Business Communication

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Chapter 1

Fundamentals of Communication

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- The Importance of Communication
- The Basic forms of Communication
- The Process of Communication
- Barriers to Communication
- Dealing with Communication Barriers

Communication is the process of transferring meanings. In a business setting this process sometimes accounts for the difference between success and failure and also profit and loss. This fact is now being recognized by both the corporate community and business schools. In a 1984 *Harvard Business Review* poll of practitioners and academicians, both groups felt that the oral and written skills of MBAs required a great deal of improvement.

Today business communication has become so important that many colleges and universities, nationally and internationally, require the course for graduation. It is becoming clear to all the concerned parties that communication is critical to the effective functioning of modern business enterprises.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION

Effective business communication is important both to the individual and to modern organizations.

Helping You

Good communication skills often make the difference between being hired and fired. A well written résume and cover letter, and a convincing interview, can get you the job you want even though more qualified people had applied for it.

And once you start working, you'll find that good verbal and nonverbal communication enables you to interact effectively with others and get work done efficiently. Good writing skills also draw attention to you and increase your chances of promotion.

Good communication skills can help you in a variety of ways in your career: advance you socially (i.e. make useful contacts), build your self confidence, enable you to help and lead others. Most successful people recognize the role communication skills have played in their career. In a survey of college graduates in a wide variety of fields, most respondents said that communication was vital to their job success. Most, in fact, said that communication skills were more important than the major subject they had studied in college.

Helping the Organization

By improving your communication skills you help not only yourself but the entire organization. That's because as an employee you form a link in the organization's information chain. Your ability to receive, evaluate, use, and pass on information gathered from inside and outside the organization affects your company's effectiveness. Managers rely on such information from their employees to take suitable and necessary action.

Communication *per se* can also help an organization by boosting employee morale. By keeping employees informed about what is going on, involving them in decision making, and getting feedback from them regarding their opinions attitudes and suggestions, managers can raise employee morale. As a result, employees are more willing to assume responsibility and support management's efforts.

THE BASIC FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is essential for the functioning of an organization. Every day a vast amount of information flows from managers to employees, employees to managers, and from employee to employee. Apart from this internal communication, a considerable amount of information is also carried in and out of the organization.

This communication, internal and external, takes place in a nonverbal and verbal manner: through gestures, expressions, meetings, listening, speaking and writing.

Nonverbal Communication

The most basic form of communication is nonverbal communication: all the cues, gestures, vocal qualities, spatial relationships, and attitudes toward time that allow us to communicate without words. These nonverbal cues are used to express superiority, dependence, dislike, respect, love and a host of other feelings and attitudes.

Nonverbal communication differs from verbal communication in fundamental ways. For one thing, it is less structured, which makes it more difficult to study. You can’t just pick up a book on nonverbal language and master the vocabulary of gestures that are common in a particular culture. Nonverbal communication also differs from verbal communication in terms of intent and spontaneity. We generally plan our words, so when we say something we have a conscious purpose. However, when we communicate nonverbally, we sometimes do so unconsciously. We don’t mean to raise an eyebrow or blush - those actions come naturally. Without our consent, our faces express our emotions.

Nonverbal cues are especially important for conveying feelings. One reason for the power of nonverbal communication is its reliability. Most people can deceive us much more easily with words than they can with their bodies. Words are relatively easy to control; but body language, facial expressions, and vocal characteristics are not. By paying attention to these nonverbal cues, we can detect deception or affirm a speaker’s honesty. Not surprisingly, we have more faith in nonverbal cues than we do in verbal messages. If a person says one thing but transmits a conflicting message nonverbally, we almost invariably believe the nonverbal signal. To a great degree, then, an individual’s credibility as a communicator depends on nonverbal messages.

Nonverbal communication is important for another reason: it can be efficient from both the sender’s and the receiver’s standpoint. You can transmit a nonverbal message without even thinking about it, and your audience can register the meaning unconsciously. At the same time, when you have a conscious purpose, you can often achieve it more economically with a gesture than you can with words - a wave of the hand, a pat on the back, a wink, and so on. Although nonverbal communication can stand alone, it usually blends with speech, carrying part of the message. Together, the two modes of expression are a powerful combination, augmenting, reinforcing, and clarifying each other.

Verbal Communication

Although you can express many things nonverbally, there are limits to what you can communicate without the help of language. If you want to discuss past events, ideas, or abstractions, you need symbols that stand for your thoughts. Verbal communication consists of words arranged in meaningful patterns. To express a thought, words are arranged according to the rules of grammar, with the various parts of speech arranged in the proper sequence. The message composed is then transmitted in spoken or written form to the appropriate audience.

Speaking and writing

Business people tend to prefer oral communication channels to written ones. Basically, this preference reflects the relative ease and efficiency of oral communication. It is generally quicker and more convenient to talk to somebody than to write a memo or letter. Besides, when you are speaking or listening, you can pick up added meaning from nonverbal cues and benefit from immediate feedback.

On the other hand, relying too heavily on oral communication can cause problems in organizations. As organizations grow and the number of employees increase, keeping everyone adequately informed by word of mouth becomes difficult.

For maximum impact, business people should use both written and spoken channels. One company, for example, used multiple channels when it chose the multimedia approach to explain its new employee-benefits plan. Employees received a printout of their benefits, a computer disk, brochures, and a take home video. They also attended special face-to-face training meetings and were even given access to a hotline. With so many choices available, employees were able to use the media they felt most comfortable with. As workforces grow and become more culturally diverse, such multimedia approaches are expected to become even more popular.

Listening

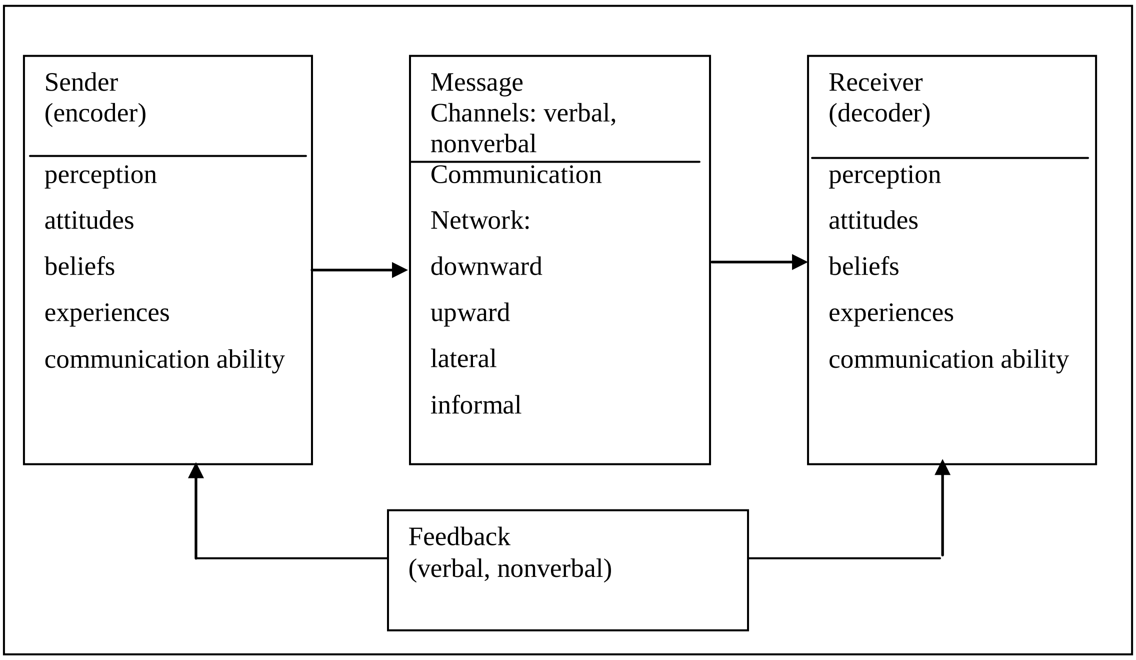
Business people spend a considerable amount of time receiving information. Effective business communication thus depends not only on skill in sending information but also on skill in receiving information.

Unfortunately, most of us aren’t very good listeners. Immediately after hearing a ten-minute speech, we typically remember only half of what was said. A few days later, we have forgotten most of the message. And, to make matters worse, we probably didn’t even grasp the subtle, underlying meaning when we heard the speech. To some extent, our listening problems stem from our education, or lack of it. We spend years learning to express our ideas, but few of us ever take a course in listening. Developing good listening habits is crucial if we want to foster the understanding and cooperation so necessary for an increasingly diverse, international workforce.

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATION

Whether you are speaking, writing, or listening, communication is more than a single act. Instead, it is a chain of events that can be broken into five phases (See Figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1: The Communication Process



Adapted from J W Gibson, and R M Hodgetts, Business Communication (NewYork: Harper and Row, 1990).

1. Sender
2. Message
3. Channel
4. Receiver
5. Feedback

Sender

The sender is the individual who initiates the communication. This person is sometimes known as the "encoder." Encoding is the process of selecting and formulating the information to be conveyed. The sender should mentally visualize the communication from the receiver's point of view. For example, if the sender must convey both good news and bad news, it is often better to relate the good news first. If he must convey both a simple and a complex message, it is best to start with the simple one. This order of priority improves the chances of effective communication. If the message is being delivered verbally, the sender should also look and listen for clues that can help provide additional information.

Message

The message is the information being transmitted. This includes both verbal and nonverbal data. Verbal information is the part of the message that is heard.

Nonverbal information entails such things as body language and the surrounding environment. For example, if a manager calls in a subordinate and says, "you did an excellent job in closing that sale to the Tata group," this comment would generally be interpreted as one of praise. However, if the manager continues to look at some reports on the table while he speaks, it may be interpreted as simply an obligatory statement. If the manager stands up, walks around the desk, and shakes the subordinate's hand while delivering the message, it is more likely to be interpreted as high praise. The nonverbal part of the message often expands what is being said by providing additional meaning. Bear in mind, however, that interpretation can alter the intended meaning of a message. For example, you might remind a co-worker about a deadline with the intention of being helpful, but your colleague could (for a number of different reasons) interpret the message as an indication that you were annoyed or mistrustful.

Channel

The channel is the means used to convey the message. To physically transmit your message you select a communication channel and a medium. A communication channel could be nonverbal, spoken, or written. The medium could be telephone, computer, fax, letter, memo, report, face-to-face, etc.

Sometimes oral communication is superior to written communication; at other times a written message is preferable. Here are some examples:

1. When immediate feedback is necessary, oral communication channels are more effective.
2. If there is a reasonable chance that the other party will not understand the message, verbal channels are the preferred choice.
3. If there is likely to be reluctance on the part of the receiver to comply with the message, verbal channels are usually more effective.
4. If there is a need to document the communication, written channels are the best choice.
5. If the message should have detailed accuracy, written channels are best.
6. If the message must be delivered to more than a handful of people, written channels are often more efficient.

In many cases, both oral and written channels should be used, for one supplements the other. For example, it is common to find managers giving their subordinates assignments over the phone and then saying “I’ll follow this up with a written memo to confirm our conversation.” This provides the receiver an opportunity to review the assignment and, if the written message is not in accord with the oral one, to contact the superior and seek further clarification.

When choosing a specific channel or medium, it is important to be aware of the internal communication network within which the message is conveyed. As mentioned earlier, information flows in four ways through the internal communication network: downward (superior to subordinate); upward (subordinate to superior); lateral or horizontal (between employees at the same hierarchical level); and informal, also known as the “grapevine.”

Downward communication. Information flows from superior to subordinate. There are five basic purposes of this type of communication: (1) to give job instructions; (2) to bring about understanding of the work and its relationship to other organizational tasks; (3) to provide information about procedures and practices; (4) to provide subordinates feedback on their performance; and (5) to instill a sense of mission in the workers. One of the major problems with both downward and upward communication is that there is often loss and distortion of information. Every link in the communication chain opens up a chance for error. So by the time a message makes its way all the way up or down a chain, it may bear little resemblance to the original idea.

Upward communication. Upward communication networks provide subordinates a means for conveying information to their superiors. This type of communication is extremely effective for gaining feedback and learning about problems and roadblocks that are affecting efficiency. Upward communication is also an excellent source of information on employee attitudes and perception. Unfortunately, research reveals that while most managers report that they encourage upward communication, subordinates disagree. They feel that their superiors are not as open and willing to receive feedback as they claim to be.

Lateral communication. Lateral communication channels are used to convey information between individuals and units on the same hierarchical level. These channels are employed for such purposes as (1) coordination of tasks, (2) sharing of information, (3) problem solving, and (4) conflict resolution. These forms of communication, because they occur among employees of similar authority, tend to be persuasive and suggestive in nature rather than directive or authoritative.

Informal communication. Informal communication channels or networks are formed by employees in an effort to circumvent or complement formal channels. Informal channels are often collectively referred to as the grapevine. Research shows that 75 to 90 percent of business information that travels through the grapevine is accurate.

Attempts to quash the grapevine generally have the opposite effect. Informal communication increases when official channels are closed or when the organization faces periods of change, excitement, or anxiety. Instead of trying to eliminate the grapevine, sophisticated companies minimize its importance by making certain that the official word gets out. Many successful managers tap into the grapevine themselves to avoid being isolated from what is really happening. They practice MBWA (Management By Walking Around) to make contact with their employees.

Receiver

The receiver is the individual to whom the message is directed. The extent to which this person comprehends the message will depend on a number of factors, including (1) how much the individual knows about the topic, (2) his receptivity to the message, (3) the relationship and trust that exists between sender and receiver, and (4) the receiver’s understanding and perception of the information being conveyed.

Perception refers to an individual's view of reality. It is the result of many factors, including past experience, attitude toward the message and the sender, mental abilities such as intelligence, and communication skills such as speaking and listening. It is important to realize that a person's perception is not always accurate. For example, the top staff may think that they always inform their subordinates in advance about change, but only about half their subordinates may agree that their bosses communicate in advance about change. One group's perception of its communication style can thus be radically different from another's, and this perception will influence the way the group both sends and receives messages. For example, if personnel at one level were to begin asking questions about future changes, their superiors might shrug them off with the explanation, "oh, you don't need any more information. You've already been fully informed about the change."

Feedback

Feedback is the receiver's response to a message; it can take a number of verbal and nonverbal forms. In verbal form, some of the most common responses are designed to obtain more information or to provide closure by letting the sender know that the message has been received and will be acted upon accordingly. Here are some examples.

For getting more information:

- "Could you tell me more about how this reorganization plan will affect my department?"
- "Your idea sounds good, but how will it help increase work productivity?"
- "You said there were four steps in your new promotion plan, but I noted only three. Can you briefly review the fourth step for me?"

Providing closure:

- "I understand and you can count on my support."
- "I'll get started on this right away and have the report on your desk by next Friday."
- "Thanks for bringing me up-to-date on the program's progress."

As is evident from the above examples, feedback also reveals attitude, perception, and comprehension or lack of it. In nonverbal form, some of the most common examples of feedback are nodding one's head, shrugging, grimacing, smiling, winking, rolling one's eyes, looking the other person directly in the eye, and looking away from the other person.

BARRIERS TO COMMUNICATION

There are many types of communication barriers. For the purpose of analysis, they can be placed into four categories: problems caused by the sender, problems in message transmission, problems in reception, problems in receiver comprehension and perception.

Problems Caused by the Sender

The sender is the individual who encodes the message. A number of barriers can prevent this individual from properly handling a communication task. One is the amount of information the individual has about the subject of the message. If the sender is asked to write a memo explaining the company's new pension program, but the finance committee has not made some of the final decisions regarding how the program will be implemented, the sender will be unable to provide a full explanation.

Too much knowledge about the subject can also be a problem. The sender may over explain the message or make it so detailed and complex that it is confusing. A third barrier is indecision regarding selection of information. What should be included? What should be left out? Until the sender can answer these questions, he will be unable to complete the message.

A fourth barrier is the order of presentation. What should be presented first? What should come next? It is often a good idea to present some general material first to set the stage for the material to follow. For example, if a series of productivity improvement recommendations are being presented to the manager, they should be preceded by a discussion of the current productivity situation and an analysis of the causes of low productivity.

A fifth barrier is a lack of familiarity with the audience. A sender who does not know the audience very well may use an inappropriate approach. For example, if the audience does not know much about the subject, a brief discussion is in order. The message should also be conveyed in a carefully structured format that presents the information in an easy-to-understand manner. On the other hand, if the audience is knowledgeable about the subject, the sender should move immediately to the heart of the matter and present the important information up front. A sender who is unfamiliar with his audience is likely to confuse the first group and bore the second.

A sixth barrier is a lack of experience in speaking or writing. When senders have limited education or training in communication, they often have difficulty expressing their ideas. Their vocabulary is limited, their word choice is poor, there are punctuation and spelling errors, and the overall presentation style is ineffective.

Problems in Message Transmission

Communication can also break down because of problems in transmission. One major problem is the number of transmission links. When a verbal message is transmitted through three or four different people before reaching its final destination, the message will most likely be altered or changed through the stages in communication. This distortion of message occurs often in upward and downward communication.

Another major problem is the transmission of unclear or conflicting messages. When a message contains two conflicting parts, the receiver may have trouble dealing with the communication. Consider, for example, a memo to the head of the Shipping department that directs him to immediately reduce shipping costs while ensuring that all deliveries are made in an expeditious manner. The message appears to be contradictory. How can the manager cut costs and still ensure that all deliveries are made quickly? After all, a reduction in shipping costs is likely to result in goods being sent by a slower route. To which part of the message should the department respond? Or should the manager try to address both messages by reducing the shipping costs for those goods that do not have to arrive quickly while continuing to send “rush” items by overnight delivery?

Problems in Reception

Sometimes there are communication problems because of problems in reception. Communication scholars use the term “noise” to refer to factors that interfere with the exchange of messages. “Physical noise” - external sounds that distract communicators - falls into this category, but there are other types of external noise that don’t involve sound. For example, an overcrowded room or a smelly cigar can disrupt concentration. A second kind of interference is caused by “physiological noise.” Hearing disorders fall into this category, as do illnesses and disabilities that make it difficult to receive messages. The third type of interference is “psychological noise,” consisting of forces within the receiver that interfere with understanding. Egotism, defensiveness, hostility, preoccupation, fear - all these and more constitute psychological noise.

Problems in Receiver Comprehension

Sometimes the receiver will have a problem comprehending the message. There are a number of reasons for this. One is that he may not understand some of the words being used. This is a common problem when a company or industry uses technical terms that have special meaning for them. For example, in engineering firms the term "burn" often means "make a photocopy"; in the medical sciences "OB" refers to obstetrics, while in management studies it refers to "organizational behavior."

Another problem arises from the involvement of personal interests. For example, a message from top management that announces that there will be a wage freeze this year may conclude with the statement, "While this decision was a difficult one to make, it will be good for the entire company." Management may believe this, but many of the lower level employees may not. Their interpretation is that management is making them suffer, because a top executive making Rs 5 lakh annually will be able to forego an annual raise easily, while a worker earning Rs 50,000 a year will experience difficulties coping with economic inflation.

DEALING WITH COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

The following chapters analyze different communication situations, but they all have one common focus: how to deal with communication barriers. Although each communication situation is unique, there are some basic methods for dealing with communication barriers. In this section we discuss these methods, and in subsequent chapters we will refer to or repeat them.

Know your Subject

Identify the topic you are going to discuss and find out (may be even research) all you need to know about it. In particular, find out all the important, specific details, because without details it is not possible to guide or instruct anyone clearly.

At the same time, the writer or speaker should be clear about what he wishes to convey and select the material accordingly. Many people make the mistake of trying to convey everything they know about a subject. Unfortunately, when a message contains too much information, it's difficult to absorb. So if you, as the communicator, want to get your point across, decide what to include and what to leave out, and how much detail to provide.

Focus on the Purpose

To determine the type and amount of information you should include in your document (or presentation), you should know the purpose of your message. If you are writing a report on the consumer market for sports equipment but you don't know the purpose of the report, it would be hard to determine what to include or exclude from the report. What sort of sports equipment should you cover? Should you include team sports as well as individual sports? Should you subdivide the market geographically or according to price ranges? Should the report provide conclusions and recommendations or simply facts and figures? Unless you know the purpose (in this case, why the report is needed) of the report, you can't really answer these questions intelligently. As a result, you will end up writing a vague, general report, that contains a bit of every type of information.

Know your Audience

To convey your purpose effectively, you must know about and understand your audience. You need to know something about the biases, education, age, and status of your receiver to create an effective message. If you are writing for a specialist in your field, for example, you can use technical terms that might be unfamiliar to a layperson;

if you are addressing a lower-level employee, you might approach a subject differently than if you were talking to your boss. Decisions about the content, organization, style, and tone of your message all depend, at least to some extent, on the relationship between you and your audience. If you don't know your audience, you will be forced to make these decisions in the dark, and your message, or at least part of it, will not be conveyed effectively.

Audience-oriented writing can be achieved by answering the question, "How will the receiver react to this message?" For example, if the manager must announce a 10 percent reduction in the workforce, the union representative will interpret this message negatively. The union member will see it as an attempt by management to improve profitability at the cost of the workers' welfare.

By examining the message from the other person's point of view, the sender can identify some of the problems to be encountered and can work to sidestep or minimize them. For example, in the above message the sender could explain the reason for the cutback in terms of the well-being of the workers: "A small cutback now will ensure that no reductions will be needed in the next few years."

Be Organized

Knowledge of the subject, purpose, and audience will also help you to organize your material in such a way that it conveys your message effectively. For example, if the receiver is not familiar with the subject you might have to first give some background information. If you have to persuade the receiver to accept a decision or take a certain course of action, you may first have to explain the rationale for your recommendation to convince the receiver and prevent an emotional response from him.

Communication should be organized in such a way that it conveys the sender's message effectively. This means, the communication should be structured in such a way that it is easily readable by and understandable to the audience. If a message is short it can be organized within a single paragraph. If it is more than one page long, an introduction-body-close format should be followed. If the message is detailed or difficult to follow, it should be broken into segments so that it is easier to understand. In this context, the use of headings, subheadings, underlining and numbering can be useful. If material can be presented in a checklist format, this too can be useful in ensuring that the message is logical, complete, and understandable.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

As you read this book, you will discover many ways to overcome communication barriers and make your communication powerful and effective. Through numerous examples and cases you will examine different communication situations and a variety of techniques for effective communication. Bear in mind that each communication situation is unique, and that this book, or any book for that matter, can only give you guidelines and suggestions for improving your communication skills. Ultimately you have to decide the best strategy for each situation.

Since every communication situation is unique, this book attempts to give you the tools to determine the best strategy in a given situation. That is why this book repeatedly urges you to examine the communication situation - the subject, the purpose, and the audience - so as to identify the most suitable way of conveying your message.

Part I of the book discusses oral communication and Part II examines written communication. Both nonverbal and verbal aspects of oral communication are explored. To make this study meaningful and relevant to managers, communication is discussed in the context of negotiations, interviewing, group communication and presentations - all managerial activities.

Part II discusses the composition of different types of written documents: letters, résumés, memos, and reports. Although oral and written communication are different in many ways, the fundamental rules of communication hold true for both. As a result, there is some necessary overlap between Part I and Part II.

Part II provides numerous examples and guidelines to enable readers to think for themselves and learn to adapt to different writing situations. As with Part I, the purpose is not to prescribe rules, but to "enable" the readers. In this fast changing world it is important to grasp the "tools" and not the "rules" of communication.

The building blocks of communication, however, do not change. That is why this book concludes with a review of writing skills: sentence structure, paragraph structure, and composition.

