we have to provide a special outlet?
- Will students know how to use them, or will we need to provide instructions?

As I said before, we're on a tight time frame and need good information from you as soon as possible to help us make our decision about ordering. You never know what the board might come up with next. I'm looking at several other companies, also, so please let us know ASAP.

Document 7.B: Making Claims and Requests for Adjustment

At a local business-supply store, I recently purchased your "Negotiator Pro" for my computer. I bought the CD because I saw your ad for it in *MacWorld* magazine, and it looked as if it might be an effective tool for use in my corporate seminar on negotiation.

Unfortunately, when I inserted it in my office computer, it wouldn't work. I returned it to the store, but since I had already opened it, they refused to exchange it for a CD that would work or give me a refund. They told me to contact you and that you might be able to send me a version that would work with my computer.

You can send the information to me at the letterhead address. If you cannot send me the correct disk, please refund my \$79.95. Thanks in advance for any help you can give me in this matter.

Document 7.C: Responding to Claims and Adjustment Requests When the Customer Is at Fault

We read your letter requesting your deposit refund. We couldn't figure out why you hadn't received it, so we talked to our maintenance engineer as you suggested. He said you had left one of the doors off the hinges in your apartment in order to get a large sofa through the door. He also confirmed that you had paid him \$5.00 to replace the door since you had to turn in the U-Haul trailer and were in a big hurry.

This entire situation really was caused by a lack of communication between our housekeeping inspector and the maintenance engineer. All we knew was that the door was off the hinges when it was inspected by Sally Tarnley. You know that our policy states that if anything is wrong with the apartment, we keep the deposit. We had no way of knowing that George just hadn't gotten around to replacing the door.

But we have good news. We approved the deposit refund, which will be mailed to you from our home office in Teaneck, New Jersey. I'm not sure how long that will take, however. If you don't receive the check by the end of next month, give me a call.

Next time, it's really a good idea to stay with your apartment until it's inspected as stipulated in your lease agreement. That way, you'll be sure to receive your refund when you expect it. Hope you have a good summer.

Document 7.D: Letter of Recommendation

Your letter to Tanaka Asata, President of SONY, was forwarded to me because I am the human resources director. In my job as head of HR, I have access to performance reviews for all of the SONY employees in the United States. This means, of course, that I would be the person best qualified to answer your request for information on Nick Oshinski.

In your letter of the 15th, you asked about Nick Oshinski's employment record with us because he has applied to work for your company. Mr. Oshinski was employed with us from January 5, 1995, until March 1, 2001. During that time, Mr. Oshinski received ratings ranging from 2.5 up to 9.6, with 10 being the top score. As you can see, he must have done better reporting to some managers than to others. In addition, he took all vacation days, which is a bit unusual. Although I did not know Mr. Oshinski personally, I know that our best workers seldom use all the vacation time they earn. I do not know if that applies in this case.

In summary, Nick Oshinski performed his tasks well depending on who managed him.

Exercises

For live links to all websites discussed in this chapter, visit this text's website at www.prenhall.com/boeve. Just log on and select Chapter 7, and click on "Student Resources." Locate the name of "Exploring the Best of the Web" exercises, you'll also find navigational directions. Click on the live link to the site.

7.1 Revising Messages: Directness and Conciseness Revise the following short e-mail messages so that they are more direct and concise; develop a subject line for each revised message.

- I'm contacting you about your recent order for a High Country backpack. You didn't tell us which backpack you wanted, and you know we make a lot of different ones. We have the canvas models with the plastic frames and vinyl trim and we have the canvas models with leather trim, and we have the ones that have more pockets than the other ones. Plus they come in lots of different colors. Also they make the ones that are large for a big-boned person and the smaller versions for little women or kids.
- Thank you for contacting us about the difficulty you had collecting your luggage at the Denver airport. We are very sorry for the inconvenience this has caused you. As you know, traveling can create problems of this sort regardless of how careful the airline personnel might be. To receive compensation, please send us a detailed list of the items that you lost and complete the following questionnaire. You can e-mail it back to us.
- Sorry it took us so long to get back to you. We were flooded with résumés. Anyway, your résumé made the final ten, and after meeting three hours yesterday, we've decided we'd like to meet with you. What is your schedule like for next week? Can you come in for an interview on June 15 at 3:00 p.m.? Please get back to us by the end of this work week and let us know if you will be able to attend. As you can imagine, this is our busy season.
- We're letting you know that because we use over a ton of paper a year and because so much of that paper goes into the wastebasket to become so much more environmental waste, starting Monday, we're placing white plastic bins outside the elevators on every floor to recycle that paper and in the process, minimize pollution.

7.2 Revising Messages: Directness and Conciseness Rewrite the following sentences so that they are direct and concise.

- We wanted to invite you to our special 40% off by invitation-only sale. The sale is taking place on November 9.
- We wanted to let you know that we are giving a tote bag and a free Phish CD with every \$50 donation you make to our radio station.
- The director planned to go to the meeting that will be held on Monday at a little before 11:00 A.M.
- In today's meeting, we were happy to have the opportunity to welcome Paul Eccelson. He reviewed some of the newest types of order forms. If you have any questions about these new forms, feel free to call him at his office.

7.3

 Internet Visit the business section of the Blue Mountain site at www.bluemountain.com/eng3/business/ and analyze one of the electronic greeting cards bearing a goodwill message of appreciation for good performance. Under what circumstances would you send this electronic message? How could you person-

alize it for the recipient and the occasion? What would be an appropriate close for this message?

- 7.4 Teamwork** With another student, identify the purpose and select the most appropriate format for communicating these written messages. Next, consider how the audience is likely to respond to each message. Based on this audience analysis, determine whether the direct or indirect approach would be effective for each message, and explain your reasoning.

- A notice to all employees about the placement of recycling bins by the elevator doors
- The first late-payment notice to a good customer who usually pays his bills on time

- 7.5 Revising Messages: Conciseness, Courteousness, and Specificity** Critique the following closing paragraphs. How would you rewrite each to be concise, courteous, and specific?

- I need your response sometime soon so I can order the parts in time for your service appointment. Otherwise your air-conditioning system may not be in tip-top condition for the start of the summer season.
- Thank you in advance for sending me as much information as you can about your products. I look forward to receiving your package in the very near future.
- To schedule an appointment with one of our knowledgeable mortgage specialists in your area, you can always call our hotline at 1-800-555-8765. This is also the number to call if you have more questions about mortgage rates, closing procedures, or any other aspect of the mortgage process. Remember, we're here to make the home-buying experience as painless as possible.

