



Chapter 6

Neutral and Positive Messages

Icebreaker: Discussion

1. How have you paid it forward?
2. Have you been a recipient of someone paying for your order? Share your experience.
3. How did it make you feel?

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to:

- 6-1 Describe the value of positive messages in business.
- 6-2 Explain how to organize a neutral message.
- 6-3 Apply guidelines for writing a goodwill message in a business situation.
- 6-4 Apply guidelines for responding to online feedback in a business situation.
- 6-5 Explain ways to engage customers and employees on social media.

6-1

Creating a Positive Work Environment

6-1 Creating a Positive Work Environment (1 of 3)

Appreciation at Work

- **Employee engagement**
- Acknowledge employees for
 - Who they are
 - Recognize what they do
- Employee recognition increases
 - Job satisfaction
 - Motivation
 - Feelings of competency

6-1 Creating a Positive Work Environment (2 of 3)

Types of Positive and Neutral Messages

- **Internal**

- Manager recognizes an employee's contribution to a project
- Coworker congratulating another on life events
- Employee thanks a manager for feedback
- Manager emails a policy change
- Employee requests information for a report

6-1 Creating a Positive Work Environment (3 of 3)

Types of Positive and Neutral Messages

- **External**

- Customer thank you
- Positive online review
- Small business owner asks about a service discount
- Customer asks about a product

Knowledge Check

What are the benefits of a positive environment?

- A. Focuses on the writer and their perspective.
- B. Increases job satisfaction, motivation, and feelings of competency.
- C. Creates a sense of the “Sunday Scaries”
- D. Allows direct, authentic communication.

6-2

Writing Neutral Messages

6-2 Writing Neutral Messages (1 of 4)

Start with the Main Point

- Neutral messages are shorter and more direct
- Consider your audience
- Start with the main idea
 - Ask for what you need
 - Be clear and direct
- Ask as few questions as possible
- If you need multiple questions:
 - Number questions
 - Order questions logically
- Never ask for information that you can easily get on your own

Figure 3: Examples of Requests

- **Direct Question**

When do you expect the Ray-Ban Sunmasters to be back in stock?

- **Statement**

Please let me know when you're available to meet about the donation.

- **Polite Request**

Would you mind telling me how you arranged for summer housing in Dallas?

6-2 Writing Neutral Messages (2 of 4)