Chapter 2

Nonverbal Communication

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Characteristics of Nonverbal Communication
- Components of Nonverbal Communication

A	B
Your boss has been telling the staff that he would welcome suggestions about how to improve the organization. You take him at his word and meet him to discuss some of your ideas with him. As you begin to outline the changes you propose, he fixes you with an icy stare and folds his arms across his chest; as you go on, the frown on his face gathers intensity. When you finish, he gets up abruptly and says, with barely suppressed menace in his voice, "Thank you very much. Your ideas are priceless."	*Your friend has started a new organization. He is encountering some labor problems. You are a personnel management specialist and have several years of experience in the personnel department of a large conglomerate. Your friend calls you over to his office one day to discuss his problems. In the course of the conversation, you give him some ideas about how he could solve his problems. He finds your ideas innovative and thinks they are just right for his kind of set-up. As you get up to leave, your friend clasps your hand warmly, beams at you and says, "Thank you very much. Your ideas are priceless."*

You've seen two identical expressions being used in two entirely different situations. Verbally, the two expressions mean exactly the same. But, do you think the two speakers meant to communicate the same message? What is it that differentiates one message from the other? You will notice that it is the nonverbal cues embedded in each message that makes these two messages so radically different from each other. The boss uses nonverbal cues to let you know he thinks it is preposterous that you should try to suggest changes to him. Thus, though his words say something different, what he actually says is: *"You have a nerve, coming in here and trying to tell me how I should run this place."* So then, what exactly is nonverbal communication? Very broadly, nonverbal communication is all those messages expressed by other than linguistic means.

Communication researchers have found that nonverbal signals have more impact in conveying meaning than verbal content. In fact nonverbal behavior is so important to effective business communication that many companies are now trying to train their employees to understand it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

We've seen how nonverbal signals can completely alter the message that you communicate. Let us now look at some of the characteristics of nonverbal communication.

1) *Nonverbal messages primarily communicate emotions, attitudes:* Nonverbal signals, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter, largely communicate a person's subjective response – anger, appreciation, dislike, resentment – to a particular situation. Messages about ideas or concepts cannot be conveyed through nonverbal channels. For instance, if you want to give your friend the message, "*The sales meeting is coming up next Monday*," there's no way you can do this using nonverbal signals. However, you can express you attitude to the "sales meeting" – dread, eager anticipation – through nonverbal signals.

2) *Nonverbal cues substitute for, contradict, emphasize, or regulate verbal messages:* If someone asks you which way the MD's room is, you may simply point down the corridor. You may praise your friend's new dress while your face shows absolute dismay, or you may use your hands to indicate the monstrous proportion of somebody's ego. Very often we regulate the flow of conversation nonverbally by raising an index finger, nodding and leaning forward, raising eyebrows, and/or changing eye contact.

3) *Nonverbal cues are often ambiguous:* Nonverbal cues are not always easy to understand. No dictionary can accurately classify them. Their meaning varies by culture and context. Sometimes they convey meanings that were never intended. A random gesture may be assumed to have meaning when none at all was intended. On the other hand, some people may feel emotion strongly, but find that their bodies do not respond appropriately.

4) *Nonverbal cues are continuous:* It is possible to stop talking, but it is generally not possible to stop sending out nonverbal cues. The attempt to mask one's communication communicates something in itself. Long periods of silence at the supper table communicate as clearly as any words that something may be wrong.

5) *Nonverbal cues are generally seen as more reliable:* When verbal and nonverbal cues contradict each other, we tend to believe the nonverbal. This is largely because nonverbal cues are more difficult to fake. An experiment reported by Zuckerman, DePaulo and Rosenthal *(Verbal and Nonverbal Communication of Deception)* showed that everything we use to discern if a person is lying, comes from the nonverbal realm. As Sigmund Freud said, *"No mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he talks with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."*

6) *Nonverbal cues are culture bound:* Many nonverbal gestures are universal. Most human beings, no matter what culture they belong to, smile when happy and frown when unhappy. But certain nonverbal expressions vary from culture to culture. Gestures seen as positive in one culture may be seen as obscene in another culture.

COMPONENTS OF NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Now that we have some idea of the broad characteristics of nonverbal communication, let us examine some of the ways in which nonverbal messages are transmitted. The study of nonverbal signals is divided into three main areas: paralanguage, the way we say what we say, kinesics, the study of body language and facial expression, and proxemics, which is the study of how physical space is used. Other forms of nonverbal communication include the use of time and the mode of dress.

Paralanguage

The study of paralanguage focuses on how you say what you say. As we saw in the example at the beginning of the chapter, two identical verbal messages may communicate entirely different meanings when the tone of voice is different. The tone of our voice, the loudness, softness, rate of speech, and the words we choose to accent, communicate a great deal. In fact, by changing the emphasis in a sentence, we can change the total meaning of the sentence. Look at these sentences.

Sentences	*Possible meaning.*
1) I never said that.	I didn't say it. Somebody else might have.
2) I never said that.	At no time did I ever say that. What makes you think I did?
3) I never said that.	I didn't say it in so many words. I may have *implied* it, but I didn't say it.

Of course, other listeners may just see other meanings in each of these sentences. We did point out that nonverbal cues were ambiguous, didn't we?

Paralanguage has several component parts: voice qualities, voice qualifiers, voice characteristics, and vocal segregates.

Voice qualities

Voice qualities include such things as volume, rate of speech, pitch, rhythm, pronunciation and enunciation.

Volume

A person may sometimes speak louder to attract others' attention. But an overly loud speech can be annoying or disturbing. On the other hand, though a soft voice conveys a sense of calm, in a business setting it may give an impression of weakness or indecisiveness. Thus, the volume that may be right in one setting, may convey a negative message in a different situation.

Exhibit 2.1

Head shakes are particularly difficult to interpret. People in the United States shake their heads up and down to signify "yes." Many British, however, make the same motions just to indicate that they hear – not necessarily that they agree. To say "no," people shake their heads from side to side in the United States, jerk their heads back in a haughty manner in the Middle East, wave a hand in front of the face in the Orient, and shake a finger from side to side in Ethiopia.

The pointing of a finger is a dangerous action. In North America it is a very normal gesture, but it is considered very rude in many other parts of the world – especially in areas of Asia and Africa. It is therefore much safer to merely close the hand and point with the thumb.

Other forms of communication have also caused problems. The tone of the voice, for example, can be important. Some cultures permit people to raise their voices when they are not close to others, but loudness in other cultures is often associated with anger or loss of self-control..

A lack of knowledge of such differences in verbal and nonverbal forms of communication has resulted in many a social and corporate blunder. Local people tend to be willing to overlook most of the mistakes of tourists; after all, they are just temporary visitors. Locals are much less tolerant of the errors of business people – especially those who represent firms trying to project an impression of permanent interest in the local economy. The consequences of erring, therefore, are much greater for the corporation.

Source: David A. Ricks, Big Business Blunders

Rate of speech

On an average, it has been found that people speak at about 150 words a minute. When a person speaks at much higher or lower rates, he may have a negative impact. Fast speech often makes people nervous, while slow speech causes boredom or leads people to believe that the speaker is not quite sure about what to say next.

Voice pitch

Voice pitch is often equated with emotion. High pitch shrieking generally indicates excitement or nervousness. A low voice pitch usually commands attention and respect, because it indicates that the speaker is in control of the situation.

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to the pattern of the voice: whether it is regular or irregular; whether it flows smoothly or moves in fits and starts. A smooth rhythm, like a moderately low pitch, indicates a confident, authoritative attitude, while an uneven rhythm may convey lack of prior preparation and lack of clarity.

Pronunciation and enunciation

Good pronunciation is the correct oral delivery of a word. The vowel sounds must be said correctly and the right syllables must be accented. People who mispronounce words are thought to be not as well educated as those who pronounce words correctly. Thus, the way you pronounce words may play an important role in building your image.

Enunciation also relates to the correctness of how a word is pronounced, but is more a matter of clear articulation. People with poor enunciation drop word endings, slur their speech, or do not speak clearly. Poor enunciation may indicate carelessness, but overly precise enunciation may sometimes seem phony or pretentious.

Voice qualifiers

Temporary variations in pitch, volume and rate of speech are known as voice qualifiers. If one is aware of the normal voice qualities of a person, it is easy to detect the voice qualifiers in his speech. For instance, if your secretary, who normally talks in a low, even tone, suddenly starts talking faster and louder, you should be able to tell that something is not quite right. He may be conveying impatience, anger or excitement.

Vocal characteristics

All of you are familiar with certain audible sounds like sighing, laughing, crying, clearing the throat, whistling and groaning. These sounds, which serve to communicate some meaning, are called vocal characteristics. As a communication expert put it: "*Awareness of the more subtle voice characteristics, such as pleasantness, especially in combination with voice qualifiers, can do much to help individuals and organizations improve communication. Think, for instance, how much a company's image can be helped by a receptionist who sounds, both in person and over the telephone, 'pleasant,' 'confident,' and 'competent'.*"

Vocal segregates

"Er.......um.......will you lend me some money, please?" Now, in this sentence, what do the words, "er," "um" mean? They don't mean a thing. Such meaningless words or sounds that are used to punctuate or pace- sentences are called vocal segregates. Sometimes people use filler expressions like "right?" "you know what I mean" or "OK" to fill in their silences. Vocal segregates are usually awkward components of speech and should be avoided as far as possible. These sounds indicate a lack of confidence and exhibit a feeling of stress on the part of the speaker.

Kinesics

Human beings communicate a lot through body movements and facial expressions. Kinesics is the study of this kind of communication. Let us look at how different body movements and facial expressions communicate different messages.

Posture

The way people sit or stand can reveal a lot about their attitudes and emotions. Posture portrays confidence, anxiety, fear, aggressiveness and a host of other emotions. A boss who wants to reprimand his subordinate may do so by standing, leaning over the table and peering down at the hapless employee. Here, he is using posture to establish his superiority. Insecure or nervous people often betray their weakness by slouching, biting their nails or looking down. A person who wants to tell everyone else that he is quite confident may sit back expansively, wrap his arm over the back of the chair and stretch out his legs in front.

Gestures

Gestures are of various types. Four common ones are emblems, adaptors, regulators, and illustrators.

Emblems

Emblems are gestures that have a meaning that is understood by the public at large. Of course, most of them are culture specific. Sometimes the same emblem may have different meanings in different cultures. For instance, forming an "O" with index and thumb means "OK" in the US, while in Japan it means "money" and in parts of France it means "worthless" or "zero."

Adaptors

These are learned behavior patterns that we usually pick up in childhood. They way we use our spoons or our hands while eating is a good example.

Illustrators

These are gestures that go with what we are saying verbally and tend to depict what is being said. A good example is when you tell someone, "Come, sit in this chair," and accompany it by a nod of the head or a wave of the hand.

Exhibit 2.2

How do facial expressions convey meaning?

1. Surprise:	The eyebrows are raised, the eyes are opened wide, and the jaw drops open, parting the lips.
2. Fear:	The eyebrows are raised and drawn together; the eyes are open and the lower lid is tensed; the lips are stretched back.
3. Disgust:	The upper lip is raised, while the lower lip may be raised or lowered; the nose is wrinkled, the lower eyelids are pushed up, and the eyebrow is lowered.
4. Anger:	The eyebrows are lowered and drawn together, the eyelids are tensed and the eye appears to stare in a hard fashion. The lips are either tightly pressed together or parted in a square shape.
5. Happiness:	The corners of the lips are drawn back and up. The mouth may or may not be parted. Crow's feet wrinkles go outward from the outer corners of the eyes.
6. Sadness:	The inner corners of the eyebrows are raised and may be drawn together. The corners of the lips are drawn down or the lips appear to tremble.

Regulators

These are gestures that control the communication exchange. Patting an employee on the back may encourage him to keep talking. Shuffling through your papers while he's talking will certainly encourage him to stop.

Facial expressions

The face plays a vital role in communicating various messages. The brow, the eyes, the root of the nose, the lower face, are all capable of conveying attitudes and emotions. Exhibit 2.2 describes six universal facial expressions. But minor variations do occur from culture to culture.

Eyes

Of all facial expressions, those of the eyes are considered the most revealing. Studies have provided numerous insights about eye contact:

1) Eye contact is perceived as an indication of honesty, confidence, openness and interest.
2) People who avoid eye contact are usually embarrassed or nervous.
3) Eye contact varies by culture. For instance, some Latin American cultures teach children not to look directly at the face of an adult.

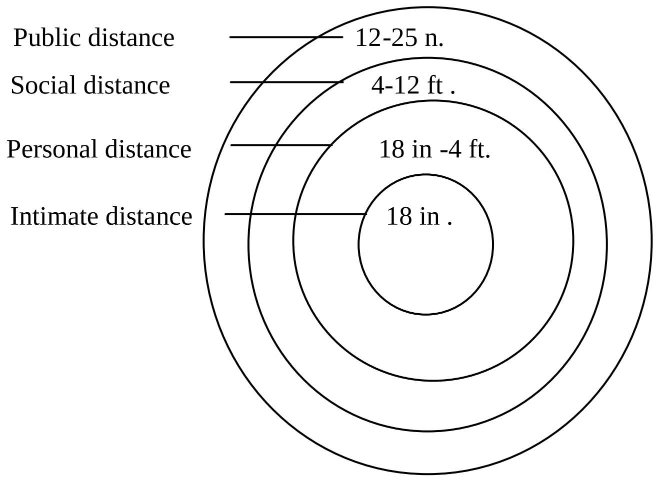
Proxemics

Proxemics is the study of how people use the physical space around them and what this use says about them.

People often put an invisible boundary between themselves and others. This is called the personal feature space. Figure 2.1 shows the four feature space categories or zones.

The intimate distance zone within a radius of up to 18 inches around a person, is reserved for close relations and friends. The personal distance zone, which may extend from 1 ½ to 4 feet is also reserved for friends and family. Of course, there are cultural variations. Certain cultures are more tolerant of intrusions into a person's personal space than others. The social distance zone extends from 4 to 12 feet. It is in this zone that most business is transacted. The public distance zone usually extends from 12 to 25 feet. It is the farthest distance at which one can communicate effectively on a face-to-face basis. Thus, by observing the physical distance between two individuals, one can judge the relationship between them.

Figure 2.1: Personal Feature Space Categories



Source: J W Gibson and R M Hodgetts, Business Communication (NewYork: Harper and Row, 1990).

In organizations the control of space generally constitutes an extension of one's personal power. Status can often be determined by how much space a person occupies. The more status a person has, the easier it is for him or her to invade someone else's space. For instance, it is all right for a manager to walk into a subordinate's office, but the subordinate must seek permission to enter the manager's room.

Use of Time

How you use time also gives others clues about what kind of a person you are and what they can expect from you in terms of dependability. In the office, the junior staff are expected to conform strictly to time guidelines. However, those in senior management are allowed to flout these guidelines as they are seen to have greater control over both their own time and the time of others. The amount of time we spend on a task also indicates how much importance we give it.

Mode of Dress

Our first impression of people is often based on what they are wearing. In organizations it is generally found that promotions and other benefits go to people who dress the way those in power feel they should dress. John Molloy, author of *Dress for Success*, says:

"*The overriding essential of all corporate business clothing is that it establishes power and authority. If you can accomplish nothing else, presenting yourself as a person who is capable of the job he has been given is an acceptable goal*."

THINK ABOUT IT

Oral communication is thus a mixture of verbal and nonverbal messages. A good communicator is one whose nonverbal cues authenticate and reinforce his words. As the old folk saying goes, "*Actions speak louder than words*." So, if your actions belie your words there's every possibility the listener may choose to believe your actions, rather than your words.

Chapter 3

Listening

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- The Importance of Listening
- Barriers to Effective Listening
- Approaches to Listening
- How to be a Better Listener
- What Speakers Can Do to Ensure Better Listening

Amit Suri was asked to represent his department at the Benefits Committee meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to announce changes in the company's home loan schemes. Amit and the others in his department were unanimous in their support of the OTP (one-time-payment) scheme. But he knew that there were some in the other departments who favored the MIP (monthly-instalment-payment) scheme. He walked into the room, hoping the OTP scheme would be adopted.

The head of the committee entered the room, walked up to the podium, put his papers in front, and began to speak.

"I know you are all here to learn about our new home loan scheme, and I won't keep you in suspense. We have decided that the MIP scheme will be our primary scheme."

As he continued to talk, Amit fumed. As soon as the meeting ended, he rushed back to his department with the news. Everyone was upset.

Twenty minutes later Amit's colleagues walked up to his desk. "Are you sure the MIP is the only scheme the company is adopting? I just spoke to a friend in the Accounts Department. He says the MIP will be the primary scheme, but those who wish to do so, can opt for the OTP."

Amit couldn't believe his ears. He called up another colleague, who confirmed what he had just heard.

What do you think happened in this case? Amit was present throughout the meeting. Yet, he didn't really hear what the speaker was saying. Why? Because he wasn't listening.

If research studies are anything to go by, Amit is certainly not an oddity in the business world. According to these studies, the average listening efficiency rate is only 25 percent. Immediately after a ten-minute presentation, a normal listener can recall only 50 percent of the information conveyed. After 24 hours the recall level is only 25 percent. Does this bode well for organizations? No. Why? Let us see why listening is so very important in a modern organization.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING

One primary reason why listening is so important is the amount of time people spend doing just that – listening. Listening is the most frequent, perhaps the most important type of on-the-job communication. Studies indicate that adults spend about 29.5 percent of their waking hours listening. Recent studies that focus on the workplace show that, on an average, personnel at all levels spend about 32.7% of their time listening, while speaking takes up 25.8% of their time and writing 22.6%. Top executives spend even more time listening than other employees.

Listening on the job is not only frequent, it is very important as well. In fact, most managers agree that "active listening" is the most crucial skill for becoming a successful manager. Stephen Covey identifies listening as one of the "*seven habits of highly effective people*." Listening can improve work quality and boost productivity. Poor listening leads to innumerable mistakes because of which letters have to be retyped, meetings rescheduled, shipments rerouted. All this affects productivity and profits. Apart from the obvious benefits, good listening helps employees to update and revise their collection of facts, skills and attitudes. Good listening also helps them to improve their speaking.

Despite all these benefits, as pointed out earlier, good listening skills are quite rare in the business world today. A number of studies have revealed why people listen poorly, despite the advantages of doing just the opposite. Let us look at some of the common barriers to effective listening.

BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE LISTENING

When we hear, we only perceive sounds, but when we listen, this hearing is accompanied by a deliberate and purposeful act of the mind. To listen means to get meaning from what is heard. One may hear the words another person utters, without really understanding them. Let us look at some of the factors that impede effective hearing. Figure 3.1 outlines some of these.

Physiological Barriers

Hearing impairment

Sometimes poor listening can be traced to hearing deficiencies. However, once these deficiencies are detected, they can usually be treated.

Speaking-Thinking rate

According to an estimate, we speak at an average of 125 to 150 words a minute. Our mind, however, can process nearly 500 words per minute. This gives listeners a good deal of spare time, which is often used for mental excursions ranging from daydreaming to thinking about the speaker's hairstyle. Spending this time for analyzing the message would make for better listening.

Environmental Barriers

Physical distractions

Distracting sounds, poor acoustics, uncomfortable seating arrangements can all hamper effective listening. But then it is not impossible to counter these distractions through concentration.

When all your attention is focused on what is being said, the other noises take backseat in your consciousness. Unless of course, the noises are too powerful.

Message overload

When you are forced to listen to a quick succession of messages, then after a point your receptivity dulls. You find it gets impossible to listen attentively. Coping with a deluge of information is like juggling – you can keep only a few things going at a time.

Attitudinal Barriers

Prejudices

Sometimes our prejudices and deep-seated beliefs make it impossible for us to be receptive to the speaker. For instance, when two politicians who belong to, say the BJP and the CPI(M), argue over a political issue, they are not likely to give each other's views a fair hearing, because of their preconceived attitudes. To break down this barrier, we must achieve some control over our instinctive responses and learn to postpone judgement until we have *listened* to exactly what is being said.

Preoccupation

Sometimes we are preoccupied with other concerns. As students, all of you must have had days when you registered nothing of what was said in class, because your thoughts were on the freshers' party you had to arrange the next evening.

A casual attitude

Because hearing is relatively easy, we assume that we can do it without much concentration and effort. This attitude is often a major barrier to listening.

Egocentrism

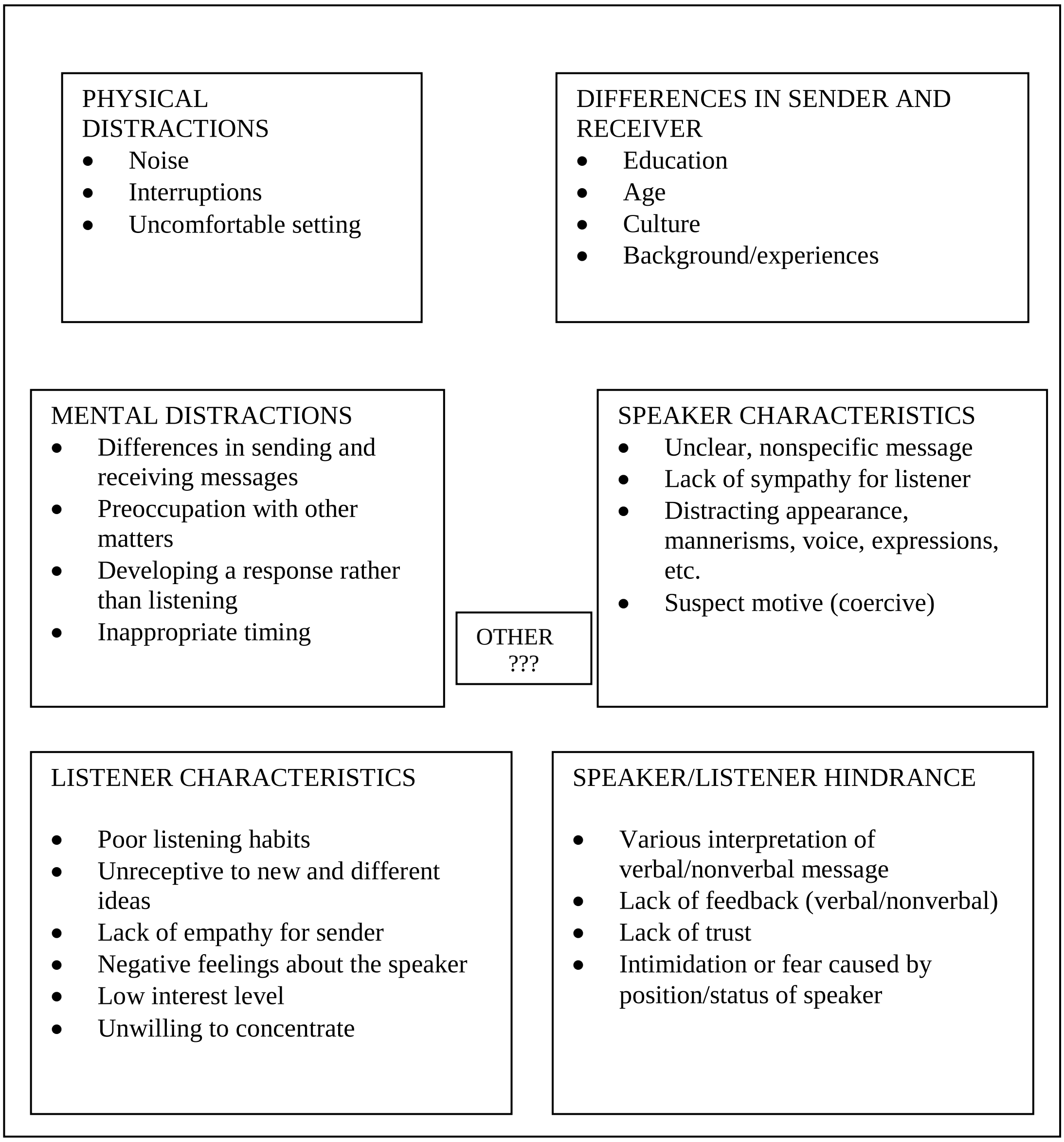
Many people are poor listeners, because they are overly concerned with themselves.

Three personal concerns dominate their listening behavior. These can be summed up in three sentences:

1) I must defend my position.
2) I already know what you have to say.
3) How am I coming through?