- 7.6 Ethical Choices** Your small supermarket chain has received dozens of complaints about the watery consistency of the ketchup sold under the chain's brand name. You don't want your customers to stop buying other store-brand foods, which are made and packaged for your chain by various suppliers, but you do want to address their concerns about the ketchup. In responding to these complaints, should you explain that the ketchup is actually manufactured by a local supplier and then name the supplier, who has already started bottling a thicker ketchup?

EXPAND YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Exploring the Best of the Web:

The Medium and the Message, p. 190

Choosing what to include in a message, deciding how to effectively express it, and selecting an appropriate format are all important considerations when you write. Go to About.com and add to what you've already learned in this chapter about writing requests and other messages.

- Both the chapter and this site offer guidelines for writing effective messages. List the "Seven C's" that characterize

good letters and memos. If you use clear language in a routine message, is it still important to restrict yourself to one topic? Why or why not?

- Even the best-run businesses sometimes disappoint their customers. Imagine that you have been asked to write a response to an angrily worded e-mail message that charges your company with fraud because a product ordered through the web has not arrived. Which of the ten "secrets" of writing business letters do you think would be most useful in shaping your reply?
- Describe some similarities and differences between a memo and a letter.

Exploring the Web on Your Own

- Learn how to write effective thank-you notes by reviewing the steps at this Learn2 webpage, www.learn2.com/05/0547/0547.asp.
- Polish your press release writing by following the steps at this Learn2 webpage, www.learn2.com/06/0622/0622.asp.
- Turn praise into prose when writing letters of recommendation by following the steps at this Learn2 webpage, www.learn2.com/06/0600/0600.asp.

LEARN INTERACTIVELY

Interactive Study Guide



Visit "My Companion Website" at www.prenhall.com/bovec. For Chapter 7, take advantage of the interactive "Study Guide" to test your chapter knowledge. Get instant feedback on whether you need additional studying. Read the "Current Events" articles to get the latest on chapter topics, and complete the exercises—as specified by your instructor.

This site offers a variety of additional resources: The "Research Area" helps you locate a wealth of information to use in course assignments. You can even send a message to online research experts, who will help you find exactly the information you need. The "Study Hall" helps you succeed in this course. "Talk in the Hall" lets you leave messages and meet new friends online. If you have a question, you can "Ask the Tutor." And to get a better grade in this course, you can find more help at "Writing Skills," "Study Skills," and "Study Tips."

Grammar Diagnostic Tests



Review and reinforce your grammar and language skills by taking one of the four online diagnostic tests offered at our companion website, www.prenhall.com/bovec. The four tests cover a variety of topics, including spelling, capitals, punctuation, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, sentence structure, sentence punctuation, clarity, word choice, style, organization skills, -proofreading, and more. Submit your test and assess your competency. Then focus on improving areas where you are weak as you complete the exercises in this chapter.



APPLYING THE THREE-STEP WRITING PROCESS TO CASES

Apply each step to the following cases, assigned by your instructor

1 Planning Cases

Analyze

1. What's your general purpose?
2. What's your specific purpose?
3. What do you want readers to do?
4. Who are your readers? (Who is the primary audience? What do readers have in common? What is their general background? How will they react?)

Investigate

5. What information do readers need?
6. What facts must you gather?

Adapt

How will you establish credibility?

2 Writing Cases

Organize

1. What's your main idea?
2. Will you use the direct or indirect approach? Why?

Compose

3. Will your tone be informal or more formal?
4. Draft the message as discussed in the "Your task" section of the case.

3 Completing Cases

Revise

1. Use the Checklist for Revising Business Messages on page 155 to edit and revise your message for clarity.

Produce

2. What's the best way to distribute your message? By fax? By e-mail? By sealed envelope?

Proofread

3. Proofread your message for errors in layout, spelling, and mechanics.

ROUTINE REQUESTS

1. Step on it: Letter to Floorgraphics requesting information about underfoot advertising As the small-town owner of Better Bike and Ski Shop, you're used to receiving promotional displays, give-away gadgets, and flashy posters from major manufacturers. The old ones clutter your back room, where employees fight over the used ski posters. But now a manufacturer wants to buy a piece of your floor!

Your Schwinn rep, Marva Beeker, approached you with the idea. Schwinn wants to put floor ads in your store. But first you have to sign up with the company that invented and sells them. Floorgraphics, Inc., leases floor space from retail stores and sells it to advertisers in 4-, 8-, or 12-week cycles.

"Floorgraphics has been doing this for years in thousands of Kmart and chain supermarkets all over the country," Beeker assures you, "and now it's trying to sign up smaller retailers to sell a wider variety of products. If floor ads work for Spaghetti-Os, why not for bicycles?"

Beeker goes on to explain how surprised everyone was by the success of strategically placing decals at the point of consumer decision making: on the floor beneath the product's shelf space. After the first placements, product sales went up anywhere from 25 to 75 percent. One survey showed that Oreo cookie sales went up by 72 percent in the two months after decals were installed on Kmart floors.

"Floorgraphics will want to lease your entire floor for advertisers other than Schwinn," Beeker explains. "And these people know what they're doing. They limit ads to two per aisle and to one company per category. Best of all, in addition to leasing fees,



you get a commission on whatever Floorgraphics makes selling your space to advertisers. I think it's about 25 percent, but you should ask Richard yourself."

That's Richard Rebh, CEO of Floorgraphics, whose business card Beeker hands to you.

"We're the first bike manufacturer to sign up," she says, grinning. "We're going to get a big jump on the other guys... if we can get storeowners like you to agree. And keep in mind, the retailers that are already in the Floorgraphics network will get first crack at the new animated floor ads! Can't you just see it? The bicycle will start to move as customers crowd in for a look!"

Long after Becker leaves, you find yourself staring at the dusty linoleum in front of the bike racks, marveling that manufacturers want to pay hard cash to put their names down there where customers are going to track dirt and melting snow all over them. But if what Becker says is true, you could gain three new ways of earning money: the leasing fee, the increased sales, and the share in ad revenues.

Your task: Write to CEO Richard Rebh at Floorgraphics, Inc. (5 Vaughn Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540). You want to find out whether Becker has been exaggerating. You'll need all the financial details, but you also want some practical information about the ads themselves: Who installs and removes them? What will your cleaning solutions do to them? What are the risks of floor damage? Is there a way to terminate the lease if you don't like them? Your questions are endless. Put as many as you deem reasonable in your letter, and be sure to justify your request for a speedy reply.⁷

2. Reverse migration: Letter requesting letter of recommendation for "dot-com" dropout You really wanted to join the so-called "Great Migration" of executive talent to online companies. You'd seen colleagues become overnight millionaires by abandoning their jobs at big companies and plunging into the world of Internet commerce. Employee stock options and inflated IPOs offered a lure they couldn't resist, and neither could you. So you contacted Michele James, a headhunter specializing in finding executives for online start-ups. James went to work and quickly landed you a lucrative offer at a well-funded dot-com company in your industry (travel services). You took it.