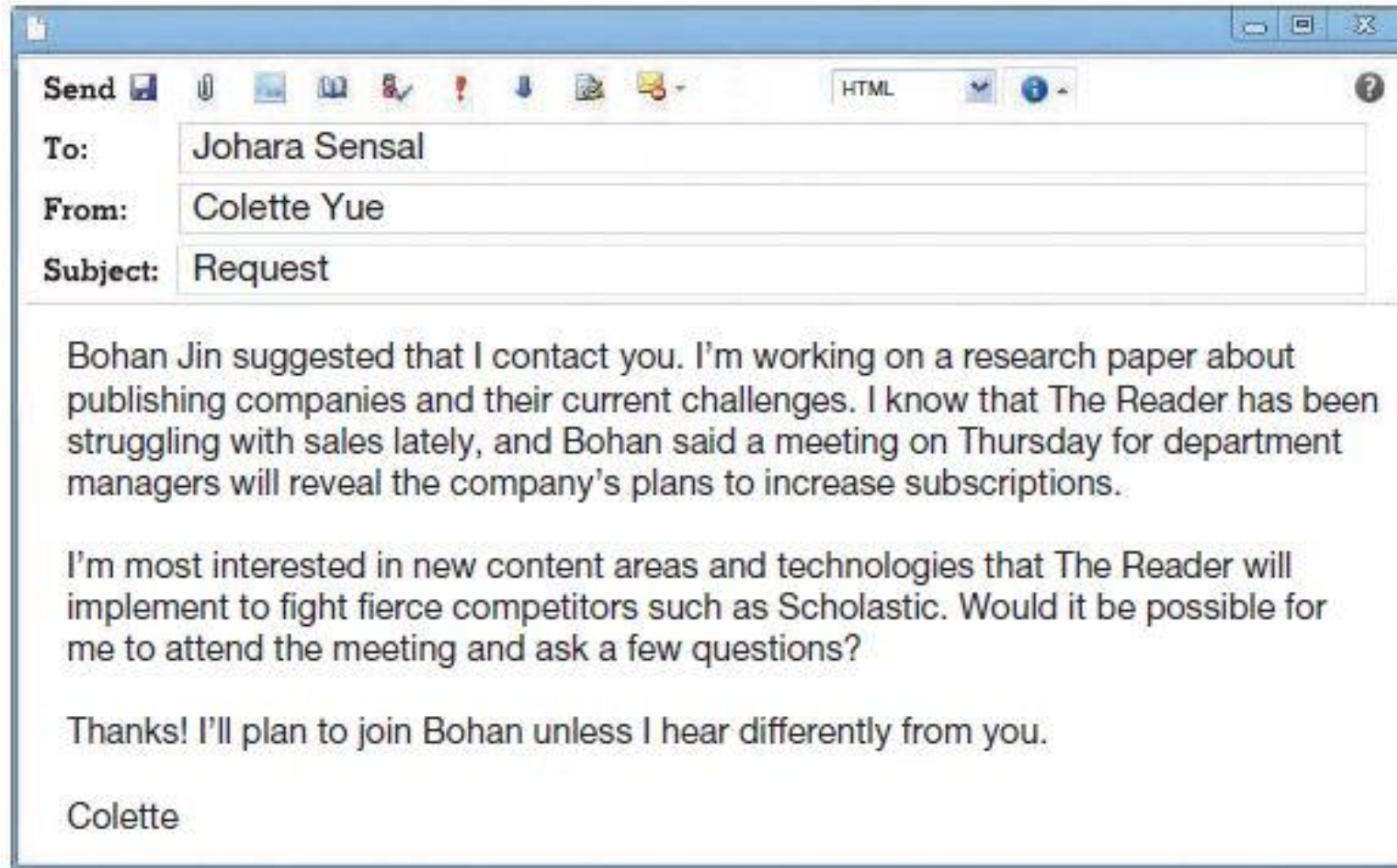
Provide an Explanation and Details

- Explain your initial request: Why are you asking?
- Reader's perspective: How does responding to the request benefit them?
 - Unless contrived or obvious

End on a Positive Note: Friendly, positive tone

- Specific to the purpose:
 - express appreciation for the assistance
 - state and justify any deadlines
 - offer to reciprocate

Figure 4: Ineffective Email Request



6-2 Writing Neutral Messages (3 of 4)

Instead of:

I need the information
by October 1.

perhaps:

May I please have the
information by
October 1, so I can
include upcoming
performances on our
new website?

Instead of:

Thank you in advance for
your assistance in this
matter.

perhaps:

Thank you for providing
this information, which
will help us make a fairer
evaluation of Janice
Henry's qualifications for
this position.