These concerns set up effective barriers that destroy the critical link between speaker and listener.

Figure 3.1: Barriers to Effective Listening



Adapted from William.C Himstreet,Wayne Murlin Baty and Carol M.Lehman. Business Communications, 10th edition (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993) 45

Poor Listening Habits

Listening, like much of human behavior, tends to follow consistent patterns. Most of us develop certain bad listening habits that eventually create a pattern. Four of the most common bad habits are:

1) *Faking attention:* Many of us fake attention so as not to appear discourteous. However, this can become habitual, and turn out to be a barrier to effective listening.
2) *Listening only for facts:* In looking only for the facts, we often forget to locate the main idea.
3) *Avoiding difficult and uninteresting material:* Sometimes we switch off our attention when what is being said is difficult, unfamiliar, or simply uninteresting. If we do this often, this turning off becomes a consistent pattern.
4) *Focusing on delivery:* Sometimes we are so concerned with how someone says something that we pay scant attention to what he or she is actually saying.

Lack of Common Experiences

It is difficult for a person to understand what is being said, if he or she has no experience, either direct or indirect, of the concepts being discussed. Can you imagine a farmer, who has lived all his life in a small village, trying to understand the message of an MTV VJ?

APPROACHES TO LISTENING

Now that we've considered some of the barriers to effective listening, let us look at another question: Why do people listen at all? Well, the answers to this question are many and varied. Sometimes people listen because they want some information from the speaker; sometimes they listen, because they enjoy what they're hearing. Depending on the purpose, a listener adopts one of the following listening approaches discussed here.

Discriminative Listening

Discriminative listening involves an attempt to distinguish one sound from all the others. Stopping work to determine whether the phone is ringing is an example. We learn how to discriminate among sounds at an early age. Eventually, we come to recognize not only the sounds that make up our language, we also learn to identify vocal cues such as tone of voice, volume, pitch and rate, all of which contribute to the total meaning of a message.

Comprehensive Listening

A person trying to understand a speaker's message in totality, to interpret the meaning as precisely as possible, is engaged in comprehensive listening. This kind of listening is generally practiced in the classroom when we must remember what we have heard in a lecture and rely upon it for future use.

Critical Listening

When a person wants to sift through what he has heard and come to a decision, he must listen critically. This involves judging the clarity, accuracy and reliability of the evidence that is presented, and being alert to the effects of emotional appeals.

Active Listening

Active listening is also called empathic listening. This kind of listening goes beyond just paying attention or listening critically. It entails supportive behavior that tells the speaker, *"I understand. Please go on."*

When you listen actively, you encourage the speaker to express himself fully. Sometimes active listeners provide the speakers with neutral summaries of what they have heard in order to affirm that they have understood what they have said. Active listening involves responding to the emotional content as well, apart from the bare verbal message. An active listener is alert to all cues, and carefully observes the nonverbal behavior of the speaker to get the total picture.

HOW TO BE A BETTER LISTENER

Regardless of whether the situation calls for appreciative, critical, discriminative or active listening, listening skills can be improved with conscious effort. Figure 3.2 shows the differences between good listeners and bad listeners. Let us now look at some of the specific steps you can take to become a better listener.

Figure 3.2: Distinguishing Good Listeners from Bad Listeners

TO LISTEN EFFECTIVELY	THE BAD LISTENER	THE GOOD LISTENER
1. Find areas of interest	Tunes out dry subjects	Opportunizes; asks, "what is in it for me?"
2. Judge content, not delivery	Tunes out if delivery is poor	Judges content; skips over delivery errors
3. Hold your fire	Tends to enter into argument	Doesn't judge until comprehension is complete; interrupts only to clarify
4. Listen for ideas	Listens for facts	Listens for central themes
5. Be flexible	Takes extensive notes using only one system	Takes fewer notes; uses four to five different systems, depending on speaker
6. Work at listening	Shows no energy output; fakes attention	Works hard; exhibits active body state
7. Resist distractions	Is distracted easily	Fights or avoids distractions; tolerates bad habits; knows how to concentrate
8. Exercise your mind	Resists difficult expository material; seeks light, recreational material	Uses heavier material as exercise for the mind
9. Keep your mind open	Reacts to emotional words	Interprets emotional words; does not get hung up on them

Adapted from C.L. Bovee and J.V. Thill. Business Communication (New York: McGraw, 1995) 571.

Be Motivated to Listen

When you resolve that you will listen, an improvement in your listening skills will become immediately noticeable. Researchers have concluded that the more motivated a listener is, the more active and alert he becomes as a receiver. Though motivation alone cannot solve all problems in listening, it is the first prerequisite to becoming a good listener.

Be Prepared to Listen

Sometimes you need to make some preparation beforehand in order to listen effectively to a particular piece of communication. It is helpful to gather as much relevant information as you can about the subject, the speaker, and the situation. This will help you to better understand and appraise what the speaker is saying. Preparations could also include attempts to minimize physical barriers between yourself and the speaker and to eliminate all distractions in the environment.

Exhibit 3.1

Are men listening?

Recent findings seem to confirm what women have suspected all along: men say they're listening, but they're really only giving it half their attention.

In fact they listen with the left side of their brain, while women use both the right and left sides, according to a study. But the authors of the study say this is not the time to resurrect gender stereotypes, and that the jury is still out on which sex really has the better listening skills.

"Language processing between men and women is different but it doesn't necessarily mean performance is different," says Michael Philips, assistant professor of radiology at Indiana University School of Medicine.

After playing a portion of the John Grisham novel, *The Partner*, to 20 men and 20 women for a period of less than six minutes, the researchers found that both had a similar grasp of the plot.

But what the magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) demonstrated was the markedly different ways they arrived at roughly the same point.

The MRI revealed that while brain activity in men was exclusively in the temporal lobe of the brain's left hemisphere, which is associated with listening and speech, the women also employed the right temporal lobe which is thought to help with performing music and understanding spatial relationships. "*It was a surprise result,"* says Philips.

Be Objective

From your own experiences, you would have noticed that you are more receptive to a message when you approach it with an open mind.

To be objective, one must avoid jumping to conclusions. Keep your critical faculties on the alert but do not make a judgement until all points are fully developed. If you make a judgement too fast, there is always the danger that you may fail to register things the speaker says that may not exactly tie in with your judgement. Objective listening entails a conscious effort to keep our emotions and prejudices at bay. The example given at the beginning of the chapter shows you how you can miss important facts, when your emotional responses pull down the shutters over your receptivity.

Be Alert to all Cues

Look for the speaker's main ideas. The speaker's voice quality, inflection, emphasis and body movement can all offer vital clues to what the speaker feels is most important. Besides, these cues also give you insights into the emotional content of the speaker's message, which must be taken into consideration if the message is to be fully understood.

Make Good Use of the Thinking-Speaking Time Difference

As mentioned earlier, we normally think much faster than we speak. If you are a listener you can use this gap to your advantage by mentally summarizing and reviewing what the speaker has said. Focus on what the speaker is saying, rather than on what would be the appropriate response to the message.

Use Feedback

Using feedback is one way we can get more from our communication encounters. Sometimes this feedback may be as simple as telling the speaker that you don't understand. This lets you hear the message again. While using feedback, make sure that the speaker receives your message, that there's no ambiguity about your feedback and that your feedback is related to what is going on.

Practice Listening

Proficiency in listening, like in any other skill, is the result of conscious effort. Many of the barriers to effective listening can be successfully overcome through practice. Force yourself to listen to speeches and lectures that seem to hold no obvious interest value. Doing this will help you overcome the temptation to "switch off" when the messages seem dull or difficult.

Use Verbal and Nonverbal Cues to Encourage the Speaker

The listener can use a number of verbal and nonverbal cues to aid the speaker in communicating. Establishing eye contact with the speaker can go a long way in reassuring him or her. Looking out the window while somebody is speaking does little for the morale of the speaker. Sometimes nodding the head slightly or casual remarks like 'I see' can tell the speaker that you're actively involved in the communication process. Even an act as simple as smiling can offer warmth and support to the speaker and help him to get over his nervousness.

WHAT SPEAKERS CAN DO TO ENSURE BETTER LISTENING

So far, we have studied 'listening' entirely from the listener's perspective. But the speaker too, to a certain extent, influences the way in which others listen to the message. Of course, this is not to suggest that the entire onus of communicating a message is on the speaker – a notion that is alarmingly popular among most poor listeners. But the speaker can use certain techniques to encourage more effective listening.

Try to Empathize

Speak to your listeners. To do this you must understand them – understand how they will respond to your ideas. The best way to do this is to imagine yourself in their position. This will help you to weed out uninteresting and difficult parts that may be irrelevant or could be made more easily understandable by being put in a different way.

Adjust your Delivery

Make sure the listeners have no difficulty hearing you. You can retain listeners' interest by modulating your voice and making your speech as lively as you can without sounding ridiculous. A dull monotone often induces mental lethargy and turns listeners off.

Utilize Feedback

As the listener can use feedback to improve the communication, so can the speaker. Be sensitive to listener responses. Ask yourself: Are they paying attention? Do they look interested? Do they look confused? Are they bored? Answering these questions will help you to make the necessary adjustments and tailor your message to the needs of the audience.

Be Clear

Know your purpose. What is the main point that you are trying to make? If you are not clear about what you want to say and why you want to say it, you're likely to ramble aimlessly and it's very difficult to pay attention to disconnected and disjointed wanderings.

Be Interesting

To be interesting you must first of all be interested in what you have to say. Lack of interest on the speaker's part communicates itself immediately to the listeners and dulls their own response. Lively, stimulating and relevant speech always has a better chance of capturing the audience's attention.

THINK ABOUT IT

Most people spend at least half their communication time listening. This most used communication skill is not only crucial in interpersonal communication, it also affects organizational communication and helps determine success in education and in careers. Business writer Kevin Murphy says, "*The better you listen, the luckier you will get*." So take time to listen.

<u>**Chapter 4**</u>

Interpersonal Skills

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Building Positive Relationships
- Giving Praise
- Dealing with Criticism
- Managing Conflict

Effective communication is not just about talking and listening. In an organization it's largely about building team-oriented relationships marked by co-operation, honesty and mutual respect. After all, no man works alone in the workplace. He has to work with others. And his success in the workplace depends largely on how well he communicates with them and how well he works with them as a group. These skills, often referred to as "people skills" or "interpersonal skills" determine the quality of his relationships.

BUILDING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to work well with others is no longer merely an additional asset for a manager. It is one of those vital abilities that sometimes makes the difference between success and failure. According to Lee Iacocca, *"There's one phrase I hate to see on any executive's evaluation, no matter how talented he may be, and that's the line, 'He has trouble getting along with other people.' To me that's the kiss of death."*

The quality of the personal relationships in an organization determine the communication culture of the firm. When people trust one another and believe that they are appreciated, the communication climate is a positive one. Psychologist Jack Gibb provides a list of ways to promote positive relationships.

Use Descriptive 'I' Language

Look at this sentence: You never come to office on time. This kind of a statement uses what is known as "you" language as it verbally accuses the receiver. Now look at this sentence*: Since you've been coming in late, I've had to make a lot of excuses whenever the Director asks for you. I'm uncomfortable with that.* Here too the speaker is pointing out to someone that he is coming in late and that this is not acceptable. However, while the first sentence sounds judgemental, and is more likely to result in defensiveness, the second one is more descriptive. It has clear and specific statements and is not judgemental.

Focus on Solving Problems, not Controlling Others

A controlling message is one in which the speaker attempts to manipulate or coerce the listener. Controlling messages usually contain elements that attack the intelligence of the speaker. On the other hand, a problem-solving orientation focuses on identifying a problem which can be solved through mutual cooperation. Look at these two sentences.

(a) *If you continue to come late to work I will have to sack you.*

(b) *Let's try to figure out why you have difficulty coming to the office on time and see what we can do about it.*

The first sentence shows little regard for the other person's needs, while the second recognizes that there is a problem and suggests that it can be solved through joint effort.

Be Open: Don't Try to Deceive

Nobody likes to be manipulated or deceived. The moment somebody discovers that he has been tricked into a particular course of action through misleading or deceptive messages, he becomes extremely defensive. Being open in these circumstances is likely to generate less defensiveness. Even though others may not always like what you say, they will eventually grow to respect your candor.

Show Empathy

Lack of understanding, interest or concern always creates defensiveness. Imagine yourself in the shoes of the secretary whose boss tells her:

"I don't care what your problems are, get this job done by the end of the day."

Wouldn't this kind of a message make you feel that you were being treated as an object, rather than as a person with real feelings? By contrast, when you empathize with your listener, you show concern for his opinions and assure him that he is valued. Now look at the same message rephrased:

"I hope it will not be too difficult for you to complete this job today."

While the first message conveys indifference, the second message shows greater sensitivity to the feelings and thoughts of the listener.

Don't Put on an Air of Superiority

When you behave as though you are superior to the listener, you are implying that you have greater power, wealth, intelligence or social status. This encourages the listener to become defensive by ignoring or forgetting the message, or by establishing a competitive environment. A message of equality, on the other hand, encourages a positive communication climate that encourages feedback and demonstrates respect. The supervisor who tells his subordinate, *Do it this way because I'm the boss and I say so*, is likely to antagonize his staff. The supervisor who says, *How do you think we should handle this problem*, is likely to get greater support from his staff.

Listen with an Open Mind

It's always a good idea to hear out what others have to say with an open mind. A closed mind may imply to the other person that you don't care about the topic and that your mind is made up. Imagine that you've prepared a well-researched report on how moving the plant can benefit the company. You discuss the report with your supervisor, and before you've finished your first sentence, the supervisor says, "*Moving the plant would be a stupid idea*." Wouldn't you feel that the supervisor is a "know-it-all" who is probably more interested in trying to assert his superiority than in looking at the facts? On the other hand, if the supervisor says, "*I have already seen two reports on why the plant shouldn't be shifted, but may be your arguments will help us to look at the matter in a different perspective*," you feel more comfortable, because you are sure the supervisor will at least give your ideas a fair hearing.

GIVING PRAISE

Praise, when used skillfully and when it is sincere, can go a long way toward establishing an enduring culture of motivation in an organization. Communication consultants Peter and Susan Glaser provide several tips on how to harness the power of praise.

Make Praise Specific

Although any kind of sincere praise is always welcome, praise becomes more meaningful when you spell out exactly what you appreciate. Telling your sales officer, "*You showed great ingenuity in dealing with that irate customer without losing your cool*," tells him what exactly you appreciate about the way he handled the complaint.

Praise Progress, Not Just Perfection

Don't wait for a person to turn in an outstanding piece of work before you praise him. Chances are, you may never get a chance to do so. Instead, focus on the progress the person makes. You can always motivate a person to try harder by complimenting any improvement in his performance.

Be Sincere

Praise that is not sincere can be highly counterproductive. In the words of Bob Nelson, founder of Nelson Motivation Inc., *"Words alone can fall flat if you are not sincere in why you are praising someone. You need to praise because you are truly appreciative and excited about the other person's success. Otherwise, it may come across as a manipulative tactic – something you are doing only when you want an employee to work late, for example."*

Don't Overdo Praise

Like all other good things, "praise" too can become inefficient if it is overdone. Constant praise becomes meaningless, as it sounds insincere.

Get the Timing Right

In *The One Minute Manager*, Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson encourage managers to "*catch people doing something right*." Praise given as soon as an achievement is complete, or the desired behavior is displayed, is always more effective.

DEALING WITH CRITICISM

While praise is always a pleasure to give and receive, there are situations where you must grapple with something not quite so pleasant – criticism. Sometimes you have to make a critical remark about somebody, and sometimes you may be at the receiving end. By managing criticism well, both as the critic and as the criticized, you can avoid conflict and maintain good working relationships.

Offering Constructive Criticism

Criticism, as mentioned earlier, doesn't have to foster conflict. As a critic, you can ensure that your comments meet with the least resistance by taking care of some of these aspects.

1. Understand why you are making a critical remark

Be sure that your criticism is appropriate to the situation and constructive for the parties involved. Criticizing somebody out of self-interest or envy may prove destructive.

2. Try to understand the other person's perspective

Putting yourself in the other man's shoes will always help you to deal with the situation better.

3. Direct criticism at the person's behavior, not at the person

Your criticism should be focused on something that the person did or didn't do, not on his 'traits' or 'character' in general. Be specific about what you are criticizing; deal with who, what, where and when.

4. Avoid sounding judgemental

Even though criticism implies evaluation, emphasize description, by using 'I" language, as described earlier. Avoid using provocative language.

5. Do not force criticism on anyone

Present criticism in such a way as to encourage the other person to make decisions. People are more likely to comply with solutions they have generated themselves.

6. Avoid Critical Overload

If you make several complaints at one time, there is every likelihood that the other person may go on the defensive and stop being receptive.

Exhibit 4.1

Different Levels of Conflict

It is not uncommon for a minor conflict to escalate into a major crisis without even those directly involved noticing the signs along the way. People often ignore the early signs of conflicts as they do not seem important enough to deal with. Some people work on the "Peace at all costs" principle; however, this often has enormous long term costs

The first step in the art of resolving conflict is to look for conflict clues. If you learn to recognize the early clues you can often save a situation from escalating into something more serious and difficult to manage.

The first clue is 'discomfort.' Discomfort is the intuitive feeling that something is wrong, even though you may not be able to put your finger on it. Sometimes it can be a sense that you did not say all you needed to about an issue, that there is 'unfinished business.'

It is important to pay attention to these feelings. Ask yourself, "Is there something I can do about this?" If there is, act on it as soon as possible. If there isn't, stay alert and look for another opportunity to do something about it.

A minor conflict incident is another clue. Something minor happens that leaves you feeling upset or irritated for a while. Often these incidents seem so minor it feels unreasonable to make a fuss, and it is soon forgotten. At least it appears to be. These little incidents, however, often keep simmering at an unconscious level and the next time something similar happens the level of irritation increases.

Examples include:

- The person who is always borrowing something and never returns it without being reminded. The level of irritation increases with each incident until he/she borrows something that is needed urgently and cannot be found.
- The member of the family or household who is almost always out when it is his turn to cook or wash up.
- The person who constantly uses up the last of the milk, but never buys a new carton.

The next level of conflict is misunderstanding. Lack of clear communication or lack of rapport often lead to people making unwarranted assumptions about a person's motives, or a situation. Sometimes misunderstanding arises because the situation raises a touchy issue and perceptions of the problem become distorted. Often the person who reacts emotionally or defensively to a situation is unaware of the past, unresolved conflict which triggers these emotions.

Tension is another obvious clue. Your own tension distorts your perception of other persons and most of what they do. The relationship becomes weighed down with negative attitudes and fixed opinions or positions. The relationship suffers and almost any incident can cause a significant rift.

A crisis can result from such unresolved tension. A person may walk out of a job or relationship over an unresolved conflict. A crisis can lead to heated arguments or abusive behavior. People are overwhelmed by their feelings and can no longer behave or think rationally. A crisis can lead to serious, if not irretrievable, breakdown in relationships.

Crises usually occur because people have ignored or been unaware of the earlier signs of conflict. The point is, never regard something as too minor to deal with at the time of its occurrence. Early handling or management of minor issues will save much time and energy resolving them in the future if they escalate into something more serious.

Responding to Criticism

Responding to criticism without resorting to either "fight" or "flight" takes a lot of skill. Some of these guidelines can be of help.

- Recognize the value of constructive criticism. Such criticism can improve relationships and productivity.

- Try to understand the perspective of the person offering the criticism.
- Acknowledge criticism that focuses on your behavior. Try to transform criticism that seems directed at your "person" to specific acts or behavior.
- Try to understand accurately the criticism being offered. You can do this by paraphrasing what the other person is saying, asking questions and checking out nonverbal cues.
- Maintain your authority to make your own decisions. Don't let a "personal" attack weaken your resolve. Focus the other person's criticism on specific actions and assert your right to generate solutions.
- Seek constructive changes to the behavior that prompted the criticism.
- Communicate clearly how you feel and what you think about the criticism. Use "I" messages.

MANAGING CONFLICT

Conflicts are inevitable. Even the most amicable people get upset at times. Disagreements arise because individuals see, hear, and interpret things differently. When conflicts focus on fault-finding and fixing blame, they can cause frustration and stress. However, a great deal depends on how the conflict is handled. While unmanaged or badly managed conflict damages relationships, managed conflicts can lead to creative solutions, greater job satisfaction, and better relationships.

Approaches to Conflict

When faced with a conflict, different people respond in different ways. Let us look at some of these approaches.

Avoiding

This approach focuses away from the conflict altogether. Unwillingness to talk things out, pretending that a conflict does not exist, making attempts to smooth things over when differences appear, are all characteristic of this approach. Many a time this approach can prove counterproductive. After all, no problem can be solved by wishing it away. But this approach can be useful in the following situations:

- When you need time to gather facts or think about a situation;
- When it is advisable to allow emotions to settle;
- When you perceive that you have no chance of satisfying your concerns;
- When the potential damage of confronting the conflict outweighs the benefit of resolution.

Accommodating

While avoiders shut themselves out, accommodaters neglect their own concerns in order to satisfy the concerns of others. They are usually more concerned with being liked and getting along than with being right. As with avoidance, accommodation can sometimes prove disastrous. But this style is the best option

- When you realize you're wrong
- When you want to make a goodwill gesture when the issue is important to others
- When you feel that preserving the relationship is more important than the issue at hand

Competing

A person who adopts this approach is committed to his own position or perspective and considers relationships as secondary issues. Though this approach does generate ill will that is costly and unpleasant, it does have its advantages in the following situations:

- When you have to respond quickly and decisively (e.g. in emergencies);
- When you have to announce an unpopular decision;
- When you have to protect yourself against those who would take advantage of a more cooperative approach.

Collaborating

This approach focuses on satisfying both parties to the greatest degree. It is cooperative in nature. Both parties work together to resolve conflicts in a way that meets the concerns of both. While a collaborative style is neither a panacea nor appropriate in all cases, it is particularly effective

- When both parties' concerns are too important to be compromised;
- When a long-term relationship between the parties is important.

Compromising

Though this approach is also cooperative in nature, here the cooperation is dictated by self-interest. Each party forgoes something that it is seeking in order to reach an agreement. Here the goal is an expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both.

A compromise is best

- When the goals of both parties are important but not worth pushing too hard to achieve;
- When a quick solution is the need of the hour;
- When a temporary settlement is needed;
- When two parties with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals.

Personality factors play a major role in the way conflicts are handled. Exhibit 4.2 shows you how.

Exhibit 4.2

Some people invite or escalate conflict situations more than others. Personality types are major factors in a conflict. There are specific behaviors on a scale, beginning with the strong leader, moving through the independent worker, team player, and compliant follower, and ending with the victim. The leader may be overbearing and too focused on controlling others. The independent types may insist on acting alone and refuse to participate in group decisions or activities. Team players may avoid assuming responsibility and be overly dependent on others, while followers may wait until specific directions are given. Victims will complain about others giving them too much, too little, or the wrong thing! Although these examples represent stereotypical behaviors, all of us fall somewhere along that continuum of workplace personalities. Identifying your place on the scale is one of the first steps to understanding how to reduce conflict.

Resolving Conflict

Communication skills are at the heart of conflict management. Ultimately, it's the way you present your ideas and feelings that makes for either rancor and animosity or receptiveness and a sense of cooperation. It's O.K. to express feelings of hurt, anger, disappointment or disgust. But you can always do that without blaming somebody else for the way you feel. Perhaps you could offer alternative information or performance suggestions in a non-accusatory manner. For instance, instead of shouting at your *subordinate and saying, You idiot, you blew it*, it would be a better idea if you gave the matter some more thought and said something like, *Since this approach hasn't really worked well, perhaps we should adopt the consumer durable section's sales promotion drive.* Avoiding emotional words that trigger a negative response is crucial. Perhaps one of the best kinds of awareness is knowing when to keep quiet. Here are a few strategies for defusing and redefining a conflict.