The first week as creative services director wasn't so bad. You learned tons of new things and adapted readily to the seat-of-the-pants work style. You discovered with delight that at your new company, creativity and vision weren't considered terrifying traits of overachievers who had to be kept on a short leash; instead, these traits were cultivated prerequisites. The more "out there" your ideas, the more attention they merited. That's because e-business moves fast and everybody needs to move fast with it.

You just didn't realize how long and how often you'd be expected to keep moving. That first week was only 50 hours. The second was 60. By the third week, 70 hours wasn't considered outlandish. Anyone who went home before 7 P.M. or who didn't show up on Saturday or Sunday was considered a loser and quickly disappeared from your workscape.

Your spouse was soon complaining about not recognizing you anymore; your children told people at school functions that you were in the hospital; and you couldn't remember the last time you ate a meal without a computer screen, cell phone, or beeper a few inches from your plate. You love the fast decision making, and your CEO loves your exemplary work, but you are exhausted. One day you pick up your briefcase and leave at 5 P.M. Horror registers on the few faces that lift to see you go. Then their weary eyes shift back to their computer screens.

Money is nice, you muse. But when will you enjoy the things it can buy? When will you live your life?

You've read about others who have taken the Internet plunge but quit after experiencing similar job stress. "Reverse migration" was the term the newspapers used to describe people like you who leave dot-com jobs to return to the "normalcy" of the traditional workplace.

Your task: You've already resigned. Now write a hard-copy letter to Glenna Evans, CEO of Yourtravel.com, asking for a letter of recommendation.⁸

3. Fortune or folly: Request for information from a Subway franchise operator Even before you heard Jared Fogle's story, you were thinking about buying into a franchise. Reading about the young man who lost 245 pounds while eating two Subway sandwiches a day has inspired your choice. If Jared can reach his goal by sheer determination, so can you. Maybe you should invest in a Subway franchise.

You do have some misgivings. From popular books such as Robert Kiyosaki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad*, you know that franchises can be a smart first move for aspiring business owners. But you've also read that they demand long hours, steep investments, and rigid rule-following. What you'd like to know is exactly how long those hours will be, what unforeseen costs might suddenly arise, and whether it's hard for a would-be entrepreneur to fit into the franchise mold, where everything from the signage to the size of the ham slices is dictated by the company.

You decide to ask someone who's already taken the plunge, signed that 20-year agreement, and doled out the necessary \$65,000 to \$184,000 (depending on store size and location). That money covers franchise fees, leasehold improvements, equipment, outdoor signs, supplies, and inventory, but what isn't covered?

You also have questions you're embarrassed to ask Subway because you think maybe you should already know the answers. For instance, do you get any say-so in that range of 500 to 1,500 square feet, standard sizes for Subway outlets? Does Subway insist on choosing its own locations, or will you get to specify Bartlesville, Oklahoma, which you've determined to be an untapped market for the sandwich franchise? How long before you'll see any profit?

When you called Subway's headquarters and asked for references, you were told about Tharita Jones, who operates a Subway store in Tulsa, about 30 miles from Bartlesville. "She's been with us for about five years now," said the woman as she gave you Jones's name and number. Trouble is, you can't bring yourself to call her.

You have an image in your mind of a fast-food-franchise owner watching employees, doing paperwork, ordering supplies, talking to customers, and checking restrooms. She won't have the time to take a call from someone like you. You have so many questions: how to calculate the 8 percent royalties on gross sales and the 3.5 percent advertising fees charged weekly by the Subway franchise, whether franchise owners can switch suppliers if they find a better price, and what happens if royalty payments arrive late. You're also dying to find out whether Jones is happy with Subway's advertising programs and how much help she got from Subway in the beginning. You're even wondering whether you could drop by and observe Jones's

operation for a day—sort of a behind-the-scenes look. How can you ask all this by phone?

You decide that a letter would be more considerate. You hate to impose, but you need to investigate before you sign a contract. With 14,700 stores worldwide, Subway *seems* like a good investment, but you need to be certain.

Your task: Write a letter to Tharita Jones (Owner, Subway restaurant, 120 W. Greenfield Street, Tulsa, OK 74133), requesting permission to visit her operation for a day (at her convenience) so that you can learn more about investing in a Subway franchise. Let her know how you got her name, and reassure her that you will need only about an hour of her time to address your specific questions. To make your meeting more productive, list your questions in the letter. You'll need to make your decision soon, so politely suggest a time limit for her reply.⁹

4. A juicy position: E-mail requesting information on management careers at Jamba Juice

Working as a personal trainer at 24-Hour Fitness wasn't your college goal, but your love for sports made the gym an ideal place for an undergrad internship. When they offered you a full-time position as a trainer, you took it.

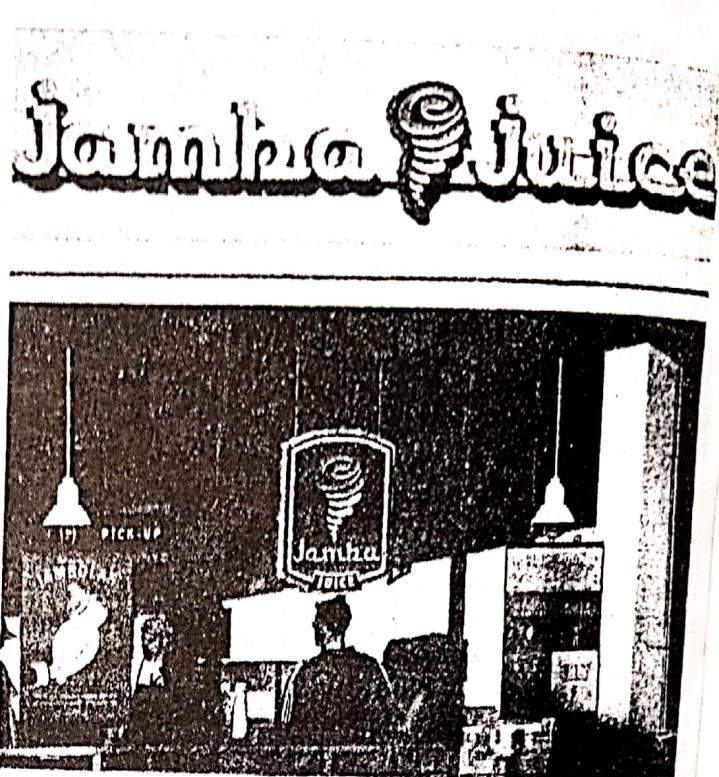
But now that you've earned your business degree, you're sick of Cybex machines and working from 5 A.M. to 9 P.M. to meet clients' schedules. And unlike many of your co-workers (of both genders), you don't dream of becoming a TV fitness guru or landing a celebrity client who'll pay all your bills. What you really want is to use what you've learned about business in a job with more responsibility—and better pay!