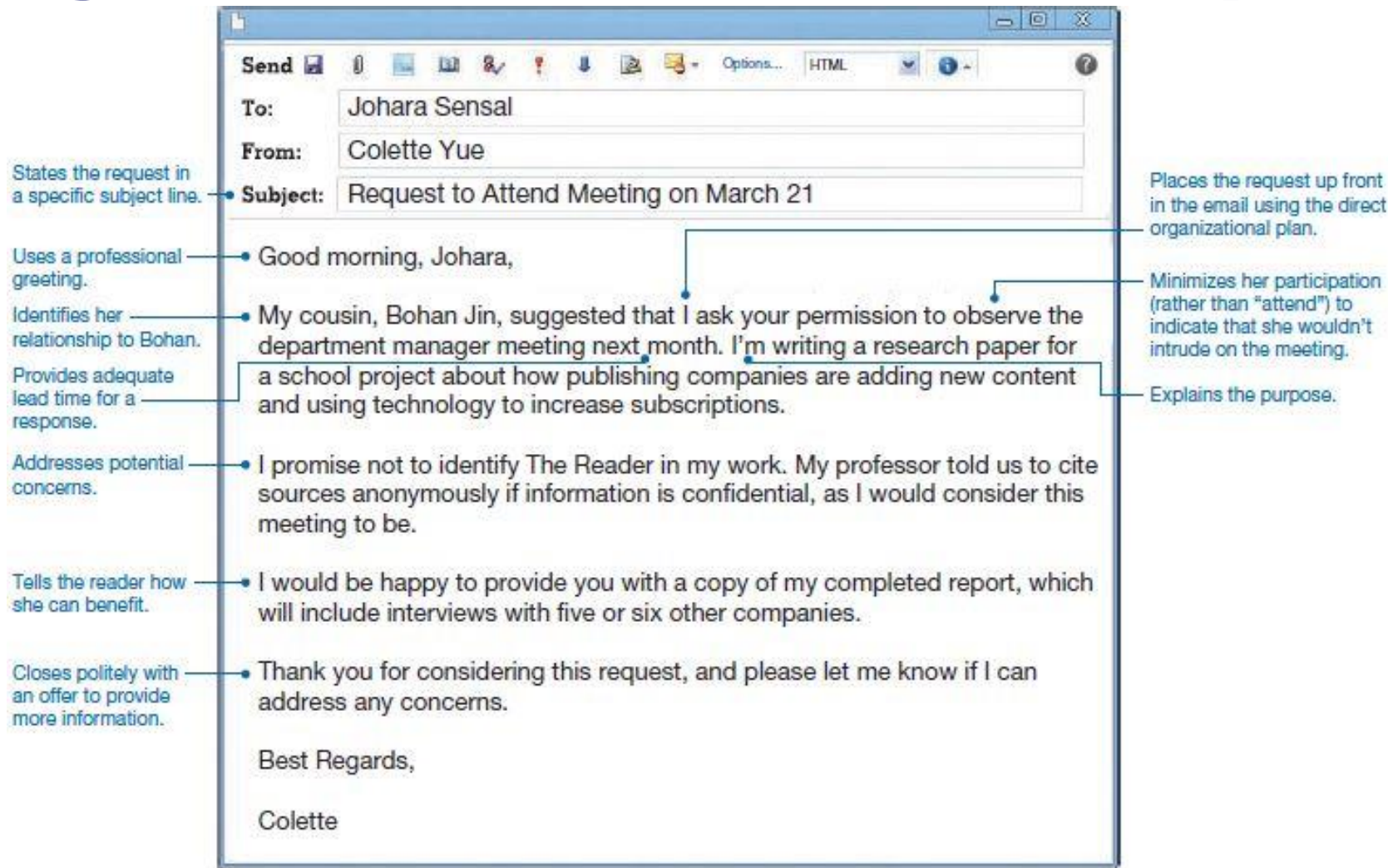
Instead of:

Let me know how I
can help you in the
future.

perhaps:

Please let me know if I
can return the favor
by attending the
meeting with Gupta
Associates next week.

Figure 5: Effective Email Request



6-2 Writing Neutral Messages (4 of 4)

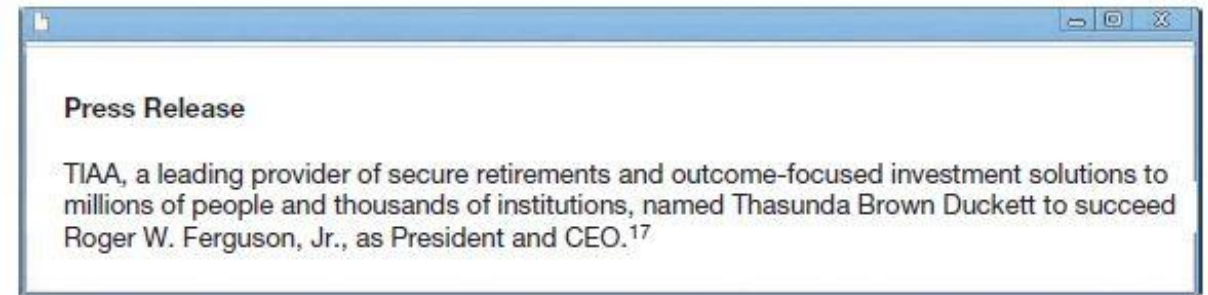
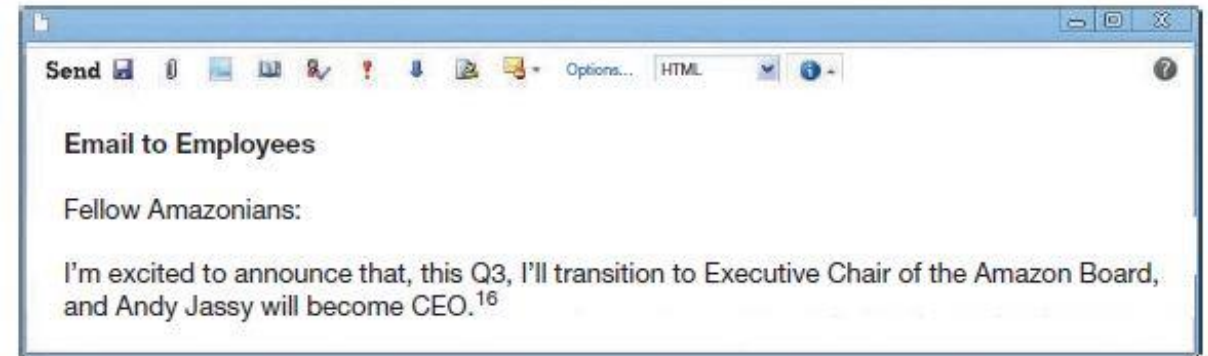
Respond to a Neutral Message