- Restate: Make sure everyone hears the same message.
- Agree: Focus on areas of agreement.
- Refocus: Try to see the "Big Picture" instead of trivialities.
- Dissect: Separate the main issue from personal feelings.
- Compliment: Acknowledge the merits of the other person.
- Compromise: Settle for less than 100 percent.
- Postpone: Allow for cool-down time before resolution.
- Exit: Leave the scene before you become angry.

THINK ABOUT IT

In today's business world good interpersonal skills are essential for success. No individual, no matter how brilliant or talented, can hope to make it to the more coveted posts and stay there if he cannot work harmoniously with a group of people. Not only individual success, even the success of the organization as a whole depends to a great extent on whether the workforce has the necessary "interpersonal skills" to establish a positive work environment.

Chapter 5

Negotiations

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Approaches to Negotiation
- The Major Elements of Negotiation Preparation
- The Situation

In the last chapter we took a look at how conflicts arise and the different ways in which these conflicts can be effectively managed. When the parties involved in a conflict want to work toward an amicable resolution, they must engage in a communication process to decide what kind of a deal would be acceptable to both. In other words they must negotiate to reach an agreement. Here what is important is that all the parties concerned must want a solution. And for this they must put up or encourage proposals, not hold on to whatever grievances they have or whatever arguments they deem right. Arguments cannot be negotiated, only proposals can. This demands that emotions be kept under control. Negotiating is a delicate process and a lot of thinking must go into it, both before it actually gets underway, and while it is going on.

APPROACHES TO NEGOTIATION

As with conflict management, negotiation can be handled in different ways. The outcome of a negotiation depends on the approach.

Bargaining Orientation

This approach is based on the premise that one person can win only at the expense of the other – that any victory by one party must be matched by the other's loss. That is why this is also called the win-lose approach. Although this approach is marked by competitiveness and may create ill will, this is sometimes the best approach when the other party is determined to take advantage of you or when your interests truly conflict with those of the other party and compromising is not a satisfactory option.

Lose-Lose Orientation

This is adopted when one negotiating partner feels his own interests are threatened and reacts by doing all he can to ensure that the outcome of the negotiation does not serve the other party's interests either. In effect, everybody ends up being a loser. Lose-lose outcomes occur when negotiating partners ignore one another's needs or when the need to hurt each other outweighs the need to find some kind of an acceptable solution.

Compromise

A lose-lose situation is hardly a desirable outcome. To avoid this, sometimes people compromise. Both parties give up a part of what they had originally sought, and settle for something less than that. A compromise is the best way out when it is impossible for both parties to convince each other or when even the partial attainment of one party's goals depends on the satisfaction of the other. Compromise is a good option when disputed resources are limited. For instance, if two managers each need a full-time secretary, but budget restrictions make this impossible, they may have to compromise by sharing one secretary.

Win-Win Orientation

When the needs of the negotiating parties are compatible, a win-win solution, which satisfies the needs of all parties, becomes possible. Box 5.1 looks at some of the aspects of this approach. The win -win approach is superior to other problem-solving styles, because everyone ends up feeling satisfied. However, such a solution is only possible when the needs of the parties involved do not conflict. This approach works well when the following five steps are followed.

1. *Determine the needs of both parties.* If both parties can identify what issues are important to the other, they would find it easier to work toward a mutually acceptable solution.

2. *Develop a list of possible solutions.* Once the basic issues have been identified, the two parties can sit together and come up with several solutions that would satisfy everyone's needs. All possible solutions are put down, without any of them being evaluated.

3. *Choose the most appropriate solutions.* At this stage each solution is evaluated and the ones that are most promising are adopted.

4. *Implement the solution.* Once the best solution is decided upon, make sure everyone understands it, and then implement it.

5. *Follow up on the solution.* Even the best plans need to be monitored after they have been implemented. A while after the plan has been put into action, meet with the other parties involved and discuss how the solution is working out. If anyone's needs are still unmet, you could go back to the problem-solving procedure and identify another solution.

Figure 5.1 shows the characteristics of different negotiating styles

Figure 5.1: Characteristics of Negotiating Styles

Bargaining	**Compromise**	**Win-Win**
Controlling orientation exists (us versus them).	Recognition that it is impossible to control other party.	Problem orientation exists (we versus the problem).
One party's gains are viewed as other party's losses.	Recognition of linkage between one's own goal and satisfaction of other party.	Mutual gain is viewed as attainable.
Argument over positions leads to polarization.	Parties accept one another's positions, however grudgingly.	Seeking various approaches increases chances for agreement.
Each side sees issue only from its own point of view.	Partial understanding of other party's position.	Parties understand each other's point of view.
Short-term approach focuses only on immediate problems.	Recognition of need for civil outcome.	Long-term approach seeks good relationship.
Only task issues are usually considered.	Focus on task issues.	Both task and relationship issues are considered.

Source: Adler & Elmhorst, *Communicating at Work (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996)144*

THE MAJOR ELEMENTS OF NEGOTIATION PREPARATION

Success in negotiation, like other things in life, does not just happen. A good deal of preparation is necessary to ensure that your endeavors are successful.

Being well-prepared breeds confidence and a confident manner can always give you an edge in any communication process. Preparation involves several activities.

Understand the People Involved

It is important to know something about the people with whom we must negotiate and the organization they represent. What are their roles, their objectives? What problems will they raise? Are they in a position to make a difference or will they have to consult someone else? The answers to these questions will help you to better handle the issues that come up during the actual negotiation.

How the other party sees you is important too. He is likely to respect you more if he perceives you as being professional, confident and as having the requisite authority to negotiate.

Know your Objectives

Having your objectives clearly in mind is very important. Identify the objectives, decide what the priorities are, what the variables are and what should be your attitude to each. The variables are the different factors involved in the negotiation – the raw material, so to speak, of negotiation. To be well prepared you must know exactly how much you are willing to concede or compromise on each factor. You must also have ready all the arguments you may need to justify your point of view, particularly on those points which you want to win.

Conduct

Two factors that operate during the actual negotiation are the tactics of negotiation and the interpersonal behavior that accompanies them. Negotiation tactics hinge on the variables – some of which are conceded by us and some by the other party. Variables that are traded are referred to as 'concessions.' Negotiation, is in fact, the process of trading concessions. To negotiate skillfully you must have a knowledge of all the variables and their possible use as concessions.

As you start the process of negotiation bear in mind four important principles.

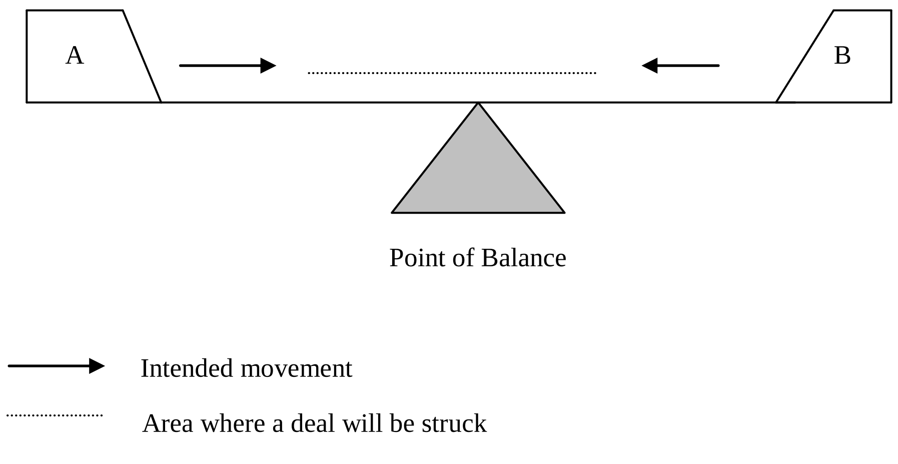
1) *Aim High:* It pays off to aim for the best deal you can imagine. You can always trade down. If you start too low, it is difficult to trade up, particularly at a late stage in the process. In complex negotiations where there are a large number of variables, it is worthwhile to separate the variables into three priority categories.

- The 'musts': those that we must get, if the deal is to be accepted by us at all.
- The 'ideals': what we hope to get, to make the ideal deal;
- The 'loss leaders': what we are prepared to trade in order to reach a deal.

2) *Get the other person's shopping list:* As mentioned earlier, it is important to identify what the other party wants, and what he is likely to concede. This will help you to assess the situation better.

3) *Keep the whole package in mind:* Focus on the total situation – your views and the other party's – so that you proceed conscious of everything (or as much as possible) that will be involved.

Figure 5.2: The Point of Balance



4) *Keep searching for variables:* Remain flexible. What you plan beforehand should never act like a straightjacket. Sometimes matters proceed along the lines you expect; many times they don't. Adapting and fine-tuning may always be required.

When the negotiation starts the two parties are at opposite ends of the scale. However, by the time the negotiation closes, they are expected to settle on something they can both relate to as a 'good deal.' This is the point of balance which is usually a range of solutions around the middle point of the scale, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. Both parties usually recognize that the two extreme points from which they start their initial stance – are unrealistic. Negotiation can thus be represented as the to and fro process that moves up and down the line and dictates where things finally settle.

Sometimes the first round of negotiation only serves to induce both parties to shift to a more reasonable initial stance.

As negotiation is essentially a communication process, its success, to a great extent, will depend on how well the two parties can build what are called 'bridges of rapport.' These bridges help them to see each other's point of view and to relate to each other. To build these bridges to an acceptable agreement you must

- do your homework beforehand – research the opposition, the topic, and your own team's blind spots or hang-ups – so you don't waste anyone's time.
- identify your priorities, your needs, and your top and bottom line beforehand.
- come prepared with all necessary documents and agreements.
- generate a range of options before deciding upon one; don't try to determine a single, correct solution. Instead, think of a wide range of possibilities that could please both sides.
- open the discussion on a neutral note to allay any hostility.
- listen actively and keep an open mind rather than deal from a position of 'entrenched antagonism.'
- remember the likeability factor (like likes like). If the opposing side likes you, you stand a much better chance of achieving your goals within reason. However, don't make that your primary goal.
- keep your emotions in check; ignore, rather than respond to personal attacks.
- show respect for the other person's views; don't browbeat, denigrate, or insult the opposing team.
- avoid manipulating because it creates bitterness rather than harmony.
- encourage the other party to look at the issue from your perspective.
- look out for positive signals of cooperation from the other side and build on these.
- state the areas where agreement has been reached and list the issues that are still being negotiated.

Overall, success in negotiation comes largely from good listening skills, the ability to communicate persuasively and good interpersonal skills. Negotiations will not produce the desired effect unless those involved consciously address both the solid facts and the human dimension. Communication can be described as an exchange of what we might call "messages," and it has been found that such "messages" have both a factual and an interpersonal dimension. It is the interpersonal dimension that governs the factual one in human communication.

Now that we've considered some of the aspects of negotiation, let us look at an actual negotiation. This will give you some idea of the strategies adopted by successful negotiators.

THE SITUATION

Anita Jaiswal runs a small advertising agency. She also writes articles and books. She has decided to buy a new desktop computer. After some research, she has decided on a suitable system and has asked a salesman from the computer company to visit her to discuss the quotation he has submitted.

Rohan Bakshi works for Aaj Ka Computer. He is an experienced salesman, knows the equipment he sells and is keen to clinch a deal. From his previous conversation with Anita Jaiswal, he has inferred that she likes the system that he had recommended and he confidently expects to conclude the deal at the forthcoming meeting.

He arrives on time, and is offered a cup of coffee. Let us eavesdrop on the discussion.

With the initial pleasantries past, Rohan turns to the business of the day.	
R: You got our quote all right then?	
A: Yes, thanks very much.	
R: I hope you found it interesting.	*(He tries to discover her initial attitude.)*
A: Yes. Indeed. I am not sure it is exactly right and I am comparing it with some others, but it was certainly clear.	*(She indicates that she is looking at other quotes and hints they are also good, or perhaps better.)*
R: I see. In what way is ours not quite right?	*(He attempts to clarify her last remark.)*
A: Well, technically I am sure it is quite good. I am not a technical person, of course, but you seem to have reflected my brief well enough and I have no quibbles with that. However, I am after a total system; not just the w/p itself, but the software, printer and things like training as well. I think it's these areas we need to have a closer look at.	*(She begins to soften up Rohan.)*
R: I see, perhaps you would tell me where you see any particular problem?	*(He seeks further clarification.)*
A: Well, I think there are several areas; perhaps we can take them one at a time. Let's deal with the ancillary equipment first. Now in your quote you recommend the faster of the two laser printers we discussed. As you know, I really want the faster printer rather than the most basic one if I can, and both a 3 ½ inch disk drive and a 5 ½ inch drive, so I can liaise with a colleague who has material on that system. Now this will certainly do everything I want - a Rolls Royce job in fact but that printer does make the whole package cost more than I really hoped to spend. I am not sure that the second disk drive is essential. Anyway, I may well be able to manage without it. So what I suggest we do is that you let me have the 5 ½ inch drive on loan long enough to test it out.	*(A prefers to deal with one thing at a time and in the sequence of her choice. She starts with the other equipment.)* *(A indicates the total is too expensive.)* *(A asks for a concession – trading something of low importance to her – the two drives.)*
R: It is just the additional disk drive that you	*(R clarifies.)*

A: Yes, if I do want to keep it then it will postpone the payment for that element for just a while and it means I can go for the better printer. See what I mean?

R: Yes, I do.

A: It won't be difficult for you to arrange that I am sure, and if I decide in your favor, you will get payment for it anyway in, say, 6 months.

R: Okay, I suppose I can arrange that - I'm pretty sure you will want to keep it anyway.

A: I expect you're right. Good, that's fine. Let's turn now to the question of software. I would ideally like the graphics package and the one that will do my accounts as well as the full word processing. Would you be able to include those at no extra charge? They are not very costly but I must keep the overall cost down, as I've said.

R: You didn't include those in the order we quoted, or did you?

A: No, I'm, sorry - I hadn't been through all the literature at the time - but I can see they would be useful. It would make your overall arrangements much more attractive.

R: It is an extra cost for us though.

A: Not very much in terms of the overall cost.

R: Well, perhaps not. I guess I could let you have those then if we go ahead.

A: And you will deliver that along with everything else and include a run-down on them in the training?

R: Well I don't know, it will extend the training time and..

A: But, they are not much good unless I can work them. I am sure I will pick it up fast and it won't extend the time to any real extent.

R: All right.

(Always her intention)

(A minimizes the difficulty the point may create for him.)

(R concedes what appears a small point.)

(A confirms the concession and turns to the second point: software...)

(R begins to resist.)

(A apologizes and repeats the request.)

(R continues to resist.)

(A persists in minimizing the effect.)

(R agrees, reluctantly, to include the extra software.)
(A adds on a request for a small, associated concession.)

(R realizes he has in fact given away more than he thought.)

(The point is pressed and the difficulty (time and cost) minimized.)

(He agrees.)

A: I appreciate that. Now, what next? Ah yes, the delivery and installation.	*(A raises a third point: delivery and installation.)*
R: Well, that should be straightforward. Is that the last point?	*(R attempts to get the rest of her shopping list.)*
A: Yes. Well, apart from training, but I am sure that's no problem, as it's all included and you agreed to run me through the other software.	*(A belittles what is described as the last point.)*
R: Yes. Okay. What about delivery? Here I suppose?	*(Reassured, R goes back to the third point.)*
A: That's right. I've ordered one of those units for it all to stand on. Once I know which quote I accept, I can get that in first and away we go. Your people do install, don't they? I don't want a pile of boxes dumped on the doorstep.	
R: Yes, of course, delivery and installation are all included.	
A: And you will take away all the boxes and packing?	*(A asks for a small extra.)*
R: We don't usually do that. Can't you leave them for the garbage man?	*(R resists.)*
A: The management company running this office complex is a bit strict about that sort of thing and their office is actually next door. In fact, he wants to come and see what equipment I get. If you can get all the boxes taken away, I can possibly recommend you. I think he is thinking of a similar installation for his firm.	*A hints at future business prospects as a lever to obtain the concession.)*
R: I'm still not sure that I can arrange that. Our despatch manager is very strict.	
A: See what you can do, will you?	*(This point is left hanging but A has a nice case to make to whoever delivers... 'Well, he said he'd fix it.')*
R: Okay, I will. Now what about training? If you decide to go ahead today, then I can get a date in the diary for you to visit the training center.	*(R tries to move ahead onto the last point - explains what needs to be done.)*
A: And you think a day will be enough - even with the other software included?	*(A checks details.)*
R: Oh, yes, certainly. How about the week after next?	*(R goes for agreement.)*
A: Well, hang on - I was hoping you could get your trainer to come here. Would that be possible?	*(A introduces another expected concession.)*

.R: Well, it is certainly possible, but there would be an extra cost.	*(R is determined to give nothing away*
A: You remember I mentioned earlier the other quotes I have?	
R: Yes.	
A: Well, one of the differences is that they are both willing to do the training here. I means I don't have to leave my phone unattended. That's important to someone working on her own, you know. If we schedule the date well ahead, it would minimize inconvenience	*(A makes him feel uncompetitive [just at a stage when he believes everything was agreed] and minimizes the problem.)*
R: Even so, we have a clear scale of charges for in-house visits and with what I have already agreed............	*(R resists.)*
A: Well, I see the problem, but it would be a pity to fall out at this stage. Everything else seems fine. May I make a suggestion?	*(A emphasizes the prospect of the order.)*
R: What exactly?	*(R tries to clarify.)*
A: I have been asked by one of the office equipment journals (she names a well-known one) to write a feature on the writer's use of word processors. If I buy yours, I shall have to use it as an example - after all it will be the only one I've got! If I promise to mention your firm by name, do you think your boss would agree to the training being done here? It would be such a help. At least ask him. He might like the idea.	*(A makes the request seem to have clear compensations - she sells it.)*
R: I can certainly ask, it sounds a good swop to me. Will you give me some time?	*(R conditionally agrees.)*
A: Yes, of course - see what reaction you get.	
R: Right. So we seem to be agreed. We let you have the second drive on 6 months' loan, include the additional software, and I will work on the training being done here.	*(R tries to wrap up the deal.)*
A: And on getting all the boxes cleared away - yes?	
R: That's right, nearly forgot. Now - can we go ahead on what basis?	
A: Yes,.. I think we can... But there is just one small thing. Again, this is included in the other quotes, and that's insurance.	*(A raises an extra area.)*

R: What do you mean?	*(R queries.)*
A: They offer a free year's insurance as part of the package.	
R: On the same machine and costing?	
A: Not exactly, I suppose, but similar.	*(A concedes it is not like for like.)*
R: You have to look at the other deal you know. With the price we have quoted and the extras, there is no possibility of my matching that.	*(R refuses.)*
A: Well, I suppose I have to accept that. Even so it is a bit of a disappointment. Your company offers the best arrangements in many ways, but even with the items we have agreed it is still not the most competitive. I take it you do want the business?	*(A suggests how reasonable she is...)* *(... raises a price objection.)*
R: Yes, indeed we do.	
A: Perhaps you would consider adjusting the overall discount to make up for my having to fix and pay for insurance separately?	*(.... and makes a suggestion.)*
R: I believe our original price was very keen, and we do, as I said, want the order. But I don't really have any more leeway over the discount.	*(R resists.)*
A: I'm sure your price is keen, but as I said, it is not the most competitive.	*(A puts his quote on the spot by reminding him of the competitors.)*
R: Well, what sort of difference are we talking about?	
A: To really make everything we have said add up to the best deal all round. I suppose the discount would need to go up by 7 ½% or so.	
R: That's a lot of money. The margins on this kind of system are not so great.	*(R resists.)*
A: How far can you go?	*(A squeezes.)*
R: Myself? Well, I think with what we have already agreed, I cannot go beyond 4% at this stage. That will be my limit.	
A: And how far can your company go at the next stage?	*(A presses to test that the overall limit is really being reached.)*
R: 'At this stage' is just a turn of phrase. 4% will be the company's limit.	
A: No good me calling your boss, you mean?	*(A questions R's status and authority.)*
R: No, I'm afraid not.	
A: But you can go to 4% more discount?	
R: Yes, I can.	

A: I hoped you would go to 7 ½% to match the others completely, but let's see what we have agreed. You will lend me the 5 ½" drive and invoice after 6 months at the current price, you will include the other software and find out about the training - and the boxes - and reduce the price by another 4%.	*(A belittles the offer....)* *(throws in <u>current</u> price)*
R: Yes, that's it.	
A: On that basis, I think we have a deal. Would you like another coffee while we tie up the paperwork?	*(A closes the discussion and the deal.)*

THINK ABOUT IT

The example used here illustrates the use of several negotiating tactics. However, it is important to remember that negotiating cannot be learned by following a pre-packaged set of principles and applying them to all situations. That might work if everyone could be counted on to behave rationally and predictably, but they can't because people are often emotional and irrational. To negotiate well, you must be prepared to use a variety of approaches. You must be alert to all verbal and nonverbal clues, and you must bring all your persuasive communication skills into play, so that in the process of getting what you want, you don't jeopardize your relationship with the other party.

Chapter 6

Interviewing

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Planning the Interview
- Conducting the Interview
- The Ethics of Interviewing

An interview is a goal-oriented, interpersonal communication between an interviewer and a respondent. It is primarily undertaken to accomplish a specific purpose, perhaps to obtain or provide information, to solve a problem, or to persuade someone to undertake some action. The style and structure of an interview depend on its purpose and on the relationship between the two parties involved.

Business interviews usually fall into one of the following categories.

Employment Interviews

These provide general information to potential applicants before a job actually exists, or take place when a specific job opening has occurred and applicants are to be screened for the position. Ultimately, the employment interview seeks to determine whether a particular applicant is suitable for the job.

Performance Appraisal Interviews

These provide job-related feedback to employees. A supervisor and an employee together assess how much progress the employee has made toward the achievement of certain predetermined goals. Areas where improvement is needed are identified and new goals are set. The employee’s long-term career plans may also be discussed.

Counseling Interviews

These provide guidance and assistance to employees. Such interviews sometimes involve very personal and emotional issues, such as family problems, drinking, or drugs, that affect the employee’s performance. Counseling can be effective only when the interviewer is willing to listen to the respondent’s problem and show a certain amount of tolerance.

Disciplinary Interviews

Disciplinary interviews become necessary when there are disruptive problems that must be curtailed. Some of the most common problems that warrant disciplinary action are nonperformance of duties, chronic absenteeism, disobedience or insubordination and the damaging of property.

Figure 6.1: Choosing Questions with the Appropriate Degree of Openness

◁ Open-Ended Questions					Close-Ended Questions ▷
Explore the breadth and depth of potential information	Require the interviewer to be skilled	Provide the opportunity for respondent to reveal feelings and information	Yield an economical use of time	Allow the interviewer control over questions and responses	Elicit precise, reproducible, reliable data

Source:C L Bovee and J V Thill, Business Communication Today NewYork : McGraw-Hill,1995) 578

Persuasive Interviews

These interviews, which primarily seek to induce somebody to adopt a new idea, product or service, are generally associated with selling. To conduct a successful persuasive interview the interviewer has to use all his communication skills, both to draw out the opinions of the respondent and to impart information.

PLANNING THE INTERVIEW

Whatever the type of interview, a good deal of planning is necessary to make the interview a successful one. There are six strategies for planning an interview - state the purpose, get information about the other party, decide the structure, consider possible questions, plan the physical setting and anticipate problems.

State the Purpose

The starting point of good communication, as we’ve repeated ever so often in this book, is a clear purpose. As an interview is a communication process, here too the first step in preparing for the interview is a clear formulation of the purpose – both for the interviewer as well as for the respondent. The interviewer must have a specific goal clearly in mind, so that the structure of the interview and the actual questions can all be tailored to suit that particular purpose. On the respondent’s part, lack of a clear purpose can cause him to send out conflicting signals which often undermine his chances of achieving his goal.