Last week you heard an intriguing rumor about the manager of the Jamba Juice bar located inside the gym. You wanted to ask her about it, but decided it would be more discreet to log on to www.jambajuice.com. There you discovered that the truth is even better than the rumor.

Jamba Juice is actively recruiting new managers by offering impressive incentives. It turns out that the chain is an up-and-comer in the health, fitness, and nutrition industry. That's a customer base you understand well, after long hours talking to clients sweating on treadmills. You love Jamba's smoothies, and now you discover that you can make more money working for the company.

The information at the Jamba Juice website was vague. It mentioned a "General Manager J.U.I.C.E. Plan"—some sort of profit sharing—but it never explained what J.U.I.C.E. stands for. Everything else sounded good, such as an average 7.5 percent of the store's profit as a take-home bonus every eight weeks for general managers, 1.5 percent for assistant general managers, with a "minimum guaranteed bonus" every eight weeks based on meeting "customer service goals." No explanation was given of what those goals are or how much the minimum is, but the site promised health benefits, paid time off for community service, and "private stock options" (Jamba Juice is a privately owned company).

You were most impressed by the "retention bonus for general managers." Again, how it's calculated is unclear, but the promise is a bonus based on the manager's ability to "build sales" over time. You earn the bonus from day one, but you don't actually get paid the accumulated bonus until you've been in the store or in a position of greater responsibility for three years. The website states the bonus could be as high as \$50,000; one manager has already collected \$10,000.



If you sign on for another three years, you're given a three-week paid sabbatical, in addition to accrued vacation or personal time! That, and a \$1,000 bonus for every assistant you promote to general manager. All this after a five-week management training program.

Your task: The website suggests sending an e-mail to careers@jambajuice.com for more information. Draft such a message, asking for clarification on each of the vague points and for information about qualifications and application procedures. You'll also want to know whether the training would require traveling to the company's San Francisco headquarters. Plus, you're curious about which locations currently have openings. You wonder whether you might have to move. Decide whether or not to mention your familiarity with the company's customer base, your business education, and so on; for instance, you might mention these special qualifications in your closing to encourage a speedy reply.¹⁰

ROUTINE ANNOUNCEMENTS

5. Temper, temper: E-mail reminder to employees about technology failures This is the third time in two months your company, Metro Power, has had to escort an employee from the building after a violent episode. Frankly, everyone is a little frightened by this development, and as a human resources administrator, you have the unhappy task of trying to quell the storm.

Metro Power rarely fires employees, preferring to transfer them to new responsibilities, which may either draw out their finer points (and prove better for everyone in the long run) or help them decide to seek greener pastures. But in three cases, you had no choice. One man punched out his computer screen after the system failed. Another threw his keyboard across the room when he couldn't get access to the company's intranet. And in the third incident a woman kicked a printer while screaming obscenities.

In all three cases, co-workers were terrified by these sudden outbursts. Too many disgruntled workers have committed too many violent acts against others in recent years, and whenever workers lose their temper on the job these days, it causes great fear—not to mention financial losses from the destruction of property and the disruption of work flow.

People are on edge at Metro Power right now. Rising energy costs, public and government scrutiny, and cries of price gouging are causing additional work and stress for all your employees. Plus, too much overtime, unrealistic expectations for overworked departments, and high demands on sensitive equipment are contributing to the problem. Tempers are frayed and nerves strained. You're concerned that these three incidents are just the tip of the iceberg.

"Why don't you write a reminder to all employees about controlling tempers in the workplace?" your department head suggests. "Tell them that technology glitches are commonplace and not some unholy disaster. And remind them to report routine computer failures to Bart Stone. He'll get to them in due course."

You don't say anything to contradict her idea, but how can you do what she asks without sounding trite or condescending? You don't want to sound like some nagging parent—no one will pay attention to your message. You sigh deeply as your boss strolls calmly back to her office. You're fairly certain that every employee already knows about reporting computer failures to Bart Stone, assistant director of information services.

Even so, you can think of a few suggestions that might be helpful, such as taking a walk to cool down, or recognizing that machines, like humans, are not infallible. You want cooler heads to prevail, and that's just the sort of cliché you'd like to avoid in your message.

Your task: Write the e-mail message to all employees. Instead of uttering platitudes or wagging your finger, include preventive maintenance tips for office equipment, such as turning systems off at night, keeping food and liquids away from keyboards, making use of dusting sprays and special cloths, and so on. Your boss also asked you to make it clear that abusive behavior will be reprimanded, so include that point in a tactful way.¹¹

6. Skimmers beware: Warning letter to Capital One customers about credit card fraud

"Isn't there anything consumers can do?" you ask in disbelief.

Capital One vice president Shauna Perkins has just concluded a presentation to gathered executives on the latest twist in credit card fraud. At her side is agent Tim Raymond from the Secret Service financial crimes division.

"All they can do is take precautionary measures," replies Perkins. "And we all know what those are: Check your statements, check your statements online during the month or call automated account services to review charges, and report any discrepancies as soon as possible. Unfortunately, that might be 30 to 60 days after the crime."

One of your co-workers pipes up, "But what if you're on vacation and don't get your mail, or you don't have computer or phone access?"

"Well," Perkins hesitates, "obviously using cash is an option, but that's not the option we want our customers to take."



Of course, they're not liable for any spurious charges on their account, but they'll have to prove fraud." She turns back to you and you know what's coming. "As our director of consumer fraud, you will need to inform our customers about this new scam as soon as possible."

"Yes, of course," you mumble. You're stunned by the overwhelming advantage carved out by the bad guys this time. They're more organized and more technologically sophisticated than most credit card customers. Worse, they're stealing millions at a time to finance even more serious crimes.

Perkins did a good job of explaining everything during the meeting. The crooks are using small devices, about the size of a pager, to "skim" vital information from a credit card's magnetic strip, including cardholder name, account number, expiration date, and the invisible verification codes introduced in the early 1990s to foil counterfeit cards. These algorithms, based on account numbers, are normally transmitted from merchants to the credit card company to validate the card at the point of sale. But with that code, an electronically indistinguishable duplicate card can be created.

The actual "skimming" is done by a dishonest waiter or store clerk who has been paid to conceal the skimming device in a coat pocket, inside a jacket, or under a counter. The data are stored and later downloaded into a computer. From there, the stolen codes can be transmitted anywhere in the world via the Internet, often to Europe, Asia (where the practice originated), or Latin America. Phony cards are embedded with the stolen codes, and purchases can be made within hours.