- Respond promptly.
- Respond courteously.
- Put your main point up front.
- Personalize your response.
- Promote your company, products, or services—within reason.
- Close your response on a positive, friendly note.

Group Activity

Refer to Figure 2 (right) and discuss these questions:

1. What is the main point of each email?
2. How did they keep it short and focused?
3. How did they support the positive message?
4. How is the audience taken into account?



Group Activity Debrief

1. What are your thoughts on the emails in Figure 2? Do you find them encouraging, or would you ignore them?

6-3

Writing Goodwill Messages

6-3 Writing Goodwill Messages

- **Goodwill messages** sent out of sense of kindness

Guidelines for Goodwill Messages

- Messages vary by culture
- Recognition Notes: particularly good job
- Congratulatory Notes: major business achievements or personal milestones
- Thank-You Notes: sent whenever someone does you a favor
- Sympathy notes: Sympathy or condolence to a person who is having a difficult time personally

Figure 7: Guidelines for Goodwill Messages

Be prompt.	Be direct.	Be specific.	Be sincere.	Be brief.
Send a goodwill message while the reason is still fresh in the reader's mind. A welcome note to a new employee, for example, should be sent within the first few days on the job.	State the major idea in the first sentence or two, even for sympathy notes; because readers already know the bad news, you don't need to shelter them from it.	If you're thanking or complimenting someone, mention a specific incident or anecdote. Show the significance or impact on others.	Avoid language that is too flowery or too strong (e.g. "awesome" or "the best I've ever seen"). Use a conversational tone, as if you're speaking to the person directly, and focus on the reader—not yourself. Take special care to spell names correctly and to make sure your facts are accurate. You may use exclamation marks, but don't overdo it.	You may not need an entire page get your point across. A personal note card or a one-paragraph email may be plenty.