Get Information about the Other Party

Depending on the situation, you need to gather relevant information about the interviewer or the respondent. A respondent’s degree of preparation speaks volumes about his interest level and conscientiousness. In order to make the best case for your candidacy for a particular job, you need to be prepared with information about yourself and about the job, the company, and the field.

The interviewer too finds it easier to restrict himself to relevant questions if he is familiar with the details the applicant has provided in his application form or résumé.

Decide the Structure

Interviews can be structured in different ways. The structure determines what kind of planning you ought to put in and what sort of results you can expect.

In a directive interview the interviewer takes almost complete charge of the flow of conversation by asking specific questions designed to keep the respondent focused on the type of information required. Such questions are called close-ended questions, as they seek to elicit precise information on a specific issue. A directive approach is useful when you are looking for precise, reliable information in a short time. However, a directive approach limits the respondent’s initiative and may prevent him from volunteering useful information. When you want to not only obtain factual information but gauge the underlying feelings of the respondent or draw out his opinions on different issues, a non directive approach works better. This approach, with its open-ended questions, gives the respondent more control in determining the course of the interview. The interviewer does a minimum of talking and encourages the respondent to fully express his feelings. In an actual interview, most questions fall along a continuum of openness, as shown in figure 6.1. As an interviewer, you can frame a question toward any one end of the spectrum, depending on the purpose you want to achieve.

Look at these examples of close-ended and open-ended questions in figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Close-ended and Open-ended Question

DIRECTIVE INTERVIEW	**NON-DIRECTIVE INTERVIEW**
CLOSE-ENDED QUESTIONS	OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS
Did you graduate from college?	Tell me about yourself.
Are you familiar with our policy on absenteeism?	Why are you absent from work so frequently?
Did you see the no smoking sign in the cafeteria?	What do you know about our smoking policy?

Consider Possible Questions

Once you have decided on the format, you can start formulating specific questions. Each question must be so structured as to elicit just the information you want. Apart from deciding where your questions are going to fall on the openness continuum, you can choose between factual and opinion questions, primary and secondary questions and direct and indirect questions. Factual questions, as the name suggests, seek to ascertain facts, while opinion questions ask for the respondent's judgements. Primary questions introduce new topics or new areas within a topic and secondary questions seek additional information on a topic that has already been introduced. Secondary questions are useful when a previous answer is incomplete, vague or irrelevant. Direct and indirect questions are two different ways of eliciting information. Though direct questions are usually the best way to get information, sometimes they fail to elicit satisfactory answers, either because the respondent is unable to answer accurately or is unwilling to do so.

In such situations indirect questions, that draw out information without directly asking for it, are more effective. Look at these examples.

Direct question

Do you understand?

Are you satisfied with my leadership?

Indirect question

If you had to explain this policy to a newcomer, what would you say?

If you were made the manager of this department, what changes would you make?

Apart from these, you may also decide to include hypothetical and leading questions. Hypothetical questions are 'what if' questions*: If I were to introduce flexible working hours, do you think the morale of the staff would improve?* These questions can indirectly get a respondent to describe his attitudes. They also let you learn how a person would behave in certain situations. Leading questions force the respondent to answer in a particular way, by suggesting the answer the interviewer expects: *You wouldn't mind working extra hours, whenever necessary, would you?*

Plan the Physical Setting

The physical setting in which the interview takes place can have a great deal of influence on the results. A setting with the minimum distractions is generally the best. Frequent interruptions mar the flow of conversation and prevent both the interviewer and the respondent from being alert to each other's verbal and nonverbal cues. The seating arrangements also have an impact on the interview. An interviewer who addresses the respondent from behind a desk assumes greater control. When the two parties face each other with no barriers between them there is a greater degree of informality.

Anticipate Problems

This is an important aspect of preparation. Once you've clarified your purpose, decided the format, put together your questions and decided the setting, go over the entire plan once again, looking for loopholes. Is the format you've selected really suitable for the achievement of your specific purpose? Perhaps you should include more questions that are open-ended, to get more details? What if the respondent is a poor communicator and is unable to handle too many open ended questions? What if the respondent uses open-ended questions to digress from the main point? As you plan an interview you may come up with many such questions. Answering these questions will help you to employ effective strategies to counter problems as and when they arise during the course of the interview.

CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

Interviews have three basic stages: an opening, a body and a close. Let us examine each of these stages in detail.

The Opening

The opening is usually used to put the respondent at ease and to establish the purpose of the interview. To put the respondent at ease, the interviewer usually follows up the initial greeting with a brief informal conversation, helping the respondent to relax and building up a rapport with him. Whatever the nature of the interview, the outcome is likely to be better when the interviewer and the respondent are comfortable with each other.

Once the respondent is made comfortable, the interviewer gives him a brief overview of what is to follow. He explains the purpose of the interview, what information will be needed, how it will be used and the general format of the interview. This sets the stage for the actual question-answer session that constitutes the body of the interview.

Body

How the interviewer and the respondent handle their respective roles in this session, is one of the most important deciding factors in shaping the final outcome.

The interviewer's role

It is the interviewer's responsibility to control and focus the conversation so that the discussion doesn't drift away from the agenda. At the same time he should be willing to explore relevant sub-topics that might provide valuable insights into the situation or about the respondent. The interviewer also has to ensure that he allots enough time to each item on the agenda. If he lingers too long on one topic, he may not have enough time to do justice to other areas that are equally important.

Interviewers must listen actively in order to pick up verbal and nonverbal cues. Sometimes they are so caught up in framing their own questions and responses that they fail to hear what the respondent is actually saying. An alert interviewer must not only pay attention to the respondent's verbal messages, but pick up nonverbal signals too, that may provide insights into the respondent's behavior and attitudes.

Taking notes is sometimes advisable. However, if you intend to take notes, you must inform the respondent beforehand. Be brief and unobtrusive while taking notes.

When a respondent is not totally responsive to a question, an interviewer may have to use probing questions to elicit a satisfactory response. If a response is inadequate, you might say, *"That's an interesting scheme. Can you give me more details?"* Skillful use of probing questions will improve your results. Sometimes you can effectively use silence to induce the respondent to volunteer more details or a more satisfactory explanation. Summarizing the main points from time to time also helps to ensure that the interviewer and the respondent have the same understanding.

The respondent's role

The respondent can do several things to ensure that he makes a favorable impression. The most important of these is to answer each question the interviewer asks as clearly and accurately as possible. A respondent who doesn't give clear answers is either seen as having failed to understand the question or, as wanting to evade the issue.

Sometimes interviewers misinterpret facts. When this happens, it is up to the respondent to ensure that the record is set straight. He can do this by politely pointing out that he had said something else, or by unobtrusively repeating an earlier remark, so that the misunderstanding is cleared. The respondent should also make sure that his answers are all tailored to achieving his purpose in attending the interview. The answers should be honest, but must always focus on the positive aspects.

Exhibit 6.2

Checklist for Interviews on the Job

A. Preparation

1. Decide the purpose and goals of the interview.
2. Set a structure and format based on your goals.
3. Determine the needs of your respondent, and gather background information.
4. Formulate questions as clearly and concisely as possible, and plot their order.
5. Project the outcome of the interview, and develop a plan for accomplishing the goal.
6. Select a time and a site.
7. Inform the respondent of the nature of the interview and the agenda to be covered.

B. Conduct

1. Be on time for the interview.
2. Remind the respondent of the purpose and format.
3. Clear the taking of notes or the use of a tape recorder with the respondent.
4. Use ears and eyes to pick up verbal and nonverbal cues.
5. Follow the stated agenda, but be willing to explore relevant sub-topics.
6. At the end of the interview, review the action items, goals, and tasks that each of you has agreed to.
7. Close the interview on an appreciative note, thanking the respondent for his time, interest, and cooperation.

C. Follow-Up

1. Write a thank-you memo or letter that provides the respondent with a record of the meeting.
2. Provide the assistance that you agreed to during your meeting.
3. Monitor progress by keeping in touch through discussions with your respondent.

Adapted from C L Bovee and JV Thill, Business Communication Today (NewYork: McGraw hill, 1995) 579.

Closing

Once the last question has been asked and answered, the interview can be rounded off by a restatement of conclusions. This signals that you have finished and gives the respondent an opportunity to ask relevant questions. The interviewer then gives the respondent some idea of what future action he can expect before concluding with pleasantries. Exhibit 6.2 provides a checklist of all that goes into making an interview a success.

THE ETHICS OF INTERVIEWING

The communication between the interviewer and the respondent should be guided by certain ethical guidelines. This paves the way for better interactions in future.

Guidelines for the Interviewer

Don't make unrealistic promises

If you make some kind of a promise to a respondent, make sure you have the means or the authority to fulfill the promise. For instance, when you raise the hopes of a job applicant about getting an offer, you must be in a position to honor this promise. Commitments that sound good, but cannot be kept, are best avoided.

Don't reveal confidential information

Any personal information that a respondent provides during an interview must be kept confidential. Likewise, the interviewer must also take care to see that he does not divulge confidential information about the organization to the respondent.

Don't ask illegal questions

Illegal questions or questions that are not directly related to the job should be avoided.

Don't be controlling or overbearing

Allow the respondents to feel comfortable enough to respond to your questions and ask their own.

Don't be overly friendly

Interviewers should conduct themselves in a professional manner and avoid being overly friendly or familiar with the respondent.

Guidelines for the Respondent

Don't be dishonest

Misrepresenting facts can land you in trouble. Whatever the nature of the interview, be frank and honest in your answers.

Don't waste the interviewer's time

Clarify your purpose before you appear for the interview. It is advisable to do one's homework thoroughly before the interview, so that you adhere to the subject while the interview is going on and have a clear sense of where the discussion is going.

THINK ABOUT IT

Having discussed some of the salient features of interviews, it is well to remind ourselves that an interview, like any other communication process, cannot be reduced to a formula. People are not predictable. It is up to you to analyze a situation and to decide what strategy and technique are most appropriate.

Chapter 7

Group Communication

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Factors in Group Communication
- Group Decision Making
- Effective Meetings

Groups form to accomplish some objective. The objective may be to complete some kind of task or it may be to strengthen interpersonal relationships between the group members. Many groups fulfill both these functions. While social groups like families and social clubs are predominantly social in their orientation, work groups function to complete a particular task or solve a particular problem. Communication among the members of a group leads to group decisions. If these decisions are to be effective, a group's members must be able to communicate freely and openly with all the other members of the group. Groups generally develop certain norms about discussion and group members develop roles that affect the group's interaction. Figure 7.1 describes some of the roles people take on when they interact with others in a group.

FACTORS IN GROUP COMMUNICATION

There are several factors that affect group dynamics and thereby shape the outcome of group discussions. Let us consider a few of these.

Size

The smaller the group, the better its members can communicate with each other. When the group is a large one members have fewer opportunities to interact with each other. Researchers haven't yet hit upon an optimal number of members for the effective functioning of groups, but it is generally believed that groups of five to seven members are ideal for decision making and problem-solving tasks.

Longevity

Groups formed for short-term goals, such as to arrange a dinner, usually focus more on the task at hand, rather than on maintaining interpersonal relationships. Groups formed for long-term assignments may devote a lot more time to maintaining relationships among members.

Figure 7.1: Roles People Play in Groups

SELF-ORIENTED ROLES	GROUP MAINTENANCE ROLES	TASK-FACILITATING ROLES
Controlling: dominating others by exhibiting superiority or authority.	**Encouraging:** drawing out other members by showing verbal and nonverbal support, praise, or agreement.	**Initiating:** getting the group started on a line of inquiry.
Withdrawing: retiring from the group either by becoming silent or by refusing to deal with a particular aspect of the group's work.	**Harmonizing:** reconciling differences among group members through mediation or by using humor to relieve tension.	**Information giving or seeking:** Offering (or seeking) information relevant to questions facing the group.
Attention seeking: calling attention to oneself and demanding recognition from others	**Compromising:** offering to yield on a point in the interest of reaching a mutually acceptable decision.	**Coordinating:** showing relationships among ideas, clarifying issues, summarizing what the group has done.
Diverting: focusing group discussion on topics of interest to the individual rather than those relevant to the task.		**Procedure setting:** suggesting decision-making procedures that will move the group toward a goal.

Source: C L Bovee and J V Thill, Business Communication Today (NewYork: McGraw Hill, 1995)

Leadership

Leadership that aims at achieving task goals, while at the same time maintaining interpersonal relationships in the group, is likely to make for greater group success.

Perception and Self-Concept

Each member of a group generally has his own perception about how the group should function, what kind of goals it should have and how it should work toward it. At the same time he also has a self-concept, which determines how he will interact with the others in the group. The successful working of a group depends to a great extent on its ability to satisfy the expectations and support the self-concepts of its members.

Status

Sometimes some members of a group have a better social standing or are better qualified than the others. The status of the members determines the manner in which they interact with each other. People tend to communicate with peers as their equals, but they tend to speak upward to superiors and downward to subordinates.

GROUP DECISION MAKING

Research has shown that groups generally arrive at decisions in a predictable pattern. Aubrey Fisher identified four stages in group problem solving.

A. The Orientation Stage - when group members get to know each other. The communication at this stage is rather tentative but the norms that govern the interactions between the group members are usually formed at this stage.

B. The Conflict Stage - when members disagree with each other and debate ideas.

C. The Emergence Stage - when members reconcile their differences and the outcome of the group's efforts and the group's social structure become apparent.

D. The Reinforcement Stage - when group members endorse their final decision by using supportive verbal and nonverbal communication.

The purpose of every group is to achieve a specific goal or to arrive at a decision. However, different groups may adopt different approaches to achieve their purpose. Some common approaches are:

Reflective Thinking

Developed by John Dewey, this is a careful, systematic approach to a problem. This approach involves six steps:

1. *Problem identification*
2. *Problem analysis*
3. *Criteria selection*
4. *Solution generation*
5. *Solution evaluation and selection*
6. *Solution implementation*

Brainstorming

Sometimes brain-storming sessions are used to arrive at a decision. Members are encouraged to generate as many ideas about a topic as they can. Every idea is recorded. No idea is rejected at the initial stage. The group then returns to the ideas and adopts those that seem most feasible or most useful.

Nominal Group Technique

This is a group decision making tool that is used when the group must rank a set of options. Members individually list all options that can be considered. The group facilitator then asks each member to rank all the options from the lowest to the highest priority. The facilitator then computes an average score for each idea to determine the group's highest priority.

The Final Decision

There are many ways that a group can make a final decision, agree on a solution or come to an agreement. Some of the popular ways of making decisions include

Consensus - all the group members agree on the final decision after discussion and debate.

Compromise-group members come to an agreement by giving up some of their demands.

Majority vote - the decision is based on the opinion of the majority of its members.

Decision by leader - the group allows its leader to take the final decision.

Arbitration - an external body or person makes a decision for the group.

Now that we've looked at some of the aspects of group dynamics let us take a closer look at the actual interaction between group members when they get together to discuss common concerns - in other words, when they get together for a meeting.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

The success of a meeting depends on the ability of each individual member of a group to communicate with the rest of the group as a whole. Over the years the word "meeting" in many organizations has come to be associated with wasted time and boredom. There are several reasons for meetings failing. One is that they are held at regular intervals for no particular reason. Sometimes there are too many people present to make an effective decision. To set the stage for a successful meeting careful planning is crucial.

The Planning Process

To plan a meeting the convener must consider five important questions:

1) Why have a meeting at all?
2) What type of meeting is called for?
3) Who should be asked to participate?
4) Where should the meeting be held?
5) When should it be held?

Why Have a Meeting at all?

This question underlines the need for a specific purpose. Some meetings have a long-standing purpose: an example is the daily morning briefings in police stations at which officers are briefed about recent developments before they begin their patrol. Meetings that do not have any such ongoing purpose, need to have their true purpose defined clearly. For instance, a meeting called to present the company's alternative home loan scheme may have either of these three purposes: to inform the employees about the alternatives, so that they can choose the one they want; to allow the group to decide whether they want to adopt the new plan; or to persuade employees to opt for the new plan.

Once the convener decides what the real purpose of the meeting is, he has to think about what type of meeting would best serve the purpose.

What Type of Meeting Should be Held?

The home loan example cited earlier suggests there are at least three types of meetings – informational, problem-solving, and change facilitating.

Informational meetings

These are the easiest to plan. The purpose is to inform the group about recent developments. The convener does most of the talking but there is also scope for two-way communication. This enables the convener to get feedback from the group about whether they understand and accept the new proposals.

Problem-solving meetings

These meetings usually have fewer participants than informational meetings. Problem-solving meetings usually focus on arriving at a decision – changing existing procedures, adopting a new system, etc. Sometimes such meetings are also used to generate new ideas.

Change -facilitating meetings

This type of meeting has to be carefully planned. In the example of the company trying to get its employees to adopt the new home loan scheme, the convener has to look for ways to 'sell' the new concept to the employees. What are the advantages? Why should an employee adopt the new scheme? What are the objections that employees are bound to raise? These questions must be given careful consideration while planning a change-facilitating meeting.

Having decided what type of meeting should be called, the convener has to decide who should be asked to participate.

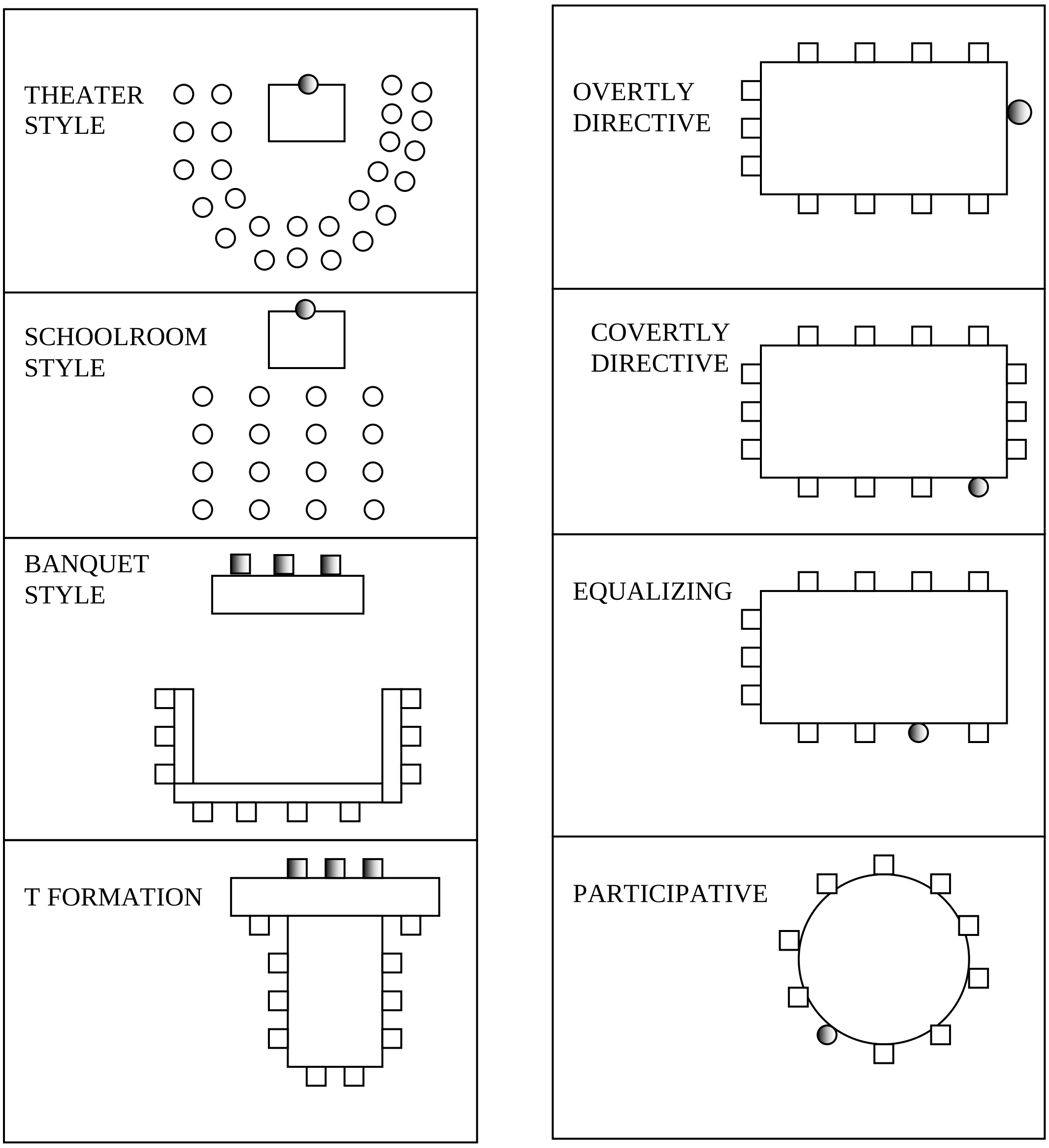
Who Should Participate?

The answer to this question depends on the purpose for which the meeting is held. If the meeting is informational, a large number of people may be invited. If the meeting is called to take a decision, fewer people should be invited, so that all can participate in the discussion. In this case the convener should invite only those who have expertise in the area and those who have the authority to make a decision.

Where Should the Meeting be Held?

The 'where' of a meeting is usually decided by custom or availability of space. Studies have shown that people react in certain predictable ways in certain physical surroundings. The seating arrangements can have a bearing on the final outcome of the meeting. Figure 7.2 shows a number of seating arrangements. The theater style and the schoolroom style are appropriate for large groups that are meeting to obtain information. The leader does much of the talking and participation is limited. The banquet style allows members to see each other and the T formation brings participants closer together, but the focus is still on the leaders. These arrangements can be used for meetings designed to facilitate change. Problem-solving meetings generally have the conference table seating arrangements shown in Figure 7.2. How far individual members are expected to participate in the meeting depends on how the leader positions himself in relation to the other participants. The overtly directive seating arrangement focuses attention on the leader and enables him or her to maintain control of the agenda. The covertly directive plan too enables the leader to retain control, but it is a more democratic seating arrangement. The equalizing pattern indicates the leader wants all members to participate by speaking their minds. The participative arrangement uses a round table so that status differences are minimized, and all participants feel free to express their opinions.

Figure 7.2: Meeting Room Seating Arrangements



Meeting room seating arrangements

Conference table seating arrangements

Source: Gibson and Hodgetts,. Business Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

Conveners must also consider the timing of the meeting.

When Should the Meeting be Held?

In deciding when the meeting should be held, the convener should consider the schedules of participants. Early Monday morning is seldom a good time for a meeting as most participants are anxious to get on with their week's schedule. Similarly, meetings scheduled for the afternoon of the last day of the week – Friday or Saturday – draw a poor response as most participants are preoccupied with their plans for the weekend.

Notice

Once these questions have been considered the meeting convener must issue a notice. A notice should:

(i) be issued by the proper authority

(ii) observe a minimum period of notice

(iii) state where and when the meeting is to be held

(iv) be accompanied by an agenda

(v) be sent to all individuals entitled to receive it.

Agenda

The notice, as mentioned above, must be accompanied by an agenda. An agenda is a list of topics that will be covered at the meeting. The agenda gives participants a chance to gather their thoughts and bring relevant information to the meeting.

To be effective, an agenda must be specific. The topics listed should not be vague. They must spell out what exactly will be discussed. Any relevant background reading material should be attached. The list of topics to be taken up for discussion should not be too long. Meetings that go on and on are not very popular. Look at the agenda shown in figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: Agenda for Safety Committee Meeting

Safety Committee Meeting	Conference Room A
March 1, 2001	3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

Agenda

1. Review of factory safety standards (attached)
2. Approval of Safety Committee Report (attached)
3. Quarterly corporate safety statistics (attached)
4. Recommendations for safety record improvement
5. Other business

Source: Gibson and Hodgetts,. Business Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

The name of the meeting, the location, the date and the beginning and ending times are all listed. The agenda lists specific topics and required background material is attached so that the first three items can be handled more effectively. A good agenda sets the stage for effective meetings by giving participants a clear idea of what to expect.