All your customers can do is report any discrepancies in their statements to your customer services department and try to cope with the ensuing hassle of proving the fraud, discontinuing their old cards, and getting new ones.

"If it's any consolation," agent Raymond adds, "new technologies are beginning to help. Visa has already begun using a higher-coercivity tape with a higher magnetic pull, and MasterCard is experimenting with embedding the last three

20 PART 3 Writing Letters, Memos, E-Mail, and Other Brief Messages

digits of the account number in the plastic, not the mag stripe. In the future, fingerprinting may become a routine part of the card validation process.¹²

Your task: Write a letter to Capital One consumers, warning them about skimming. Advise them of the precautionary measures, and suggest that they keep a close watch on their cards when handing them over for transactions. Try to encourage customers to continue using their cards, despite the risks.¹²

7. Got it covered? Letter from American Express about SUV rentals You can always tell when fall arrives at American Express—you are deluged with complaints from customers who've just received their summer vacation bills. Often these angry calls are about a shock-inducing damage repair bill from a car rental agency. Vacation car rentals can be a lot more complicated than most people think. Here's what happens.

Your credit card customers are standing at the Hertz or Avis counter, ready to drive away, when the agent suggests an upgrade to, say, a Ford Excursion or another of those monstrous gas-eaters that families love to drive on city streets. Feeling happy-go-lucky on vacation, your customers say, "Why not?" and hand over their American Express card.

As they drive off in the lumbering, unfamiliar, supersize SUV, 9 out of 10 are unaware that the most common accidents among rental cars take place at low speeds in parking lots. Plus, the upgraded vehicle they're driving is no longer fully covered either by their regular auto insurance or by the secondary car rental insurance they expect from American Express. If they've agreed to pay the additional \$10 to \$25 a day for the car rental agency's "collision and liability damage waiver fee," they will be able to walk away from any accident with no liability. Otherwise, they're running a costly risk.

Soon they pull into a shopping mall with the kids to pick up the forgotten sunscreen and sodas, where they discover that this luxury van is not so easy to park in stalls designed when compact cars were all the rage. *Thwack*—there goes the door panel. *Crunch*—a rear bumper into a light post. *Wham!* There goes the family bank account, but they don't realize it yet—not until they receive the bill from the rental agency, the one that comes *after* their auto insurance and credit card companies have already paid as much as they're going to pay for damages.

Auto insurers typically provide the same coverage for rentals as you carry on your own car. When customers use their credit card to pay for car rentals, American Express offers secondary protection that generally covers any remaining, unpaid damages. But there are important exceptions.

Neither insurance nor credit card companies will pay the "loss of vehicle use fees" that car rental agencies always tack on. These fees can run into thousands of dollars, based on the agency's revenue losses while their car is in the repair shop. When your customers are billed for this fee, they invariably call you, angrily demanding to know why American Express won't pay it. And if they've rented an SUV, they're even angrier.

American Express Green and Gold cards provide secondary coverage up to \$55,000, and the Platinum card extends

that to \$75,000. But large SUVs such as the Ford Expedition, GMC Yukon, and Chevrolet Suburban are not covered at all. Such exclusions are common. For instance, Diners Club specifically excludes "high-value, special interest or exotic cars"—such as the Ferraris, Maseratis, and even Rolls Royces that are urged on customers by rental agencies.

Your task: As assistant vice president of customer service, you'd like to keep the phone lines cooler this summer. It's April, so there's still time. Write a form letter to be sent to all American Express customers, urging them to check their rental car coverages, warning them to rent no vehicles larger than they require, and encouraging them to consider paying the rental agency's daily loss waiver fees.¹³

8. Mind your own e-mail; Memo stating electronic privacy policy at the Los Angeles Times When you stepped into your office at the *Los Angeles Times* this morning, the place was buzzing with gossip about a reporter in the paper's Moscow bureau. Apparently he'd been snooping into his fellow reporters' e-mail. To catch him, supervisors there set up a "sting" operation, planting an exchange of phony e-mail messages with the Jerusalem bureau, which cooperated in catching the snoop. The bogus e-mail referred to "shinkin travel allowances."

The suspect took the bait, apparently using a co-worker's password to view the e-mail. When he later mentioned the new travel rules, he was slapped with a reassignment back to Los Angeles, to an as-yet-undesignated job—probably writing obituaries, or so the rumor mongers in your office have decided.

The *Los Angeles Times* has always observed strict discipline with regard to journalistic ethics. But because journalists traditionally hold "confidentiality" in high regard, management assumed that e-mail privacy needed no special rules or enforcement policies. Clearly, that assumption was wrong. In the past, the company casually conveyed a list of commonsense e-mail guidelines, such as not using the system for personal business; being aware that your e-mail is not invisible to computer system administrators or even managers; not using derogatory language, obscenity, or copyrighted material; and so on. Now, a strict "privacy policy" will be added to the list, which will be sent out to bureau managers in an official memo.

As an employee of the newspaper's legal department, you've been handed the task of writing the memo to managers. Outline the company's policy for handling e-mail privacy violations. Management has already decided the penalties: reassignment, suspension without pay, or termination of employment. What you'll be communicating is how the new penalties are to be implemented. You will also suggest that managers immediately introduce these new rules to employees in a special meeting and that they routinely explain all the rules and guidelines to new hires.

For a first offense, the penalty will be a verbal warning in a personal meeting with a direct supervisor, which will also be entered in writing in the employee's human resources file. For a second offense, reassignment or suspension without pay, for a period to be determined by the employee's supervisor (who will know best the most appropriate length of time). A third

offense will result in immediate termination without severance pay.

Your task: Address your memo to news bureau managers (who oversee editorial offices around the globe). Outline the company's policy for handling employees who violate e-mail privacy rules. Explain that a more detailed company-issued policy memo covering all issues will be in their hands in a few weeks and must be posted at each bureau in an area visible to employees. For managerial reference in the meantime, list the penalties for privacy violations, and the appropriate sequence for applying them.¹⁴

ROUTINE REPLIES

9. Satellite farming: Letter granting credit from Deere & Company This is the best part of your job with Deere & Company in Moline, Illinois: saying yes to a farmer. In this case, it's Arlen Ruestman in Toluca, Illinois. Ruestman wants to take advantage of new farming technology. Your company's new GreenStar system uses satellite technology originally developed by the defense department: the Global Positioning System (GPS). By using a series of satellites orbiting Earth, the system can pinpoint (to the meter) exactly where a farmer is positioned at any given moment as he drives his GreenStar-equipped combine over a field. For farmers like Ruestman, that means a new ability to micromanage even 10,000 acres of corn or soybeans.