Figure 8: Internal Recognition Note to an Employee

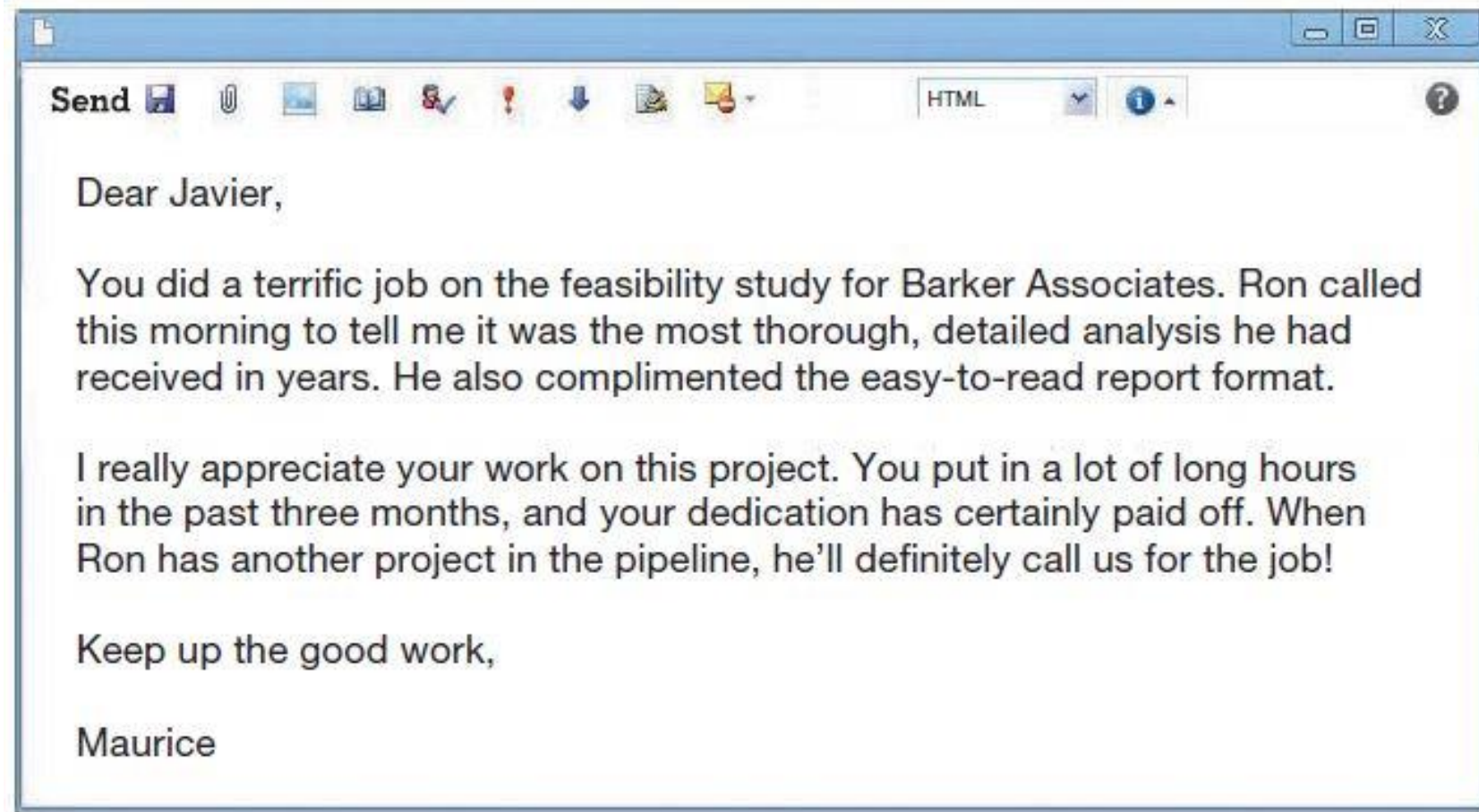