A formal meeting, however, has an agenda that includes the following:

1) Welcome/Introduction
2) Apologies for absence
3) Minutes of the last meeting
4) Matters arising from the minutes
5) First main item
6) Second item
7) Third item
8) Any other business
9) Date of next meeting

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting is sometimes circulated along with the agenda. The recipients are supposed to read them before attending the meeting. If the minutes is not sent along with the agenda, it is read out by the secretary when the meeting starts. This is generally a brief, accurate record of the business transacted at the previous meeting. It should contain the following:

i) Name of organization
ii) Place, date and time of meeting
iii) Names of chairperson and secretary
iv) Names of other members present
v) All motions and amendments
vi) Names of movers and seconders of all motions and amendments
vii) Results of voting

The minutes should be:

- concise but sufficiently detailed to make clear what the meeting was about
- precise and unambiguous
- impersonal and impartial
- written in the past tense
- numbered in ascending order from one meeting to another.

Opening the Meeting

To get the meeting off to a good start the leader must ensure that the participants are at ease and that the setting for the meeting is appropriate. One way of putting the participants at ease is by thanking everyone for coming and clearly stating what is expected to be accomplished. This ensures that everybody knows the purpose of the meeting. The leader may also redistribute copies of the agenda to those participants who do not have theirs with them. When certain participants are expected to make specific contributions, the leader may outline these in the beginning, and also indicate how much time is available for discussion, so that the participants realize the time constraints.

Conducting Business

In order to accomplish the desired objectives of the meeting, the leader must follow the agenda. Whenever the discussion strays from the agenda, he should redirect it, so that it stays focused on the main purpose. However, while doing this, the leader should not become too directive, as this discourages participation.

Some members try to introduce their own personal agenda into the discussion. They often resort to personal power plays, attention-seeking and blocking. These tactics are very disruptive as they make the other members cautious and defensive. In such situations it is the leader's task to confront the troublemaker and make him realize that he is hampering the proceedings.

Ensuring participation by each member of the group is another responsibility of the leader. An effective leader does not start out by telling the others how a particular issue should be resolved. Rather, he invites the other participants to express their opinions. By listening patiently to what the others have to say and by using positive body language, the leader makes the others feel that he is receptive to their ideas. This prompts members to be more forthcoming.

Not all ideas that come up during a meeting may be relevant or practicable. When someone comes up with an irrelevant or unsuitable idea, the leader may suggest that it may be taken up at some other time when it would be more appropriate. The leader should thank the people for their participation, regardless of how he personally feels about their ideas.

Concluding the Meeting

A little before the scheduled closing time, the leader usually signals that time is almost up. This gives the group a chance to wrap up the discussion. The leader then brings the meeting to a close by noting what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. Participants should be informed about what will happen next. If decisions have been made and action promised, the group members should be told when the action will be taken. Members should also be informed about when the minutes of the meeting will be circulated.

Following up the Meeting

After the meeting is over, the leader assesses the results. Was the purpose achieved? Did all the members participate in the discussion? Was the decision taken in an appropriate manner? How can the next meeting be conducted better?

Figure 7.4: Checklist for Meetings

A. Preparation

1. Determine the meeting's objectives.
2. Work out an agenda that will achieve your objectives.
3. Select participants.
4. Determine the location, and reserve a room.
5. Arrange for light refreshments, if appropriate.
6. Determine whether the lighting, ventilation, acoustics, and temperature of the room are adequate.
7. Determine seating needs: chairs only or table and chairs.

B. Conduct

1. Begin and end the meeting on time.
2. Control the meeting by following the announced agenda.
3. Encourage full participation, and either confront or ignore those who seem to be working at cross purposes with the group.
4. Sum up decisions, actions, and recommendations as you move through the agenda, and restate main points at the end.

C. Follow-Up

1. Distribute the meeting's notes or minutes on a timely basis.
2. Take the follow-up action agreed to.

Source: Bovee and Thill Business Communication Today *(New York McGraw Hill, 1995).*

The leader must follow up on whatever promises were made, by keeping in touch with the other members and making sure that they are actually following the steps that were outlined at the meeting. Figure 7.4 provides a checklist for meetings.

THINK ABOUT IT

Careful planning and skillful leadership make for effective meetings. Without these, meetings are bound to be looked upon as a waste of time, effort and financial resources. They may seem to lack focus and appear to be unproductive. However, group meetings can be a great asset if they are planned properly and administered effectively.

Chapter 8

Making Presentations - Getting Started

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Speech Purposes - General
- Speech Purpose - Specific
- Methods of Speaking
- Analyzing the Audience
- Nonverbal Dimensions of Presentation

As you would have gathered by now, most communication acts are initiated because an individual seeks to accomplish a purpose or fulfill a goal. In public speaking, which is simply a specialized form of communication, the speaker wants a specific response from the audience and communicates in order to secure that response. However, there is one major characteristic of public speaking that often sets it apart from some other types of interaction. In public speaking, the speaker has a preconceived purpose - a purpose that has been decided upon before the talk begins. Although many interpersonal situations also contain this element, it is not nearly as evident as it is in public speaking. Imagine trying to talk to an audience without having a clear idea of what you wanted them to know. By the time you concluded your presentation, they would be frustrated and confused from trying to follow your reasoning as you drifted from point to point. What is needed is a unifying thread that weaves all the pieces together. That thread is the preconceived purpose.

Therefore, to be a successful speaker you must determine and clarify your purpose before you send your message. By deciding upon the response you want from your audience, you can better select the ideas, the organizational patterns, the language, and the delivery methods that will enable you to reach your goal. Salespersons who come to your door may present an interesting talk with countless pieces of information, but their ultimate purpose is to persuade. Unless the materials contained within their speeches are aimed at securing their purpose, they will not make the sale.

SPEECH PURPOSES - GENERAL

There are three general speech purposes - to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. (These three purposes apply equally to public or private communication.) As we discuss these speech purposes, we should remember that we are in reality talking about responses we desire from our audience. Any discourse concerning this topic must take into account the obvious fact that all individuals are different, and therefore what is intended by the speaker as a speech to inform may well persuade or entertain certain members of the audience. Let us now briefly examine these three types of speeches.

Informative Speeches

The purpose of informative communication is to increase the receiver’s knowledge and understanding of a subject. Informative speeches may also entertain or change beliefs. A speaker whose immediate purpose is to impart information often uses amusing or dramatic illustrations to entertain his or her audience, thus holding their attention. Moreover, information, even it if consists only of facts, may lead to changes of belief, although such results may not be a part of the speaker’s purpose.

In informative speaking, your main concern is to make the audience understand and remember the information you present. The teacher talking to a class or the manager of a department store explaining the duties of a job to staff members are both engaged in informative speaking. How much the listener knows at the conclusion of a talk is the real test of the speech to inform.

Some examples of informative subjects are:

1. The procedures to be followed for adding new courses to the college curriculum.
2. How to grow vegetables in a greenhouse.
3. The working of a pollution-free engine.

Persuasive Speeches

The major function of the persuasive speech is to induce the audience to think, feel, or act in a manner selected by the speaker. You may want your listeners to discard old beliefs or form new ones; or you may merely want to strengthen opinions that they already hold. The salesperson uses the speech to persuade as a means of getting the customer to buy a coat. The person asking for a raise, the wife trying to get her husband to fix the tap, the teacher trying to get the class to study - all are trying to persuade someone to do something.

The following are examples of subjects that need persuasive treatment.

1. Final examinations in our colleges should be abolished.
2. The Indian Government should condemn the actions of Saddam Hussain.
3. Students should be given time off to campaign on behalf of political candidates.

Entertaining Speeches

The third major type of speech has the purpose of entertaining the audience. Here the word “entertainment” is used in its broadest sense to include anything that stimulates a pleasurable response, whether it be humorous or dramatic.

Through such speeches the speaker wants the people present to have an enjoyable time. The speaker is not concerned with ensuring that they learn a great deal or that they change their mind in one direction or another. Entertainment is the purpose of many after-dinner speeches and a favorite type of speech of the comedian.

Some subjects that lend themselves to humorous treatment are:

1. My first day as a college student.
2. The gourmet food served in the college cafeteria.
3. How to write a political speech.

These, then, are the three major speech purposes. If you know exactly what the purpose of your speech is, you will have a guide for your preparation - a reminder that each bit of material contained in your presentation should contribute something to the accomplishment of your purpose.

SPEECH PURPOSE - SPECIFIC

The general reaction you want to secure from your audience may be stated in terms of informing, persuading, or entertaining. But the particular and immediate reaction that you seek must be precisely formulated into a specific purpose. The specific purpose describes the exact nature of the response you want from your audience. It states specifically what you want your audience to know, feel, believe, or do.

There are three requirements a good specific purpose should meet: it should contain only one central idea; it should be clear and concise; and, most important, it should be worded in terms of the audience response desired.

When your general purpose is to inform, your specific purpose might be:

1. To have the audience understand the important aspects of student government.
2. To have the audience understand the basic fundamentals of boating safety.
3. To have the audience understand the history of the modern Animal Rights movement

If your general purpose is to persuade, your specific purpose might be:

1. To get the audience to give money to a college fund to beautify the campus.
2. To get the audience to agree that India should withdraw all its soldiers from Kashmir.
3. To get the audience to agree that we should have a Department of Women’s Studies at our University.

If your general purpose is to entertain, your specific purpose might be:

1. To make the audience laugh at the "clear" statements of some political leaders.
2. To have the audience enjoy hearing about the best ways to escape the clutches of the hostel warden.
3. To have the audience enjoy, vicariously, my appearance on MTV-Bakra.

You might find it helpful to write down your specific purpose on a sheet of paper. This will give you a constant target at which to aim. It allows you, at a glance, to see if the material you have gathered, and the organization of that material, directly relates to your specific purpose.

METHODS OF SPEAKING

Regardless of your background, knowledge, or skill, each time you speak it is a different and unique experience. Effective communicators recognize these differences and prepare specifically for each particular occasion. Included in their thought and preparation will be an analysis of the type of delivery best suited for their subject, audience, and occasion.

There are four fundamental ways of presenting a speech: (1) reading from a manuscript, (2) speaking from memory, (3) delivering in an impromptu manner, (4) and speaking extemporaneously. Bear in mind that there are many speaking situations that call for a combination of two or three of these types.

Speaking from a Manuscript

In this form of delivery you read your speech directly from a manuscript. This form is common in radio and television speeches. At conventions and business meetings the manuscript is helpful for the speaker who would like his speech to be circulated.

An obvious advantage of this method is that it puts no strain on your memory. Another advantage is that the manuscript, having been written well in advance of the speech situation, enables you to be very selective and meticulous in your style and choice of materials.

However, there are also serious disadvantages to this type of delivery. One marked disadvantage is that you often lose sight of the importance of communication. You read your remarks and many times fail to establish a rapport with your listeners. The manuscript becomes more significant than the audience, and all sense of spontaneity is forgotten.

Speaking from Memory

The memorized speech, much like the manuscript, allows you the advantage of a carefully worked out and worded speech. Every single word is committed to memory and this, of course, frees you from the manuscript. One problem of the memorized speech is that this "freedom" often leads to mechanical delivery and the presentation of what often appears to be a "canned" speech.

The memorized speech is also dangerous because one is apt to forget the entire speech. It is often difficult to recall the exact wording; and if you forget one word, you may forget the entire speech.

Impromptu Delivery

When you are asked to speak on the spur of the moment, without advance notice or time for specific preparation, you are engaging in impromptu speaking. It has been remarked that much of our conversation is nothing more than a series of short, impromptu talks.

When facing an impromptu situation, you must quickly tie together all your thoughts in a few seconds or minutes. The best preparation for impromptu speaking is being well informed and having practice in prepared speaking situations. The speaker who knows how to prepare a speech when time is not a factor in preparation will have little trouble in making the transition to the spur-of-the moment occasion.

Extemporaneous Delivery

The extemporaneous delivery is often referred to as the “middle course.” This particular speech form is by far the most desirable of the four we have listed. Therefore, we will examine it in some detail.

Extemporaneous speaking calls for the speech to be (1) researched, (2) outlined, (3) practiced, and (4) delivered in a conversational manner. Because you know about the speaking assignment beforehand, you have time to conduct research to gather the necessary information. For example, if you were going to give an extemporaneous speech on the various causes of water pollution, you would have to begin by finding out all you could about the particular subject. This investigation should be complete and thorough.

Once the data is gathered, the extemporaneous speaker must organize and outline the material into a clear and systematic pattern. A major advantage of the extemporaneous speech is that it is prepared in advance, and is therefore well organized.

This time factor also means you can practice the speech and clarify your thinking. The exact language for delivery is not memorized; instead, the speaker learns the organizational pattern, main points and subpoints. The focus, during practice, is on ideas, not specific words.

Extemporaneous delivery usually means that notes will be employed. When using notes you should follow a few guidelines. First, your notes should be on small stiff cards rather than on long sheets of paper. Because a card is small, it will not impede any of your gestures. In addition, a small note card allows you to maintain eye contact with the audience.

Second, you should only write down what it takes to remind you of your main points and subpoints. Third, write important quotations and statistics on note cards so that you don’t accidentally mislead the audience.

ANALYZING THE AUDIENCE

To communicate your purpose effectively, you need to understand the audience. Audience analysis means, in a very practical sense, finding out all you can about the people you are talking to or will be talking to. You discover what your receivers are like so that you can adapt your material directly to their needs, wants, experiences and attitudes. Only by seeing things from their viewpoint can you deal directly with their predispositions. Remember that communication is a two-way process involving sender and receiver, and that the heart of communication is behavior change. In order to change people’s behavior we must deal directly with them. The insurance agent knows about a potential client before preparing a “sales pitch.” The agent must make direct contact with the audience (in this case, clients) in order to be a successful communicator and accomplish his purpose.

As a public speaker you must also make an analysis of your audience if your speech is to be meaningful. The speaker who presents a speech without considering the audience has very little chance of gaining support or being understood. Audience analysis enables you to establish a rapport with your listeners. By understanding your audience you can adapt your materials - and yourself - to the people with whom you want to communicate.

Admittedly, the concept of “the audience” is an abstraction. No such creature exists. In reality what you are faced with is a group of individuals, who in combination make what we call an audience. Your task, if you are to be a successful speaker, is to locate their commonalities and formulate your message effectively.

To predict possible audience responses to what you will say demands that you ask the crucial question: “To what extent are the members of the audience likely to be similar?” It is in this area of similarities that you must focus your attention. Examine the following aspects about your listeners to discover some of their areas of similarity:

1. *The age of your listeners.* Countless experimental studies have revealed the impact age has on interests, learning, opinion change, and the like. These research projects have tried to document the influence of age on communication. Their findings reveal a number of interesting conclusions. For example, because older people have had a larger variety of experiences, they are inclined to become more entrenched in their opinions and hence much harder to persuade. At the same time, studies suggest that young adults are very susceptible to persuasion. Research also seems to indicate that as we get older, social sensitivity and empathy tend to increase.

A group of old people will differ in attitude and experiences from a group of young people. This simple realization will greatly aid the speaker in selecting materials to accomplish his purpose.

2. *The sex of your listeners.* Is it a mixed audience? The answer to this question may govern everything from your choice of subject to the examples you decide to place in your speech.

3. *The occupation of your listeners.* What people do for a living is often a guide to their values, attitudes, and even their sense of humor. A school teacher may see things differently than a small shop owner, for example. Ask yourself, “is the occupation of my audience relevant to my topic?”

4. *Intelligence and educational level of your listeners.* In order for communication to take place it is necessary that the audience be able to understand what you say. You must be very careful not to overestimate or underestimate the intelligence of your listeners. In either case, the cycle of communication can be broken if there is a lack of understanding. You should remember that formal education as well as education acquired through practical experience will help determine what your audience thinks and how it will react.

5. *The social, professional, and religious groups your listeners belong to.* Group membership suggests, in a general way, types of people, their points of view, interests, and attitudes. Religious affiliation, for example, influences people’s thinking in many ways. If you can learn the group membership of a large part of your audience, you would have gained a valuable clue to your listeners’ attitudes and wants.

6. *The influence of geographical experiences.* Try to understand the geographical orientation of your listeners. A person from north India, for example, is likely to have a very different attitude toward the language problem than a person from the south. A person from a rural area would have a very different attitude toward education as compared to a person brought up in the city.

In addition to exploring the backgrounds of your listeners, you will find a number of other questions useful once you have established a profile of your audience:

1. What does the audience already know about me?
2. What is the audience’s attitude toward me?
3. What does the audience know about the subject?
4. What is the audience’s opinion of my subject?
5. What brings the audience together?

The answer to each of these questions will make possible a more complete understanding of the entire speaking situation. Once you are able to see and to feel as the audience does, you are in a position to put into words those ideas that will elicit maximum agreement and understanding.

NONVERBAL DIMENSIONS OF PRESENTATION

So far we have discussed the "purpose" of a presentation and effective communication only in terms of verbal messages. However, the nonverbal elements of communication play an equally important role in communicating the verbal message. Consider the following case:

Padmini was asked to prepare a six minute 'speech to inform' for presenting before her sociology class the following week. She followed carefully the advice she had been given on preparing speech content. She analyzed her listeners carefully and, with a view to their needs, selected a topic that would have value for them. She formulated a specific purpose and set about to find the materials that would enable her to achieve her purpose. After she had gathered her materials she crafted them into a well-organized, understandable, and interesting message. She presented her speech as scheduled. But in spite of her preparation, her audience did not respond with interest or enthusiasm. One listener remarked, "Padmini, you didn't seem to be interested in what you were saying. I had a hard time forcing myself to listen."

Unfortunately, such cases are all too common. Many worthwhile ideas go unheeded because they are ineptly presented, and countless other ideas are misinterpreted because of misleading cues in the speaker's nonverbal behavior. Imperfections in communication may result when the nonverbal elements are not supportive of the verbal elements - the sender's words tell you one thing while the sound of his voice and his actions tell you something else. Which set of elements are you going to believe?

Exhibit 8.1

The Power of Nonverbal Elements

What is this thing called "presence" (and how can you get some)?

- Presenters with "presence" usually walk briskly, with a sense of purpose. Their attitude is outward, aware of their surroundings - not inward, concerned with their own problems. They project a feeling of openness.
- Nothing is tentative. They don't fuss with things. They demonstrate the importance of their mission by being decisively prepared.
- They move into the audience. (Can you imagine Johnny Carson starting his show in any other way than striding into the camera?) They step up to the issues - physically and attitudinally.
- They project an attitude of positive anticipation. They know what they're getting into and they like it. They relish the responsibility of presentation. They create an expectation of leadership.
- They look good. They've gotten "a little bit dressed up" - reflecting their own sense of self-worth, but also complimenting the audience.
- When a speaker has that elusive and largely indefinable quality called "presence," there's no doubt about who's making the presentation. It's something you sort of feel if you're in the audience and you hear if you're the presenter. (Listen for it. It may be faint, but it's definitely drums and trumpets.)

Source: Ron Hoff, "I can see you naked": A Fearless Guide to Making Great Presentations (New York: Andrews and McMeel, 1998).

The nonverbal elements of your communication behavior can convey numerous meanings to your audience. (Exhibit 8.1.) For example, your attitude toward others may be inferred from your movements toward or away from them or by other actions that seem symbolically to express intimacy, submission-dominance, and the like. Your attitude toward your verbal message is suggested by the presence of nonverbal cues which either support or belie the verbalization. And your attitude toward yourself is also often expressed through nonverbal behavior. Self confidence, or the lack of it, frequently shows in our body language.

After reading Chapter 2, you must be familiar with the different elements of nonverbal communication. As you are aware, your general appearance, your movements, facial expressions, and your spatial relationships with the audience affect their reaction to your verbal message. In addition, your voice (emphasis, tone, variety, volume, pitch, rate, distinctness, pronunciation) tells things about you and your message apart from the words you use to convey the message.

To be effective speakers, the verbal and nonverbal elements of the presentation have to be aligned so as to convey the same message and thus support each other. How can you ensure this alignment of the verbal and nonverbal elements of oral presentation? One way, of course, is by reading about them. By gaining an awareness of the role each nonverbal element plays in influencing listener reaction to the verbal message, you may learn how to make constructive use of these elements and avoid placing barriers in your path to communication effectiveness. So turn back to Chapter 2 and read it again carefully.

Exhibit 8.2

Assessing Nonverbal Behavior

USE OF VOICE (Check the appropriate blank)

Pitch level: Too high ____ Too low____ OK______

Variation of pitch: Varied ______ Monotonous to a degree_____Very Monotonous________

Rate: Too fast ____ Too slow _____ OK _______

Variation of rate: Too little ______ Too much _______ OK _______

Loudness: Too loud ______ Too soft _______ OK _______

Variation of Loudness: Too little _____ Too much ______ OK ______

Pronunciation: Generally correct ________ Frequently faulty _________

Words mispronounced: _____________________

Enunciation (distinctness): Clear ______ Slurring ________

VISUAL ASPECTS OF DELIVERY

Posture: Alert but at ease ______ All weight on one foot _______Leaning on lectern _______ Stiff __________ Shifting weight constantly _________

Gestures: Too few ____ Too many ______ OK in quantity _______

Quality of gestures: Properly motivated _______ Affected _______ Clumsy________

Movements: Immobile _______ Distracting movements ______ Satisfactory in quantity and quality ______

Facial Expression: Very animated _______ Occasionally animated_______Never animated ___________

Eye Contact: Looked at everyone _____ Favored one section ________Avoided audience ___________

Another way to assess and improve your nonverbal behavior is to practice in front of an audience of friends. Ask them to comment freely on your speech delivery. They can use the checklist given in Exhibit 8.2 to assess the quality of your nonverbal behavior.

Winston Churchill, whose speeches boosted English morale during World War II, practiced many times before his wife. He even rehearsed the speeches that he read from a manuscript (for radio broadcast) so that the sound quality would convey the correct emphasis and mood.

THINK ABOUT IT

Since communication is normally intended to convey a specific message, speakers must be clear about the purpose of their presentation. This “purpose” must be reflected in their selection and organization of material for the speech. The nonverbal elements of the presentation must also convey this message for effective communication to take place.

Speeches can be broadly divided into three speech purposes: to inform, to persuade, and to entertain. To formulate a more specific purpose the speaker must determine exactly what kind of response he wants from the audience. And to convey this purpose effectively, it must be adapted to the audience’s needs. In order to do so, the speaker should analyze the audience. Valuable insight into the listeners’ needs, wants, attitudes, and experiences can be gained by discovering their age, sex, occupation, intelligence and education, and social, professional and religious affiliations, and geographical experiences.

Armed with a knowledge of the audience, a clear sense of purpose, and an awareness of the power of nonverbal elements, the speaker should select his material, organize it, and practice his speech. Speakers are not just “born”; with practice, they can be “made.”

Chapter 9

Organizing and Presenting the Speech

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Why Organize?
- The Core Statement
- Organizational Structures
- Supporting your Ideas
- Visual Aids
- After the Presentation

In the previous chapter we discussed the need for a clear purpose, audience analysis, and awareness of the nonverbal elements of presentation. All these have to be taken into consideration when selecting and organizing material for your presentation.

But...how should the material be organized? It's all very well to say that the subject, audience and purpose determines the organization, but how exactly do they impact it? This chapter seeks to present some guidelines for developing presentations. Some of the organizational patterns and presentation ideas may suit your purpose. However, remember that in the final analysis you alone are the best judge of your speaking situation; and based on that you should organize and develop your presentation. Hopefully the guidelines in this chapter will assist you in determining the most suitable structure and style for your presentation.

WHY ORGANIZE?

The organizational process benefits speakers in several ways. It helps them detect any weaknesses in the fabric of their logic and any inadequacies in the amount and quality of their evidence (for supporting their argument). It enables them to juxtapose ideas in a variety of ways and thus determine the sequence that is best fitted to their audience and to the accomplishment of their purpose. Clear organization also helps them to retain ideas with greater ease during the pressure of message presentation. Finally, speakers benefit from the added credibility attached to their well-organized ideas.