For instance, using the GreenStar system, farmers can map and analyze characteristics such as acidity, soil type, or crop yields from a given area. Using this information, they know exactly how much herbicide or fertilizer to spread over precisely which spot, thereby eliminating waste and achieving better results. With cross-referencing and accumulated data, farmers can analyze why crops are performing well in some areas and not so well in others. Then they can program farm equipment to treat only the problem area—for example, spraying a new insect infestation two meters wide, 300 yards down the row.

Some farms have already saved as much as \$10 an acre on fertilizers alone. For 10,000 acres, that's \$100,000 a year. Once Ruestman retrofits your GreenStar precision package on his old combine and learns all its applications, he should have no problem saving enough to pay off the \$7,350 credit account you're about to grant him.

Your task: Write a letter to Mr. Ruestman (P.O. Box 4067, Toluca, IL 61369), informing him of the good news.¹⁵

10. Online expertise: Letter of recommendation for LifeSketch.com executive Mike Smith is founder, president, and CEO of LifeSketch.com (www.lifesketch.com). As his assistant, you've seen a lot of people come and go—but no one you'd rather see stay than Creative Director Becky Sharp. When you overheard her ask Smith for a letter of recommendation, you sat up and took notice. "Was Becky leaving?" you asked. "She just wants to be prepared," Smith assures you. "You know how start-ups go: work hard, attract investors, make a good showing with your IPO—and then it's up to the world to

find you and embrace you or send you off to another job as fast as you can say 'e-business.'"

LifeSketch is a good concept—good enough to attract Smith. As former president and CEO of apparel retailer Lands' End (www.landsend.com), Smith succeeded in building Landsend.com into one of the only retail sites on the web to actually make a profit. Smith brought Becky Sharp with him from Lands' End, where she had been creative director and had done a terrific job revamping the Landsend.com site.

But now Sharp's challenge is even more difficult. The Lands' End consumers had been accustomed to buying clothes from the retailer. Now Sharp must develop a market for an entirely new product. LifeSketch.com must convince visitors to preserve their memories in digital format. By becoming members, visitors can upload their family photographs and store them online (20 MB free, 100 MB at \$29.95 per year, 250 MB at \$49.95 per year). Members can also turn these photos into a multimedia digital photo album, the Sketchbook, using free art, backgrounds, audio clips, and text. Plus, for just \$19.95, members can buy a CD of the finished product. So far, Sharp has designed a site that's entertaining and easy to navigate. She's been working long, hard hours to do it, and Smith is thrilled by the results.

Smith has every intention of fulfilling Sharp's request for a letter of recommendation, but his schedule is packed, so he asks you to write the first draft. "She's wise to keep her résumé polished at all times," he explains to you, "and we owe her at least that much. She's already made us look good at two companies!"

"You know her work as well as I do," he continues. "Just don't forget to mention the way she collected 3,000 photos and then featured online those few that convey exactly the 'nostalgic hip family' feeling that LifeSketch needs to evoke." He sighs as he turns back to his office, "What would we do without her?"

Your task: Try to capture Smith's appreciation in your recommendation draft, but make sure it's believable.¹⁶

11. Betting the company: Letter from Boeing replying to questions about new aircraft plans

The moment Boeing chairman Phil Condit made the announcement, the questions started pouring in by letter, fax, and e-mail. Why wasn't Boeing following the lead of its competitor, Airbus Industrie, in developing a new superjumbo jet?

For decades, Boeing aircraft company reigned supreme in the market for supersize commercial airplanes, selling its popular 416-seat 747 jumbo jets to airlines around the world. But shortly after you took a job in corporate communications for Seattle-based Boeing in 1999, the company took a big hit from its overseas rival, Airbus. That year, Airbus sold twice as many planes as Boeing.

Airbus has always approached manufacturing differently. Founded by a group of partners in Great Britain, Germany, France, and Spain, Airbus assembles its planes in Toulouse, France, using parts manufactured all over the world. Boeing traditionally manufactured everything in-house, until competition from Airbus and a financial crisis in the mid-1990s brought about a corporate restructuring. Now Boeing also uses subcontractors. But that's where the imitation is going to stop, according to chairman Condit.

With huge fanfare, Airbus announced its vision of commercial air travel in the future: more people wanting to fly to the major terminals, with airports unable to handle more planes. So Airbus is spending \$12 billion to create a super-jumbo jet that will carry 555 to 650 passengers in a double-decker design, using the latest technology and lightweight materials. The company claims that its A380 will cost 21 cents less per "seat mile" to operate than a 747, but it won't fly any faster.

Boeing sees a different future: airlines wanting smaller, faster jets to reach smaller, less-congested airports in the suburbs. So Boeing is designing the Sonic Cruiser, which will save one hour of traditional flying time for every 3,000 miles flown by traveling at Mach .95 (or 95 percent of the speed of sound). That's 20 percent faster than today's jets.

The Sonic Cruiser will cost \$10 billion to design, but Boeing is betting that new, smaller airports will be built and that its sleek, swept-back "delta wing" jet, which will also fly at longer ranges, will become the ideal vehicle for reaching them.

Older airports may have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to upgrade facilities to service the two-level Airbus A380. And it will be useful only for heavily traveled routes, since airlines will need to fill all 550 seats. On the other hand, the Sonic Cruiser's faster flights will let airlines charge premium prices while costing less to operate because of reduced flying time. Moreover, designing a new aircraft will allow Boeing to develop more efficient manufacturing, using outside suppliers for parts so that Boeing's engineers can focus on the more sophisticated systems.

Boeing is betting that airlines will choose its Sonic Cruiser over the huge A380s, but it will be years before either company knows who'll win the market. Both planes aren't due out until 2006 or later.

Your task: Draft a form reply letter to be sent to the customers, suppliers, and general public who have contacted Boeing to learn why the company is not manufacturing a superjumbo. In your letter, focus on what Boeing is doing, rather than what it's not doing.¹⁷

12. Lighten up: E-mail reply to a website designer at Organizers Unlimited Designing your Superclean Organizer was comparatively easy. It's a clever device for organizing bathroom items that families accumulate under sinks and in drawers—shampoo bottles, soaps, sponges, deodorants, cosmetics, antiseptics, sunscreens, hairbrushes, loofahs, cotton balls, toothbrushes, toothpaste, and so on. You've created the perfect organizer to handle it all. Setting up your company—stores wasn't much more difficult. But designing a website—now that's a headache.

At first you thought you'd do it all yourself. You did your homework, reading all about website design for small businesses. You learned a lot, but realized you needed to hire a professional. You chose Pete Womack, whose résumé impressed you. Now he's e-mailed his first design proposal and you're stunned.