Figure 10: Internal Congratulatory Note

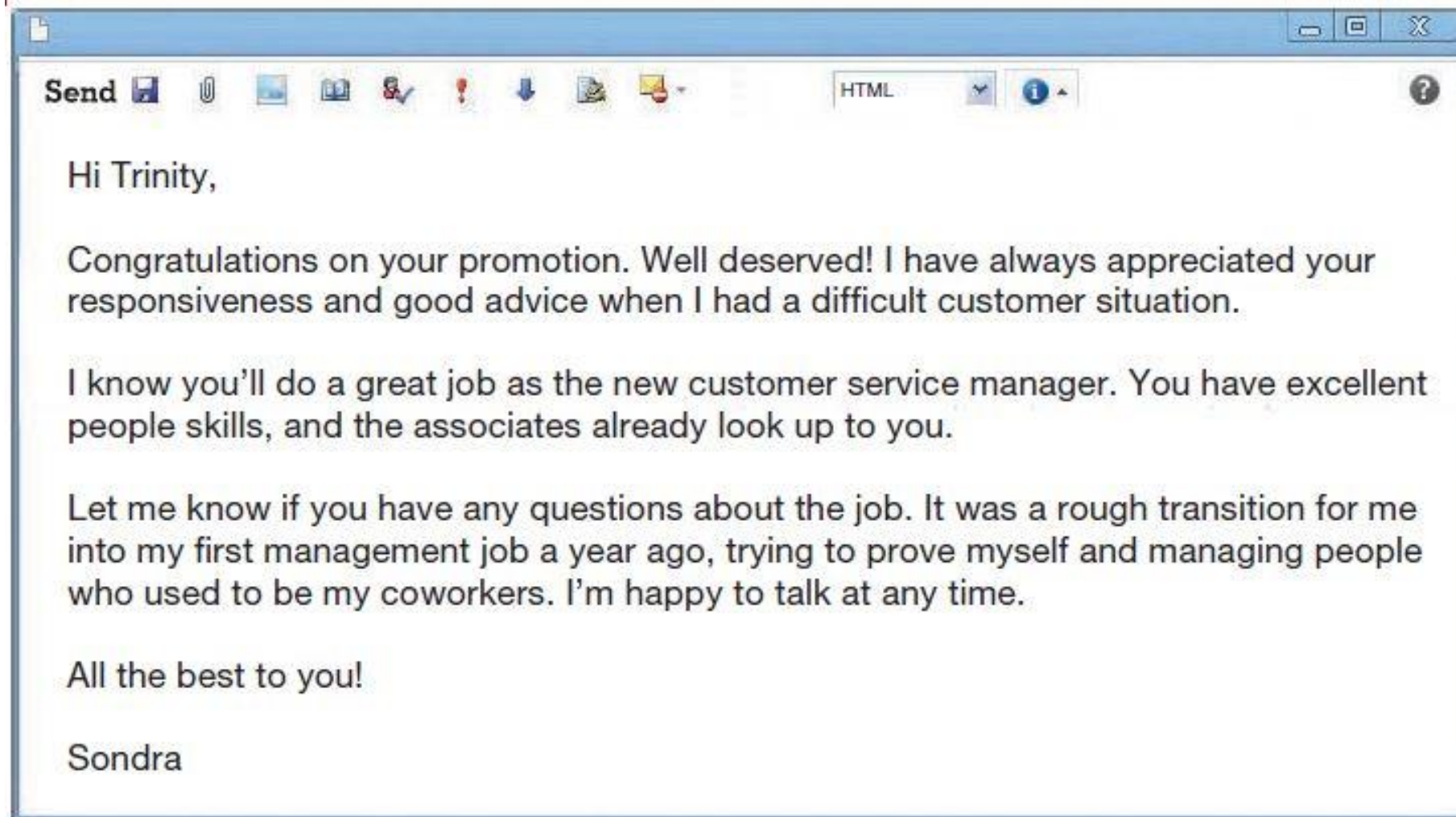
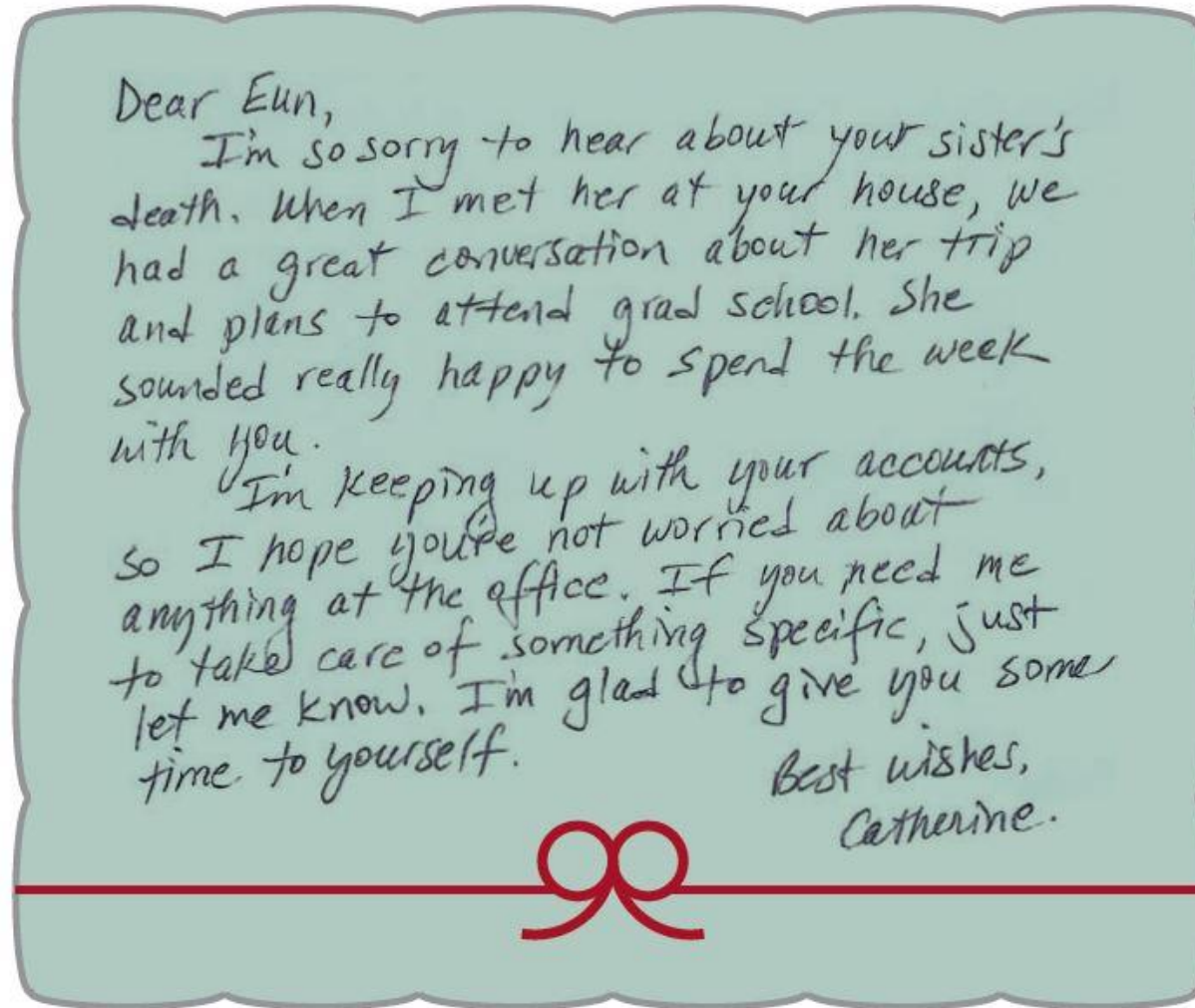