But it is ultimately for the listener's benefit that we attend to organizational strategies. Our message must be understood at the moment of encounter because the speaker, unlike the reader, cannot freeze the message and study it at leisure. Clear organization facilitates understanding and encourages the listener to remain attentive. Whether the message is a formal speech or an informal presentation, whether it is prepared in advance or composed in an instant, it will be more effective and have a greater impact on the listeners if it has organizational clarity.

While there are a variety of ways to approach the task of organizing the message, we shall concentrate on the method that involves formulating a core statement which expresses the central idea of the message, phrasing main points to support the core statement (and subpoints to support the main points, if needed), and choosing appropriate patterns to show relationships among the points.

In our discussion of organizational structure, the traditional three-fold division of the presentation - the introduction, the body, and the close - will be followed. Although this division may not be applicable to all situations, it is a useful approach for studying organizational structure. This three-fold division has also been humorously but appropriately expressed as

1) Tell them what you are going to tell them
2) Tell them
3) Tell them what you told them.

THE CORE STATEMENT

The simplest form of speech has essentially two ingredients: (1) a statement or point that requires clarification, amplification or proof and (2) the materials that clarify, amplify, or prove the statement. A complex speech is simply a combination of such units revolving around an even more general statement. The most general statement of the speech we shall call the "core statement"; the less general statements we shall call the "main points"; and the least general statements we shall call "subpoints." The levels of generality can be visualized as follows:

Core Statement: Petrol consumption is increasing in all parts of India.

Main Point: I. It is increasing in the North.

Subpoint: A. Bihar is experiencing a sharp increase.

Support: 1. Petrol dealers in Ranchi and surrounding areas report a 52% increase in sales volume.

Support: 2. The Patna Chronicle reports that northern Bihar is witnessing an increase in the number of new petrol stations.

Subpoint: B. Himachal Pradesh is experiencing an increase

Support: 1. Petrol stations in the Simla-Kalka area are increasing their storage capacity by 60 percent.

Support: 2. The Himachal Highway Police report a 50 percent increase in passenger car travel this year.

Main Point: II. Consumption is increasing in the West.

The core statement is called by some authors the subject sentence, the theme sentence, the thesis, or the proposition. Whatever the label used, it signifies that element which gives unity to everything in the speech. And the purpose of the speech is to convey the core statement to the audience to inform, persuade or entertain them, as the case may be. The main benefit to be derived from formulating the core statement at the outset of the organizational process is that it will provide you with an immediate test of the relevance of any material you introduce in the speech. If any main point, subpoint, or supporting material does not clearly relate to the core statement, then it should be discarded. One of the essential functions of the core statement is to keep you from introducing into the speech materials that are irrelevant and hence confusing to the listener. A core statement thus ensures the unity of the speech.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES

The various main points and subpoints of the presentation that clarify, amplify, or prove the core statement have to be organized systematically so that they can be easily understood by the listener. Innumerable patterns of organization are available since each speaking situation is unique. So let us restrict our survey of organizational patterns to those that are found most commonly in informative and persuasive speeches.

Organizing the Speech to Inform

Systematic arrangement of material is crucial in informative speaking if the listener is to retain the information presented. Speeches that seem to leap from point to point without any sense of direction seldom leave the listener with anything meaningful to focus on.

The introduction

The dual purposes of any introduction are to alert the audience to the subject of the speech and to arouse in the listeners a desire for the detailed information contained in the body of the speech.

The selection of a method for starting a speech will be determined by factors relating to the topic, audience interest, audience knowledge level, speaking time available, and the speaking occasion. When listeners are not vitally concerned with the topic, it is useful to begin with a rhetorical question, startling statement, or unusual illustration. In all communication situations, it is to your advantage if you can stimulate a desire on the part of the audience to want to listen to your presentation. So in the introduction to your informative speech make it clear to your audience that your topic holds significance for them and that they will benefit by listening.

You can also better hold attention during the body of your speech if you have already created an atmosphere of curiosity and interest. By motivating the audience early in the speech you also increase the probability that they will learn something by the conclusion of your talk.

In your introduction you should also provide a brief initial preview of the main points to be taken up in the body of your speech. By so doing you are allowing the audience a glimpse of your organizational pattern and making their job of listening much easier.

The body

Since the introduction has (1) captured the listener's attention, (2) aroused his interest in the information to come, and (3) previewed your main points, you are ready to present the information itself. To promote the listener's comprehension of your ideas, and to maintain attention at a high level, you should organize the body of your speech into meaningful groupings. These groupings will be more easily remembered if they can be arranged in a logical pattern.

● *Chronological pattern.* The chronological or time pattern has its greatest value in explanations of processes, in presentation of historic events, and in relating personal experiences. In discussing "The History of Air Travel," you might develop your material under the following headings or "Main Points":

I. Early attempts at flying.

II. Air travel today.

III. The future of air travel.

● *Spatial pattern.* Use of spatial order is especially effective in speeches describing a scene, a location, or a geographical distribution. For instance, the body of your speech could be arranged from North to South, from top to bottom, or from center to outside. When describing "Life Under the Sea," you might select the following order:

I. Surface sea life.

II. Sea life twenty feet below the ocean.

III. Sea life on the ocean floor.

● *Causal order.* In using the causal order you may tell of the causes of certain effects, or tell of the effects resulting from various causes. For giving a talk on "The Sun and the Individual," your pattern might be:

I. The effects of the sun on the skin.

II. The effects of the sun on the eyes.

III. The effects of the sun on the hair.

When handling the topic "Why World War II?" you might select the following order:

I. American and German relations before 1941.

II. American and Italian relations before 1941.

III. American and Japanese relations before 1941.

By examining the relationship of the United States to each of these countries, one is able to point out the possible causes for World War II.

● *Topical pattern.* The topical pattern is probably the most frequently used of all patterns. This arrangement sets out several facts of a topic that are obviously related and consistent with the subject of the speech. For a speech on "The Financial Structure of the University," your pattern might be:

I. The university's assets.

II. The university's liabilities.

III. The university's endowments.

The key to the topical pattern is that the arrangement is rather apparent and the one that an audience most likely expects. The material can be ordered so that it moves from the simplest to the most complex, the most familiar to the least familiar, the least important to the most important, or the most acceptable to the least acceptable.

The Conclusion

Certain techniques of concluding are especially valuable for the speech to inform. For example, restating your main message and summarizing your main points is a particularly useful technique. You can use it to heighten audience interest once again and suggest areas where they will be able to add to or clarify some concepts you mentioned. This "final summary" method is very popular among speakers because listeners tend to pay close attention when they feel the end of the speech is near. See figure 9.1 on ways to make introductions and conclusions unusual and memorable.

Organizing the Persuasive Speech

Every persuasive situation has its own unique demands. Therefore, the organization of one persuasive speech may radically differ from that of another. One may be organized as if it were an informational speech while another may be as obviously manipulative as a television commercial. This section will only describe some of the more popular organizational strategies. You will have to use your judgement to see if a given strategy is applicable to the persuasive situation you are facing.

Let us briefly explore the principal functions of the introduction, the body, and the conclusion of the persuasive speech.

The basic functions of the introduction to any speech are to get attention and prepare the audience for what is to follow. In the persuasive speech these two functions have to be accomplished in a way that is conducive to the creation of a climate of acceptance. It is usually a good policy for the speaker to refrain from assertiveness in the early stages of a persuasive speech because such behavior may generate suspicion and hostility. A spirit of inquiry is much less likely to erect barriers. If the speaker decides to announce the proposition in the introduction, consideration should be given to the possibility of putting it in the form of a question. Compare these two ways of orienting your audience to the nature of your talk:

Figure 9.1: Techniques for Making Introductions and Conclusions Exciting

An introduction can gain the audience's attention through:

- A thought-provoking, curiosity arousing or humorous quotation
- An interesting, new (not stale) narrative
- A reference to a recent event
- A rhetorical question
- A startling or shocking statement
- A promise of a reward for listening ("You can become a millionaire if . . .)
- A conclusion can be made more memorable by the use of
- A quotation
- An interesting illustration
- A challenge to the audience
- A call for action
- A declaration of intent (expresses speaker's intent to act)

1. Today, I would like to discuss with you the question, “Are reservations justified in modern India?”
2. Today I will attempt to demonstrate that reservations are not justified in modern India.

The body of the persuasive speech contains the speaker’s defense of the persuasive proposition. If you are defending a proposition of policy, you will probably offer arguments that show the need for a policy and demonstrate the capacity of your policy to satisfy that need. If you are defending a proposition of fact or value, you will probably offer criteria for measuring the truth of the fact or value judgement in question and then apply those criteria.

The conclusion of the persuasive speech should place the audience in the state of mind most conducive to the accomplishment of the speaker’s purpose. For example, if your purpose is to actuate, the audience should be ready to act. If your purpose is to convince, the audience should be ready to give assent.

Let us now look at some specific organizational strategies that have been found useful.

The Problem-Solution Order

This pattern is based upon a tripartite division of the body of the speech. After an introduction designed to gain attention and orient the listener, the speaker moves into the body of the speech where (1) the problem area is presented, (2) the solution to the problem is presented, and (3) the solution is defended. The speech concludes with a call for appropriate belief or action. Following is an example of a persuasive speech organized around this mode of arrangement:

Introduction

1. The mid-channel collision of a Navy destroyer and the island ferry last week underlines the existence of a long-standing problem in our area.

Body

I. The ferry is an unsatisfactory means of commuting between the mainland and the island.

A. It is costly.

(Support)

B. It is inconvenient

(Support)

C. It is dangerous.

(Support)

Core Statement: A bridge should be build from the mainland to the island.

II. A bridge would represent a solution to the commuting problem.

A. It would be less expensive.

(Support)

B. It would be convenient.

(Support)

C. It would be safe.

(Support)

III. It would be practical to build a bridge.

A. It would be practical from an engineering standpoint.

(Support)

B. It would be practical from a financial standpoint.

(Support)

IV. The disadvantages a bridge would bring are minor compared to the advantages.

A. Residents who would be displaced by construction of bridge approaches are few.

(Support)

B. Displaced ferry employees could find employment locally.

(Support)

V. A bridge would be the best solution.

A. It would be less costly to build than a tunnel.

(Support)

B. It would not present a navigational hazard as would a causeway.

(Support)

C. It would be more aesthetically pleasing than a tunnel or a causeway.

(Support)

Conclusion

1. Next week when petitions are circulated calling for the construction of this bridge, I hope you will be one of the signers.

The Motivated Sequence

This organizational strategy is basically a variant of the problem-solution order. The strategy consists of five steps to be taken in this order: Attention, Need, Satisfaction, Visualization, and Action. An example of a Motivated Sequence structure would look like this:

Attention Step

1,500 of your fellow citizens are suffering from a form of pollution that can't be seen, smelled, tasted, or touched.

Need Step

Statement of problem: The noise level at the assembly plant is dangerous to the workers.

I. The 115 decibel noise level is 30 decibels higher than the maximum level set by the Industrial Safety Commission.

II. It can cause hearing loss, cardiovascular problems, partial loss of vision, and mental disturbance.

III. Many of your neighbors are in the affected workforce.

Satisfaction Step

Statement of Solution: Acoustic shielding of the metal presses would reduce the noise to a safe level.

I. Acoustic shielding is feasible.

II. Acoustic shielding is advantageous.

III.Acoustic shielding is the best solution to the problem.

Visualization Step

Many of your neighbors will suffer needlessly if this problem isn't corrected. If acoustic shielding is provided, those same neighbors will be healthier, more productive, and happier workers.

Action Step

Join me in writing to Debashis Mittal, General Manager, Ajax Motors.

Deductive and inductive structures

If the subject of the speech does not involve problem-solving, then a deductive or inductive structure can be followed. In the deductive structure the proposal is stated first and then arguments that support the proposal are presented. For example, if a speaker wished the audience to agree with the proposition, "Garam X is better heating fuel for our clubhouse than "Lakkad Y," the speech might be organized in the following order:

Introduction

I. By the end of this month we have to make a decision about heating fuel for our clubhouse.

II. There are two alternatives available to us, Garam X and Lakkad Y.

Statement of Proposition: Garam X is superior to Lakkad Y.

Body

I. Garam X is cleaner.

II. Garam X is cheaper.

III. Garam X is safer.

Conclusion

I hope you'll give careful consideration to Garam X.

In the inductive pattern the arguments are presented first in a way that leads to the proposition. The deductive structure described above can be rearranged inductively in the following manner:

Introduction

I. By the end of this month we have to make a decision about heating fuel for our clubhouse.

Body

1. The heating fuel we choose should have these qualities:

A. It should be clean.

B. It should be cheap.

C. It should be safe.

II. We have two fuels from which to choose, Garam X and Lakkad Y.

III. Garam X is cleaner, cheaper, and safer.

Statement of Proposition: Garam X is superior to Lakkad Y.

When choosing between the inductive order and the deductive order, you should be guided by your knowledge of your audience.

If the audience is potentially hostile to your point of view, an inductive order should be chosen. A deductive order would have offended such an audience or put it in a very unreceptive state of mind. But there are occasions when the direct approach is more suitable. For example, if you are one of two (or more) speakers debating an issue before an audience, the listeners might find an inductive style ridiculous.

As you gain experience as a speaker, you will discover many more organizational patterns, and many more exciting ways to introduce and conclude your speech. (For example, it may be effective to conclude with a quotation or illustration.) Remember at all times that you are communicating to an audience and that you have to cater to their needs. Pay attention to their needs as listeners:

1. Get their attention and arouse their interest.
2. Organize the material conveniently.
3. Enable them to follow the organization easily.
4. Speak clearly and let them know when you are shifting from one point to another.
5. Always show how your information or solution will help them.
6. Motivate them to action by showing how this action will benefit them.

In short, as Ron Hoff said in his *Fearless Guide to Making Great Presentations,* "It's your presentation, but it's all about them."

SUPPORTING YOUR IDEAS

So far we have talked about "support" only in parenthesis. Supporting material or evidence are essential parts of a presentation. Why are they so important? What types of support should be used?

From our communication experiences, we all know that simply stating a point does not necessarily make it believable. There may be some assertions that listeners will accept at face value because the assertions are consistent with their beliefs and prejudices. But more frequently listeners require that assertions be backed up with proof. Suppose a speaker at your college campus advocated that the cricket team be disbanded on the grounds that it was a financial burden to the student body. Would anyone believe him in the absence of proof to support his charge?

Let us consider some of the forms of support that are available when we find it necessary and beneficial to clarify and/or prove an important and fundamental assertion.

- *Illustration (example).* An illustration is the narration of a happening or incident which amplifies, proves, or clarifies the point under consideration. It is, in a sense, the speaker saying to the audience, "Here is an example of what I mean." In addition, it often aids the memory in that it makes the important features more noteworthy.

  The illustration usually takes one of three forms - the detailed factual illustration (narrative), the undeveloped factual illustration (response to specific instance), and the hypothetical illustration.

- *Statistics.* In a sense, statistics are examples. But unlike illustrations, they are quantitative in nature. Statistics are facts represented numerically; they compare or show proportions as a means of helping a speaker develop and prove a point. Since statistics are a strong form of proof, they should be presented in the most effective manner possible. The speaker should avoid presenting too many statistics at one time. A speech crammed with numbers can often create confusion and boredom.

- *Expert testimony.* The testimony of an authority, as a form of support for a specific point, is often the most important type of evidence a speaker can use. It is advisable to select those experts whose opinion carries considerable weight with the audience. If quotations are used, they should be brief so as not to hinder the audience's ability to concentrate.

- *Analogies.* By using analogies similarities are pointed out with regard to people, ideas, experiences, projects, institutions, or data, and conclusions are drawn on the basis of those similarities. The main function of the analogy is to point out the similarities between that which is already known and that which is not. Through this technique of support or proof, the speaker attempts to shows the listener that what he (the listener) already believes or knows is similar to what he (the speaker) is trying to prove or explain.

Analogies alone are seldom sufficient to prove a point. The speaker should also examine other types of evidence to support the analogy.

- *Anecdotes, fables, parables.* These are all types of illustrations. In the anecdote, real-life characters are usually mentioned. But in the fable, animal characters speak as if they were human beings. And a parable is fictitious story from which a moral or religious lesson may be drawn.

As you would have figured out by now, these different forms of support often overlap: a factual illustration might well contain statistics; an expert's testimony may even take the form of an illustration. Whatever technique you use, remember that you have to support your argument so as to convince your audience.

VISUAL AIDS

Most formal speeches and presentations incorporate visual aids. From a purely practical standpoint, they are a convenience for the speaker, who can use them as a tool for remembering the details of the message. Visual aids also dramatically increase the audience's ability to absorb and remember information. In a sense it supports the "support" or "proof" used in the oral presentation.

Designing and Presenting Visual Aids

Two types of visual aids are used to supplement speeches and presentations. Text visuals consist of words and help the audience follow the flow of ideas. Because text visuals are simplified outlines of your presentation, you can use them to summarize and preview the message and to signal major shifts in thought. Graphic visuals, on the other hand, illustrate the main points. They help the audience grasp numerical data and other information that would be hard to follow if presented orally.

Because people can't read and listen at the same time, the visual aids have to be simple enough for the audience to understand within a moment or two. Visual aids should be just "aids." They should enhance the speech by explaining and emphasizing key points. Too many or too flashy visuals can detract from the message.

As a rule, text visuals are more effective when they consist of no more than six lines, with a maximum of six words per line. They should be typed in large, clear type (using uppercase and lowercase letters), with extra white space between lines of type. List items should be phrased in parallel grammatical form. The wording should be telegraphic (i.e. brief) but not cryptic.

Many presentations begin with several text visuals. The first is usually the equivalent of a title page: it announces the subject and signals the audience that the presentation is underway. The second typically lists the three or four major points that will be covered, thus providing a road map of what is to come. The remaining text visuals are used to emphasize the transitions between main points.

A variety of graphic visuals can be used: line, pie, and bar charts; flow charts and organization charts; diagrams, maps, drawings and tables (see chapter 19 for a detailed description of different types of graphics). Simplify the graphics so that they can be grasped easily by the audience. To help the audience focus immediately on the point of each graphic visual, use headings that state the message in one clear phrase or sentence.

Visual aids should be such that (a) they can be understood quickly by the audience and (b) they do not detract from the presentation. So follow these guidelines:

- Be sure that all members of the audience can see the visual aids
- Allow the audience time to read a visual aid before providing an explanation.
- Limit each visual aid to one idea.
- Illustrate only the main points, not the entire presentation.
- Paraphrase the text of the visual aid; don't read it word for word.

After discussing the point illustrated by the visual, remove it from the audience's view.

As the speaker, remember that you want the audience to listen to you, not to study the visual aids. The visual aids are there to supplement your words, not the other way around.

Selecting the Right Medium

There are a variety of media to choose from, so select those that are best suited to your speaking occasion.

- *Handouts.* You may choose to distribute sheets of paper bearing an agenda, an outline of the program, an abstract, a written report, or supplementary material such as tables, charts, and graphs. Handouts can help the listeners by reminding them of the subject and the main ideas of the presentation. In addition, listeners can refer to them while you are speaking. Handouts work well in informal situations where the audience takes an active role; they often make their own notes on the handouts. However, handouts can be distracting because people are inclined to read the material rather than listen to the presentation, so many speakers distribute handouts after the presentation.
- *Chalkboards and whiteboards.* When addressing a small group of people, and when you want to draw out their ideas, use a board to list points as they are mentioned. Using multiple boards, text or graphics can also be prepared in advance and revealed when required. Such boards provide flexibility because they can be altered on the spot. However, they are too informal (and messy) for certain situations.
- *Flip charts.* Large sheets of paper attached at the top like a tablet can be propped on an easel so that you can "flip" or turn the pages as you speak. Each chart illustrates or clarifies a point. You might have a few lines from your outline on one, a graph or diagram on another, and so on. By using different colored markers you can highlight ideas as you go along. This technique is effective in small, informal groups.
- *Overheads.* One of the most common visual aids in business is the overhead transparency, which can be projected on a screen in full daylight. Because you don't have to dim the lights, you don't lose contact with the audience. Transparencies are easy to make using a typed original on regular paper, a copying machine, and a paper-size sheet of plastic. Opaque projections are similar to transparencies but do not require as much preparation. You can use an opaque projector to show the audience a photograph or an excerpt from a report.
- *Slides.* The content of slides may be text, graphics, or pictures. If you are trying to create a polished, professional atmosphere, you might find this approach worthwhile. However, bear in mind that you will have to speak in a darkened room. Moreover, you may need someone to operate the projector and so you will have to coordinate the slide presentation with your speech.

- *Computers.* With a special projector, a personal computer can be turned into a large-screen "intelligent chalkboard" that allows you to create and modify your visual aids as the presentation unfolds. For example, if you are discussing financial projections, you can show how a change in sales forecasts will affect profits by typing in a new number. When the presentation is over, you can print out hard copies of the visual aids for interested members of the audience. You can also make a computer-generated slide show, for instance by using Microsoft Powerpoint software, which gives you the opportunity to make changes right up to the minute you start speaking. Using this technology, you can incorporate both animation and photos in your presentation. Computer presentations can also be mailed to potential customers (email or snail mail).
- *Videotapes, Audiotapes, Filmstrips and Films.* These can be used to illustrate major points. For example, a videotape showing mock interviews would be an effective aid in illustrating effective interviewing strategies in a human resources management training seminar. In today's visual age, an audience relates well to the color and elaborate production provided by these visuals. However, remember that visuals are intended to support the speech, not replace it. Like computer presentations, these tapes can be mailed to different people (if required), both customers and employees.

Visual	**Optimum Audience Size**	**Degree of Formality**	**Design Complexity**	**Equipment and Room Requirements**	**Production Time**	**Cost**
Handouts	Fewer than 110	Informal	Simple	Typed text and photocopying machine	Typing or drawing time; photocopying time	Inexpensive
Boards and Flip Charts	Fewer than 20	Informal	Simple	Chalkboard or whiteboard or easel and chart, with writing implements	Drawing time only	Inexpensive
Over Heads	About 100	Formal or informal	Simple	Text, photocopying machine, plastic sheets, and projector screen	Drawing or typing time; photocopying time	Inexpensive unless professionally designed or typeset
Slides	Several hundred	Formal	Anything that can be photo-graphed	Slides, projector, and screen; dim lighting	Design and photographing time; at least 24 hours production time	Relatively expensive

Source: C. L. Bovee and J.V Thill, Business Communication Today, IV Edition. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1995)

- *Models and physical objects.* A sample of a product or a replica to exact scale allows the audience to visualize and become involved with the idea being presented. A scale model of a proposed office building can give the audience a clear idea of its spaciousness.

Figure 9.2 summarizes some of the factors to consider when selecting a visual medium.

With all visual aids, the crucial factor is how you use them. Properly integrated into a presentation, they can save time, create interest, add variety, make an impression, and illustrate ideas and concepts that are difficult to express in words alone.

AFTER THE PRESENTATION

On all but the most formal occasions, an oral presentation is followed by a question-and-answer period. Don't be intimidated by questions. Questions from the audience indicate that people have listened to you and are interested in your presentation.

When fielding questions, make sure that everyone in the audience has heard the question. If there is no moderator to do this job, you should ask if everyone has heard the question. If they haven't, repeat or paraphrase it yourself. Sometimes this can be done as an introduction to your response: "Your question about the efficiency of these three techniques...."

If you hear the question but don't understand it, ask for a clarification. After responding, ask if you understood the question correctly.

If you understand the question but don't know the answer, tell the truth. No one expects you to know the answer to every question. If you have some ideas about how to find the answer - by checking a certain reference text, for example - share them. If the question is obviously important to the person who asked it, you might offer to meet with him afterwards to discuss the answer. Or you could offer to research the issue and get back by a certain time with the answer.