He's loaded up the homepage with graphics and animation—what you've heard others describe as "dancing balls, swishing hairbrushes, and jogging soap bars. Clever, it

may be, but over your dead body! It was your hatred of clutter that inspired you to design the Superclean Organizer in the first place, and you dislike cluttered websites even more. They take forever to load, especially with your 56-kilobytes-per-second (K bps) dial-up modem.

During your research, you learned that creating "heavy homepages" is an Internet no-no. Experts suggest no more than 40 to 50 K of data for the first page your visitors will see. That takes about 8 to 10 seconds to load on modems like yours. If visitors don't see your homepage by then, most will "bail out," clicking off in frustration to find the same product elsewhere. And you suspect that most of your customers will be home computer users, with slower modem connections like yours.

At first you're amazed that Womack doesn't know this. But on second thought, you realize he's not alone. You read in a survey conducted by Byte Level Research that business homepages on the web average about 150 K. Some of the heaviest the survey found were for Revlon (522 K), General Motors (547 K), Nickelodeon (638 K), and Hugo Boss (646 K), companies that can afford to hire the best design talent on the Internet. According to Zona Research, this mistake costs online businesses about \$362 million in lost income each month from customer bail-out.

If Womack is banking on high-speed connections such as cable or DSL being common, he shouldn't. Research indicates that the so-called "broadband revolution" hasn't happened yet.

Your task: Womack asked for your feedback on his initial design proposal. Give it to him straight, using the facts you've gathered to explain your reasons for rejecting his ideas. His e-mail address is pwomack@designsite.com. Fortunately, the design process is still in its infancy, so he won't be too shocked by your routine reply, even though it's going to suggest that he try a new angle.¹⁸

POSITIVE MESSAGES

13. Cold comfort: E-mail offering a regional sales position with Golight Winter in Nebraska ranch country is something to sneeze at—and to shiver over. That's why rancher Jerry Gohl invented the Golight, a portable spotlight that can be mounted on a car or truck roof and rotated 360 degrees horizontally and 70 degrees vertically by remote control. No more getting out of the truck in freezing, predawn temperatures to adjust a manual spotlight in order to check on his livestock in the dark. In fact, for Gohl, there's hardly any time left to check the livestock at all these days: His invention has become so popular that Golight, Inc., expects to sell more than \$2 million worth of the remote-controlled lights next year.

The company expanded fast, with Golights becoming popular all over the world among hunters, boaters, commuters who fear dark-of-night roadside tire changes, and early-morning fishing enthusiasts who can scope out the best shoreline sites by controlling the spotlight from inside their warm and cozy vehicles. Sales reps have been hired for every part of the country and overseas, but Gohl has been holding out for just the right person to replace him in the Nebraska territory. After all, the company president knows better

than anyone what the local ranchers need and how they think—that's why his invention was such a success there. He doesn't want to jinx his good fortune by choosing the wrong replacement.

Finally, last week he met a young man who seems a likely candidate. His name is Robert Victor, and he grew up on a Nebraska ranch, helping his dad with those 4 A.M. chores. He's young, but he's felt the bite of Nebraska's cold, he knows the rancher mind, and best of all, he's been bringing in top dollar selling agricultural equipment in Montana for the past few years. Now he wants to return to his home state. Gohl liked him from the first moment they shook hands. "He's got the job if he wants it," the boss tells you. "Better send him some e-mail before someone else grabs him. He can start as soon as he's settled."

Your task: Compose the message communicating Gohl's offer to Robert Victor: salary plus commission as discussed, full benefits (paid vacation, health and dental insurance) if he's still around in six months. His e-mail address is rvictor@ism.net. Sign with your name, as Gohl's personnel manager.¹⁹

14. Midnight mission: Thank-you letter at the Blue Marble bookstore As owner of the Blue Marble bookstore in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, Tina Moore won't be outdone this time. You are store manager, and along with the rest of the staff, you've been working hard to prepare for the biggest book sales party your store has ever hosted. Tonight's the night.

Last time you blew it with the popular *Harry Potter* series (about a boy who discovers he's not only a wizard-in-training, but a famous one). Book number four was to be released at 12:01 A.M. on Saturday, July 8, a "strict on sale" date in the United States and Britain. Like thousands of other adults, you've enjoyed the cleverly written stories of Harry and his friends at Hogwarts school of wizardry. But you and Moore agreed that customers would probably be content to come in for a copy on Saturday morning. Who would let their kids stay up past midnight for a book party?

Apparently, tens of thousands of parents did—all grateful to see their kids reading so avidly. On Friday night, bookstores all over the country opened up at midnight—especially the chains, your biggest competitors. By morning, very few copies of "HP4" were left, and within days the entire, record-breaking first U.S. press run of 3.8 million copies was gone. British author J. K. Rowling had done it again. Even well-known adult critics loved the new book. Rowling's U.S. publisher, Scholastic, called it a "phenomenon" in publishing history, "beyond anything we imagined."

Of course, that morning you still had copies available, but your customers felt cheated. "Why didn't you have a pajama party last night?" they complained. "My kids saw the crowds on TV and wanted to go—but the nearest chain store is miles from here!" Some fans even called your staff "clueless muggles" (non-wizards—usually the last to know about anything truly interesting). But that was last time.

This time, when the clock chimes midnight and you're allowed to sell Harry Potter number 5, your customers will be ushered in by staff members in costume. A local trainer will stroll the store with a pet owl (favorite messengers in Harry's



world). From the big black cauldrons your staff built, you'll serve oatmeal and Harry's favorite "butter beer" (apple juice and ginger ale over dry ice). The first kids in line will get free lightning-bolt stickers to create forehead scars like Harry's, and some will receive black, round-rimmed imitation "Harry Potter spectacles." It's going to be great fun.

Your task: Your staff has been working on their own time sewing costumes, making hats, and inventing butter-beer recipes. Write a thank-you letter to them from both you and Moore, and enclose a \$25 gift certificate in each one. You plan to distribute the letters before tonight's party.²⁰

15. On a course for Harvard: Reply to a request for a recommendation letter After working for several years for Zoe Coulson in Campbell Soup Company's department of consumer affairs, one of your co-workers, Angela Cavanaugh, has decided to apply for admission to the Harvard Business School's M.B.A. program. She has asked Coulson, a Harvard graduate, to write a letter of recommendation for her. Here are the facts about Angela Cavanaugh:

1. She has an undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Iowa, where she was an honors student.
2. She joined Campbell directly after graduating and has worked for the firm for the past five years.
3. Her primary responsibility has been to answer letters from consumers; she has done an outstanding job.
4. Her most noteworthy achievement has been to analyze a year's worth of incoming mail, categorize the letters by type and frequency, and create a series of standardized replies. The department now uses Cavanaugh's form letters to handle approximately 75 percent of its mail.
5. Although Cavanaugh has outstanding work habits and is an excellent writer, she lacks confidence as a speaker. Her

reluctance to present her ideas orally has prevented her from advancing more rapidly at Campbell. This could be a problem for her at Harvard Business School, where skill in classroom discussion influences a student's chances of success.