Figure 12: Sympathy Note to a Coworker



6-4

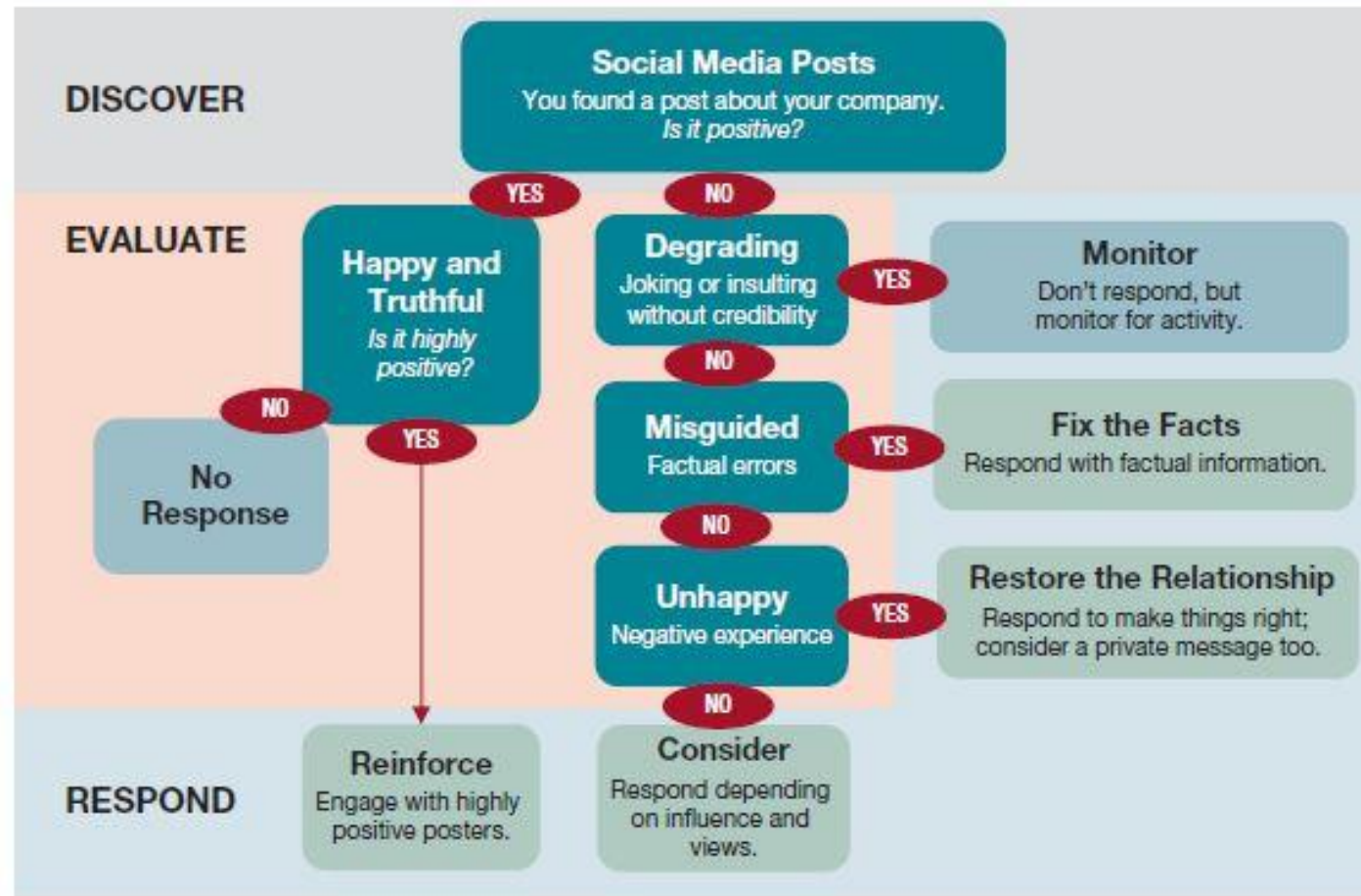
Addressing Social Media Comments

6-4 Addressing Social Media Comments (1 of 2)

Deciding Whether to Respond

- Smart companies engage in **social listening**
- After finding **mentions** of the company, social media managers decide whether and how to respond.
- Happy customers may not need a response, but highly positive posts may be engaged to highlight the feedback.
- Negative and degrading posts should be monitored in case it goes viral.
- Unhappy customers may need additional communication.

Figure 13: Social Media Response Guidelines



6-4 Addressing Social Media Comments (2 of 2)

Responding to Positive Reviews

- Yelp's advice:
 - Thank the reviewer for providing feedback
 - Highlight something positive they said
 - Conclude by inviting them back
- The first two can also be followed when responding to employee reviews

Group Activity 2



5.0 ★★★★★ ✓

Current Employee, more than 3 years

Upward trajectory; gaining momentum

Aug 19, 2020 - Technical Leadership in Austin, TX

✓ Recommend ✓ CEO Approval ✓ Business Outlook

Pros

- Outstanding engineering team (high talent, low ego)
- Competent management (planning, strategy, product)
- Individual influence on product and direction
- Growth and learning actively encouraged
- Projects are consistently fun and interesting
- Flexible hours and good benefits

Cons

- Long hours sometimes necessary; but frequently known in advance
- Small team means bigger impact from illness or leave

Maidbot Response

I appreciate you providing your honest perspective on Maidbot and leaving your review. Your feedback on our strong team, competent leadership dynamic, encouragement of learning and growth, and work on exciting projects is refreshing to hear. Building a strong culture with a world-class team is one of our top priorities so we can build an incredible company. Thank you for being part of our A player team and for all of the contributions you have brought to the company.

Sincerely,
Micah Green
Founder, President, and CEO

1. Why does this post warrant a response?
2. What was strong about the CEO's response?

Group Activity 2 Debrief

1. Have you ever left a review for your workplace or a place you have visited and received a reply?
2. If so, was it a positive message you left, or a negative one?

6-5

Engaging Customers and Employees on Social Media

6-5 Engaging Customers and Employees on Social Media (1 of 2)

Engaging Customers Online

- Build meaningful relationships online
- Companies are proactive
- Seek out customers and find creative ways to interact
- Building relationships with existing customers to convert them to brand advocates.
- Messages are authentic, responsive, and compelling

6-5 Engaging Customers and Employees on Social Media (2 of 2)

Engaging Employees Online

- Leaders who excel are genuine, authentic, and transparent
- Utilize an employee only intranet
- Sites such as Yammer can allow feedback from employees to be provided while keeping it internal.

Knowledge Check 2

What are guidelines for goodwill messages?

- A. Focus on the main point.
- B. Be direct and ask for what you need.
- C. Be prompt, direct, specific, sincere and brief.
- D. Build meaningful relationships and be proactive.

Summary

Click the link below to review the objectives for the presentation.

[Link to Objectives](#)