TO: Communications Department

FROM: Smokie Lee, Manager of Communications

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SUBJECT: Improving the Clarity and Conciseness of Internal Communications

Conciseness, or the ability to keep a message brief but comprehensive (“Concise | Define Concise at Dictionary.com,” n.d.) is an important part of effective technical communication (Crawford, 2012). Technical writing's purpose is to provide an audience with specific, relevant information using familiar language (Meyers, n.d.); to achieve this, technical communicators must keep their messages easy to comprehend and relevant to their audience. Wordy messages take longer to understand, distract your audience, and can cause misinterpretation of your message. Today's technology also demands conciseness, with data limits on cellular plans and character limits on social media (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). In addition, being concise makes a message more memorable (Singh, 2012) and improves its readability (Kurtus, n.d.).

Clarity is the quality of being easily understood and free from ambiguity (“Clarity | Define Clarity at Dictionary.com,” n.d.), and is the ultimate goal in technical writing (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). A clear message reduces your audience's need to interpret your meaning (“Write Clearly and Concisely,” n.d.) which strengthens your message (Moxley, n.d.) and improves readability (Kurtus, n.d.). Miscommunication in technical writing can lead to profit losses, efficiency losses, and in some cases can lead to injury (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). Clarity in your messages prevents miscommunication and makes your message more memorable (Bhatia, 2011).

Attached you will see that I have compiled a list of ways to improve internal communications here at International Gadgets.

**Research & Development (R&D)**

Example: “create a presentation discussing the new product and send it to interested departments”

**Challenges**

* What kind of presentation, oral or online?
* Which new product?
* What product information needs to be included?
* Which departments need to receive the presentation?
* Who are the stakeholders?
* When does this need to be completed?

**Recommendations**

Provide specific and relevant details when communicating to reduce the time it takes your audience to interpret your message (“Write Clearly and Concisely,” n.d.). An excellent way to ensure you’ve provided sufficient detail is to answer the reporter’s questions: who, what, when, where, and why (“Five Ws,” 2015).

**Sales**

Example: “a list of the biggest problems with our hot products”

**Challenges**

* What kind of list, physical or digital?
* What criteria defines “big,” “problem” and “hot”?
* What kind of information needs to be included?
* Who are the stakeholders?
* When does this need to be completed?
* What is the action that must be completed?

**Recommendations**

Add a call to action (Ashe-Edmunds, n.d.) and a specific timeframe to reduce ambiguity. Define ambiguous and subjective terms like “big” and “hot” and provide specific details to increase the relevancy of the requested information (“Write Clearly and Concisely,” n.d.). Answer the reporter’s questions (Gerson & Gerson, 2013) to help determine if enough information is available to complete the task.

**Finance**

Example: “reduce the number of suppliers being used to better control costs”

**Challenges**

* What is the threshold of cost savings we wish to achieve?
* What are the consequences of not meeting this goal?
* How do we accomplish this?
* When does this need to be completed?
* What is the action that must be completed?
* Why am I receiving this message?

**Recommendations**

The audience for this message needs to be better defined (“Understand Your Audience,” n.d.). This message was sent to all employees and yet it is likely that only a small number of employees can help achieve these goals. Provide relevant details & evidence (Gerson & Gerson, 2013) and define the goals or thresholds which you want your audience to meet (“Write Clearly and Concisely,” n.d.). Add a call to action and a deadline (Ashe-Edmunds, n.d.) to encourage your audience to act.

**Conclusion**

Clarity and conciseness are two critical components of successful technical communication (Crawford, 2012; Gerson & Gerson, 2013). Capturing and retaining your audience's attention will make your message more effective and will help your audience comprehend and act on the message much more quickly (“Write Clearly and Concisely,” n.d.). Confusing or irrelevant communications in technical writing can lead to miscommunications, a loss of credibility (Conger, 1998) or even to injury (Gerson & Gerson, 2013). If we follow the recommendations above, I believe we can improve the effectiveness of our internal communications here at International Gadgets.

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