Your task: Because you have worked closely with Cavanaugh, Zoe Coulson has asked you to draft the letter, which Coulson will sign.²¹

16. Boomerang back to us: E-mail from EDS to dot-com deserters

"Now's our chance to get them back," announces Tom Templeton as he pounces on you after a staff meeting. The director of human resources at EDS is known to be forthright, but you're startled.

"Get who back?" you inquire calmly.

"Everyone we lost to dot-com mania! You work in human resources; you should know what kind of talent drain we suffered when stock options and overnight millionaires allowed the dot-coms to steal us blind! But now that their days are numbered, it's our turn."

You could swear that's an evil gleam in his eye. "What are you proposing?"

He rubs his chin. "Well, we could do like Deloitte Consulting. Did you see their full-page ad in the *Wall Street Journal*? They invited Internet consulting firm employees to leave their roller-coaster stock options—stocks now falling like snowflakes—for an 'innovative firm with a rock-solid foundation.' I love that phrase. I'm tempted to steal it." He winks.

"You mean invite back the 550 employees we lost to dot-coms in recent years?"

"Exactly. Recruiters are all over the sinking dot-coms these days, plucking back the talent stolen years ago from companies like ours. Well, let's put out our own call! Surely our alumni must be shaking in their boots. I read that some 12,000 dot-com jobs were cut in one nine-month period last year. That number is probably higher now. Online companies are crashing like cymbals!"

You manage a smile.

"Think how much we can save if we catch these former employees on the rebound," he adds, and you begin to see his point. No training required. Rapid orientation periods. They already know the business. And you can see on Templeton's face the pride gleaming. He's thinking that each employee who comes back will prove that stability and prudence can beat dot-com flash and dazzle any day. Plus, he'll save EDS considerable money and hassle, because finding and keeping good employees is one of the greatest costs of running any business.

"You know, I think you're right. They just might be willing to give us a second chance," you concede.

"Darn right they will. Especially after you send them an e-mail encouraging them! You have the list, don't you?"

Fortunately, you do. With commendable foresight, Templeton insisted two years ago that you keep contact records for every employee who took a dot-com job. He even invited them to company events after they left. Now he's going to reap his reward for clear thinking—with your help.

"Some of our best employees are out there looking for new jobs. Are we going to let our competitors snag them? They didn't hate us—and they weren't traitors. They were merely seeking opportunity like any intelligent person. That only proves

they're good people. Well, guess whose pasture is greener now?" he says with a grin.

Your task: Templeton has asked you, his assistant, to write an encouraging e-mail message, announcing to ex-employees that EDS will welcome them back if their "flashy" new jobs have turned into dead ends. Try to echo Templeton's sense of pride in EDS. You're not begging, exactly, just letting these former employees know that the company's rehire policy is open and liberal.²²

17. Stargazing: News release announcing new life for Mount Wilson Observatory

Today, gazing at spectacular, four-color images of star clusters, nebulae, and galaxies requires only a click on the Internet, thanks to the Hubble Space Telescope and websites like the Hawaiian Astronomical Society's (www.hawastsoc.org/deepsky/index.html). But in 1929, Edwin P. Hubble searched the stars night after night, climbing up to a chilly wooden platform high in the dome housing the 100-inch Hooker telescope at the Mount Wilson Observatory on the outskirts of Los Angeles. His computer-bereft studies of light from distant galaxies required endless analysis of crude photographic plates taken with the help of his assistant, a former mule Skinner named Milton Humason. Their hard work paid off, however, and Hubble is credited with discovering the redshift that is the basis for the Big Bang theory of an expanding universe.

With the famous new space-based telescope named in his honor, we won't forget Hubble. But Mount Wilson and the Hooker telescope faded from importance as scientists rushed to larger scopes on bigger, darker mountains. In the 1980s, the Hooker was closed for eight years. Its 4.5-ton, green-glass mirror (built by a French wine-bottle manufacturer) became no more than a relic to curious visitors to the site in the San Gabriel Mountains, outside Pasadena.

Now the organization you work for, the Mount Wilson Institute in Pasadena, California, administers a reborn observatory, playing host to scientists from all over the map. And the Hooker telescope is once again making history.

For example, a team led by Dr. Laird Thompson of the University of Illinois is using the Hooker to test a computerized system of "laser adaptive optics." Adaptive optics have long been used to cancel the blur caused by atmospheric distortions, relying on natural guide stars to give computers a standard for making optical adjustments. But certain areas of space lack sufficient guide stars. Dr. Thompson's team is testing a 12-mile-high ultraviolet laser beam, sent into space at 333 pulses a second, as an artificial guide for adjustments. The resulting views are clearer than anything Hubble ever saw.

Mount Wilson also features an older, 60-inch telescope, a 60-foot solar tower operated by the University of Southern California for NASA, and a 150-foot solar tower run by the University of California at Los Angeles. A group headed by Dr. Harold A. McAlister (from Georgia State University) and another led by Nobel Prize-winning physicist Dr. Charles Townes (from the University of California at Berkeley) are both at the observatory conducting tests with "interferometry," using arrays of small telescopes to collect starlight simultaneously. McAlister's team combines six small telescopes to mimic the effect of a single scope with an 1,100-foot mirror.

impossible to build, but capable of detecting stellar details 200 times finer than the Hubble Space Telescope. Townes's group is using an array to make star surfaces visible beneath dust clouds.

Your task: Targeting science journalists, write a news release from the Mount Wilson Institute, a non-profit, tax-exempt consortium of astronomers, educators, and private

donors, which is directed by Dr. Robert Jastrow, former NASA scientist and author of astronomy books. You're hoping for news coverage of the observatory's new activities, which may attract donors. At the close of your release, invite journalists to sign up for a night tour with Dr. Jastrow and the scientists mentioned. Journalists can request a detailed science data sheet now or at the tour.²³

COMMISSIONING OF THE MOUNTAIN VIEW TELESCOPE

The Mount Wilson Institute has just completed the construction of the Mountain View Telescope, a 1.2-meter aperture telescope designed to study the properties of galaxies and clusters of galaxies. The telescope is located at the Mount Wilson Observatory, a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of astronomical research. The telescope will be used to study the properties of galaxies and clusters of galaxies. The telescope is located at the Mount Wilson Observatory, a non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of astronomical research.

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