If you are unfortunate enough to have a belligerent character in the audience who is not content with your response and insists on restating his original point, a useful technique is to offer politely to discuss the matter further after the session. This will prevent the person from boring or annoying the rest of the audience. If it is appropriate to stay after the session to talk individually with members of the audience, offer to do so. Don't forget to thank them for their courtesy in listening to you.

THINK ABOUT IT

Identify your purpose, analyze your audience and speaking occasion, research your material if necessary, organize the content, support it with solid evidence, prepare visual aids, be prepared for a question-answer session, and deliver your speech in the manner that best suits the occasion. And be sure that your nonverbal behavior is suited to your verbal message.

That's a long but necessary checklist for your next oral presentation. As you prepare your presentation, never forget that though it is your presentation, it should be all about "them," the audience. Through your subject, your words, and your body language, show your concern for and interest in the audience.

As you gain experience, you will discover many unusual ways of introducing, organizing, and concluding your presentation. But keep in mind that every part of your presentation must relate to the message, and the presentation itself must focus on the audience's needs. This chapter has only provided guidelines and advice on presentations. Ultimately, you alone will have to decide on the best approach, based on the speaking situation and your analysis of the audience.

Chapter 10

Letter Writing: Writing about the Routine and the Pleasant

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Understanding the Audience
- Organizing Your Message
- Business Letters

Letter writing doesn't involve magic; you just have to think about it. As you read this chapter, think about the following response to an order letter:

Thank you for your order, which we really appreciate. We sincerely welcome you to our ever-growing list of satisfied customers.

We were delighted to send you 30 Porta-phone telephones. They were shipped by express today.

We are sure you will find our company a good one to deal with and that our telephones are of the finest quality.

Please find our latest price list enclosed. Thank you for your patronage.

What is wrong with this letter? (We'll discuss it later in the chapter.) Hint: Put yourself in the shoes of the recipient of the letter.

Business correspondence is one of the most common forms of communication. So common that people often neglect to write letters carefully, and, as a result, inadvertently antagonize customers, business partners and potential clients.

How can one write an "effective" business letter? There is no foolproof method, but there are some useful guidelines. An "effective" letter is one that conveys the subject to the intended audience in such a way that the writer's purpose is achieved. Knowing your subject and purpose and understanding your audience is essential for "effective" business correspondence. These principles of letter writing are fundamental to all forms of communication, oral and written.

It is relatively easy to compose routine letters or pleasant letters because there is little chance of antagonizing the audience - unless one uses bad words! The difficulty arises when writing letters about the unpleasant or when writing to persuade the audience. The audience's sensibilities are then of paramount importance and affect the sentence structure, word choice, content, and organization of the letter.

Whatever type of letter one is writing, it is always advisable to plan the letter with the fundamentals of letter writing in mind - knowledge of the subject, audience, and purpose. These basics not only provide guidance but also keep one's mind calm when one is asked, at the last minute, to inform a major account holder that the company will not be able to meet the deadline as scheduled.

UNDERSTANDING THE AUDIENCE

Before composing any message, all writers should be well informed about the subject and should have a clear picture of what they want to convey and what they wish to achieve through the communication (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of "purpose"). If these prerequisites are not met, one cannot even begin to write.

Understanding the audience is often a more challenging task. It requires the cultivation of a "you" or "reader oriented" attitude. Then, as a writer, you have to transfer this understanding or mental picture of the audience into written form through careful selection of content and the effective organization of the different parts of the message.

Cultivating a "You" Attitude

Readers find ideas more interesting and appealing if they are expressed from the reader's point of view. A letter reflecting a "you" attitude indicates sincere concern for the reader's needs and interests. To think from the reader's point of view - that is, cultivate a "you" attitude - concentrate on the following questions:

- Does the message address the reader's major needs and concerns?
- Is the information stated as truthfully and ethically as possible?
- Will the reader perceive the ideas to be fair and logical?

- Are ideas expressed clearly and concisely (to avoid misunderstandings)?
- Would the reader feel this message is reader-centered?
- Does the message serve as a vehicle for developing positive business relationships - even when the message is negative? Are ideas stated tactfully and positively and in a manner that preserves the reader's self-worth and cultivates future business?
- Does the message reflect the high standards of a business professional: quality paper, correct formatting, good printing quality, and absence of spelling mistakes and grammatical errors?

Concentration on these points will boost the reader's confidence in the writer's competence and will communicate nonverbally that the reader is valued enough to merit the writer's best effort.

How Can We "Understand the Audience"?

To help you see a situation from the point of view of the reader, focus on relevant information about the reader - background, values, opinions, preferences, and so on. Your knowledge of the reader's reaction in similar, previous experiences will help you greatly in anticipating how this reader is likely to react in the current situation.

Empathizing with those you know is often an unconscious act, but empathizing with those you do not know requires additional effort. To make a mental picture of readers you are unfamiliar with, thoughtfully consider all you know about the reader and how this information might affect the content and style of your letter. Consider the following major factors carefully:

1. *Age.* A letter answering an elementary-school student's request for information from your company would not be worded like a letter answering a similar request from an adult.

2. *Economic level.* A banker's collection letter to a prompt-paying customer is not likely to be the same form letter sent to clients who have fallen behind on their payments for small loans.

3. *Educational/Occupational background.* The technical jargon and acronyms used in a financial proposal sent to bank loan officers may not be suitable in a proposal sent to a group of private investors. In the same way, a message to the CEO of a major corporation may differ in style and content from a message to one of the stockholders.

4. *Culture.* The vast cultural differences between people increase the complexity of the communication process. A letter containing expressions like "they were clean bowled" and "clear the pitch" would confuse a manager from a different culture.

5. *Rapport.* A sensitive letter written to a long-time client may differ significantly from a letter written to a newly acquired client.

6. *Expectations.* Letters containing errors in spelling and grammar will cause the reader to doubt the credibility of the source, particularly when the letter is sent by a professional like a doctor, a lawyer, or an accountant.

7. *Needs of the reader.* Just as successful sales personnel begin by identifying the needs of the prospective buyer, an effective writer attempts to understand the reader's frame of reference as the basis for developing the message's organization and content.

Understanding the audience helps the writer see the issue or subject from the reader's point of view.

Observe the lack of empathy in the following response to a claim letter:

Dear Mr.Kumar,

This letter is in response to your letter of October,20 asking for a replacement of your stained Tiger Tuff carpet. There seems to be a misunderstanding of what commercial quality implies. Commercial quality refers to the durability of the nap, not to stain resistance.

You purchased pale-blue commercial quality, but then installed it in an industrial plant. This represents a misuse of the product. I have no control over the care and use of the carpet after it has been installed.

This message clearly shows no concern for the reader's problems and no regard for his status as a client. The tone is aggressive and accusatory, conveying not only a bad image of the Tiger Tuff company, but also alienating the client and destroying the rapport that had been built up over many years.

Although knowledge about the recipients assists writers in developing empathy, writers can learn to predict reader's reactions with reasonable accuracy by placing themselves in the reader's shoes. To do so, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- Would I react favorably to a message saying my request is being granted?
- Would I experience a feeling of disappointment upon learning that my request has been refused?
- Would I be pleased when an apparently sincere message praises me for a job well done?
- Would I experience some disappointment if I am informed that my promised pay increase is being postponed?

To understand your audience and develop a sense of empathy toward it, ask yourself how you would react if you were in the other person's position. Asking that question before you write a message greatly simplifies the task of organizing the message.

ORGANIZING YOUR MESSAGE

All business communicators face the problem of compressing complicated, closely related ideas into a linear message that proceeds sequentially from point to point. People simply don't remember disassociated facts and figures, so successful communicators rely on organization to make their messages meaningful. Before discussing how to achieve good organization, let us explore why it is so important.

Why Organization is Essential

When a topic is divided into parts, one part will be recognized as a central idea and the other as minor ideas (details). The process of identifying these ideas and arranging them in the right sequence is known as outlining or organizing. Outlining before writing provides numerous benefits:

- Encourages brevity and accuracy. (Reduces the chance of leaving out an essential idea or including an unessential one)
- Permits concentration on one phase at a time. Having focused separately on (a) the ideas that need to be included, (b) the distinction between major and minor ideas, the writer is now free to concentrate totally on the problem of writing.
- Saves time in writing or dictating. (With questions about which ideas to include and their proper sequence already answered, little time is lost in moving from one point to another).
- Facilitates emphasis and de-emphasis (An effective outline ensures that important points will appear in emphatic positions).

The preceding benefits derived from outlining are writer oriented. Readers also benefit from a well outlined message:

- The message is more concise and accurate
- The relationships among ideas are easier to distinguish and remember
- Reaction to the message and its writer is more likely to be positive.

Reader reaction to a message is strongly influenced by the sequence in which ideas are presented. Throughout this chapter, and other chapters on letter writing, outlining and reader response will be considered frequently.

How to Organize Letters

Writers need organization to ensure that their ideas are presented clearly and logically, increasing the likelihood that the readers will react positively to their message. Before listing the first point of an outline, you should ask yourself:

What will be the central idea of the message?

To answer this question, think about the reason for writing. Is the purpose to get information, to answer a question, to accept an offer, to deny a request? If the letter were condensed into a one-sentence message, that sentence would be the central idea.

In addition, ask yourself two more questions:

- What will be the most likely reader reaction to the message?
- In view of the predicted reader reaction, should the central idea be listed first in the outline; or should it be listed as one of the last items?

To answer the above questions, examine how you would react if you were the one receiving the message you are preparing to send. Like all readers you would react with pleasure to good news and displeasure to bad news; and you can reasonably assume that your reader's reaction would be similar. Almost every letter will fit into one of four categories of anticipated reader reaction: (1) pleasure, (2) displeasure, (3) interest but neither pleasure nor displeasure, or (4) no interest. By considering anticipated reader reaction, the writer increases the effectiveness of the letter and maintains good human relations.

After a letter has been classified into one of the four categories of reader reaction, the next issue to consider is whether the letter should be organized deductively or inductively. In the deductive approach, the central idea is placed first and is then followed by the evidence. In the inductive approach, the evidence is placed first so as to lead up to the main idea. In general, the deductive (or direct approach) is used when the audience is expected to be receptive, eager, interested, pleased or even neutral toward the message. If the audience is likely to be resistant - displeased, uninterested, or unwilling - the writer would have better results with the inductive (or indirect) approach. See figure 10.1 for a summary of different organizational patterns for different types of audience reactions.

Bear in mind, however, that each message is unique. All communication problems cannot be solved by simple formulas. If you are sending bad news to outsiders, for example, an indirect approach is probably the best. On the other hand, you might want to get directly to the point with an associate or old friend, even if your message is unpleasant. The direct approach might also be the best choice for long messages, regardless of the audience attitude, because delaying the main point could cause confusion and frustration. Just remember that the first priority is to make the message clear.

Because deductive messages are easier to write, and pleasant (good news and goodwill) and routine messages follow similar outlines, they are discussed together in this chapter. Inductive messages are discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

BUSINESS LETTERS

Letters that convey pleasant messages are referred to as "good news" letters. Letters not likely to generate any emotional reaction are referred to as routine letters. The organizational pattern of both types of letters follows a deductive pattern in which the major idea is presented first, followed by supporting details. The deductive sequence-of-ideas pattern has several advantages:

Figure 10.1: Different Organizational Patterns

AUDIENCE REACTION	ORGANIZATIONAL PLAN	OPENING	BODY	CLOSE
Eager or interested	Direct requests	Begin with the request or main idea.	Provide necessary details	Close cordially and state the specific action desired.
Pleased or neutral	Routine, good news, and goodwill messages	Begin with the main idea or the good news.	Provide necessary details.	Close with a cordial comment, a reference to the good news, or a look toward the future.
Displeased	Bad-news messages	Begin with a neutral statement that acts as a transition to the reasons for the bad news.	Give reasons to justify a negative answer. State or imply the bad news, and make a positive suggestion.	Close cordially.
Uninterested or unwilling	Persuasive messages	Begin with a statement or question that captures attention.	Arouse the audience's interest in the subject. Build the audience's desire to comply.	Request action.

1. The first sentence is easy to write

2. The first sentence is likely to attract attention. Coming first, the major idea gets the attention it deserves.

3. When good news appears in the beginning, the message immediately puts readers in a pleasant state of mind, rendering them receptive to the details that follow.

4. The arrangement reduces the reading time. Once readers have grasped the important idea, they can move rapidly through the supporting details.

This basic plan is applicable in several business-writing situations: (1) routine claim letters and "yes" replies, (2) routine requests related to credit matters and "yes" replies, (3) routine order letters and "yes" replies, and (4) routine requests and "yes" replies.

Figure 10.2: Poor Example of a Routine Claim Letter

March 3, 2000

Mr G Bharat Kumar, Owner,
Kumar Plumbing & Heating company
78 Namboodri Street,
Chennai 370001

Dear Mr Kumar:

[1] MAYUR STREET APARTMENTS

[2] Late yesterday evening, I stopped by the construction site of the apartments you are under contract to build for me. [3] At the present rate, you appear to be well ahead of schedule.

[4] According to our agreement, all requests and complaints are to be made in writing. [5] I noticed that water heaters had been installed in two of the apartments. [6] The units are 30-litre heaters, but the specs call for 50-litre heaters in each of the 12 apartments.

[7] For some families, the smaller size may be sufficient; but others may need the larger size. [8] Because the larger size is specified in the agreement we signed, I respectfully request that the two 30-litre units be removed and that 50-litre water heaters be installed in all the apartments.

[9] Thank you for your consideration in this matter. [10] I am enthused about the progress you have made.

Sincerely,

K Srinivas
Contractor

---

1. Subject line is too general to aid reader in understanding the subject
2. Begins with detail that will lead to the main idea.
3. Makes an observation that could be omitted (although it does show that the writer is willing to give credit where credit is due).
4. States directly information that is already known.
5. Moves toward the main idea.
6. Continues with detail.
7. Presents a reason for making the upcoming request.
8. States the main point of the letter that should have been presented in the first paragraph. Stating the claim in such a long sentence keeps the request from receiving the emphasis it needs.
9. Uses a cliché.
10. Does close on a positive note but uses “enthused”; “enthusiastic” should be used instead.

Ineffective and effective applications of the deductive outline are illustrated in the sample letters in this chapter. Detailed comments have been made to help you see how principles are applied or violated.

Typically, a poorly written and poorly organized example is followed by a well-written and well-organized example. The commentary on poor examples explains why certain techniques should be avoided. And the commentary on well-written examples demonstrates ways to avoid certain mistakes. The well-written examples are designed to illustrate the application of principles of good writing; they are not intended as models of exact words, phrases, or sentences that should appear in the letters you write. The aim of this case study technique is to enable you to apply the principles you have learned and create your own well-written letters.

Routine Claims

A claim letter is a request for an adjustment. When writers ask for something to which they think they are entitled (such as a refund, replacement, exchange, or payment for damages), the letter is called a claim letter.

Claim letter. These requests can be divided into two groups: routine claims and persuasive claims. Persuasive claims, which will be discussed in a later chapter, assume that the request will be granted only after explanations and persuasive arguments have been presented. Routine claims - possibly because of guarantees, warrantees, or other contractual conditions - assume that the request will be granted quickly and willingly, without persuasion. Because it is assumed that routine claims will be granted willingly, a forceful tone is inappropriate.

When the claim is routine (not likely to meet resistance), the following outline is recommended:

1. Request action in the first sentence,
2. Explain the details supporting the request for action.
3. Close with an expression of appreciation for taking the action requested.

Figure 10.2 illustrates an inductive treatment and figure 10.3 a deductive treatment of a routine claim letter. Written inductively, the letter in figure 10.2 does transmit the essential ideas; but it is unnecessarily long and the main idea is not emphasized.

Surely the builder intended to install 50 litre heaters; otherwise, the building contract would not have been signed. Because a mistake is obvious, the builder would not need to be persuaded. And because compliance can be expected, the claim can be stated without prior explanation.

Without showing anger, suspicion, or disappointment, the claim letter in figure 10.3 asks simply and directly for an adjustment. As a result, the major point receives deserved emphasis. And given the nature of the audience, the response to it should be favorable.

Favorable Response to a Claim Letter. A response to a claim letter is termed an “adjustment” letter. By responding favorably to legitimate requests, businesses can gain a reputation for standing behind their goods and services. A loyal customer may become even more loyal after a business has demonstrated such integrity.

Since the subject of an adjustment letter is related to the goods or services provided, the letter can serve easily and efficiently as a low-pressure sales letter. For example, a letter about a company’s wallpaper might also mention its paint. This type of subtle sales message in an adjustment letter has a better chance of being read than a direct sales letter.

When the response to a claim letter is favorable, present ideas in the following sequence:

Figure 10.3: Good Example of a Routine Claim Letter

March 3, 2000

Mr G Bharat Kumar, Owner
Kumar Plumbing & Heating Company
78 Namboodri Street
Chennai 370001

Dear Mr Kumar:

[1] WATER HEATER SPECIFICATIONS FOR MAYUR STREET APARTMENTS

[2] Please replace the two 30-litre water heaters (installed last week) with 50-litre units.

[3] Large units are essential for families with children. [4] For that reason, the contract specifies a 50-litre heater for each of the 12 apartments.

[5] The project appears to be well ahead of schedule; thanks for your efforts.

Sincerely,

K Srinivas
Contractor

---

1. Subject line provides specific information about the subject.
2. Emphasizes the main idea by placing it in the first sentence.
3, 4. Follows with explanation
5. Ends on a positive note.

1. Reveal the good news in the first sentence.
2. Explain the circumstances.
3. Close on a pleasant, forward looking note.

Figure 10.4 illustrates a poorly written inductive response to a claim letter. Read this letter before reading the well written deductive response.

Figure 10.4 does reveal compliance with the request, but the main idea is not emphasized. In the absence of an explanation for the initial installation of 30 litre heaters, the reader could become suspicious of the builder's intent. Although explaining is not obligatory, an honest and efficient builder would find out what happened. By investigating and explaining, the builder may impress the reader as a manager who takes corrective and preventive measures.

In the revised letter in figure 10.5, notice the deductive treatment and the explanation.

Knowing that the recipient will be happy to learn that the request has been granted, the writer in figure 10.5 simply states it in the first sentence. The details then follow naturally.

Figure 10.4: Poor Example of a Favorable Response to a Claim Letter

March 7, 2000

Mr K Srinivas
Srinivas Property Management Corporation
632 Residency Enclave
Chennai 37003

Dear Mr K Srinivas

[1] Thank you for your letter of March 3. [2] It has been referred to me for reply.

[3] Looking at our contract, I see that it does specify 50-litre water heaters. [4]. Therefore, we are complying with your request that the 30-litre heaters be removed and that the 50-litre units be placed in all your apartments.

[5] Thank you for calling this matter to our attention.

Sincerely
G Bharat Kumar, Owner

---

1. Uses a well-worn beginning.
2. States the obvious.
3. Leads to main idea.
4. Presents main idea that should have been presented in the first paragraph.
5. Uses a sentence that seems polite but is well worn.

Routine Letters about Credit

Normally, credit information is requested and transmitted electronically or by form letters or simple office forms. When the response to a credit letter is likely to be favorable, the request should be stated at the beginning.

Request for information. The network of credit associations across the world has made knowledge about individual consumers easy to obtain. As a result, exchange of credit information is common in business. The following is an outline for an effective letter request for credit information about an individual.

1. Identify the request and name the applicant early, preferably in the opening sentence or in the subject line.
2. Assure the reader that the reply will be kept confidential.
3. Detail the information requested. Use a tabulated-form layout to make the reply easy.
4. End courteously. Offer the same assistance to the reader.

In the letter in figure 10.6, the credit applicant instead of the prospective creditor has written the request for credit information. Notice the subject line in the figure. The subject line serves as the letter's "title." If Beach Candy Distributors (the prospective creditors) had written this letter to the credit reference, an acceptable subject line would be:

Figure 10.5: Good Example of a Favorable Response to a Claim Letter

March 7, 2000

Mr K Srinivas
Srinivas Property Management Corporation
632 Residency Enclave
Chennai 370003

Dear Mr K Srinivas

[1] Each of your apartments will have a 50-litre water heater. [2] The two 30-litre units are being removed today.

[3] Thank you for reporting the problem before additional heaters were installed. [4] Clearly, "50-litre" appears on the specs; clearly, "30-litre" was keyboarded on the warehouse request form.

[5] Excellent progress is being made on this project; all plumbing should be complete by the original completion date.

Sincerely

G Bharat Kumar, Owner

---

1. The good news (main idea) receives emphasis.
2. Action is being taken already.
3. Reaction to the report is positive.
4. Presents explanation.
5. Closes with a look to the future.

CREDIT INFORMATION, COASTLINE CAFÉ

A desirable item of this letter is the use of fill-in items. This enables the recipient to provide the required information with a minimum of effort.

Request for credit. When people want to begin buying on credit and assume credit will be willingly extended, they can place their request in the first sentence and follow with details. This approach is advisable only when the writer's supporting financial statements are assumed sufficient to merit a "yes" response. Figure 10.7 illustrates a credit request that follows the deductive plan.

Favorable response to a request for credit. Effective "yes" replies to requests for credit should use the outline shown below:

1. Begin by saying credit terms have been arranged; or if an order has been placed, begin by telling of the shipment of goods, thus implying that credit has been extended.

Figure 10.6: Good Example of a Request for Credit Information

April 25, 2000

Mr Ashok Mittal, Loan Manager,
National Bank of Commerce,
12 Northpoint View,
Mumbai 230001

Dear Ashok

REQUEST TO PROVIDE CREDIT INFORMATION

Please provide credit information to Beach Candy Distributors. This information will facilitate my purchasing products on account.

Please complete the blanks that follow. Your reply will be held in strict confidence. Return the completed letter to Beach Candy Distributors in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Length of time sold on credit ____________________________

Highest credit extended ________________________________

Credit limit ____

Balance now due _____________________ Past due _________

Remarks ____

Authorized Signature ___________________________________

Ashok, we appreciate your help in obtaining credit from this new vendor. Please drop by the Coastline Café to enjoy our delicious menu additions.

Sincerely

Pankaj Nirula
Owner

2. Indicate the foundation upon which the credit extension is based.
3. Present and explain the credit terms.
4. Include some resale or sales-promotional material.
5. End with a confident look toward future business.

Why should you discuss the foundation upon which you based your decision to extend credit? To prevent collection problems that may arise later. Indicating that you are extending credit on the basis of an applicant's prompt paying habits with present creditors encourages continuation of those habits. It recognizes a reputation and challenges the purchaser to live up to it. When the financial situation become difficult, the purchaser will probably remember the compliment and pay you first.

Why should you discuss the credit terms? To stress their importance and prevent collection problems. Unless customers know exactly when payments are expected, they may not make them on time. And unless they know exactly what the discount terms are, they may take unauthorized discounts. See Figures 10.8 and 10.9 and the commentary that follows to identify the differences between a poorly written and well-written response to a credit request.

Figure 10.7: Good Example of a Request for Credit

June 3, 2000

Sindhi Athletic Clothing company
137 Mayadeep Drive
Ludhiana 620013

[1] Ladies and Gentlemen:

[2] Will you please fill the enclosed order on a credit basis? [3] We are eager to offer your popular line of athletic clothing to our customers.

[4] Established in 1974, we are the largest indoor athletic facility in Hyderabad. [5] From aerobics and racquetball to a health-food café, our club offers members the most diversified selection of recreational activities available locally.

[6] The enclosed financial statements indicate that we purchase on account regularly from other vendors. [7] Credit references can be provided. [8] If you need additional information, please write to me.

[9] Many of our customers have been asking us to stock your line; therefore, we expect to place a similar order every six weeks.

Sincerely,

R Venkateshwar
Manager

[10] Enclosures

---

1. Uses an appropriate salutation for a letter addressed to a company.

2,3 States the major idea and shows interest in the company.

4,5 Gives background information about the company.

6,7 Provides details needed for credit to be extended.

8,9 Closes with a look at the future.

10. Uses an enclosure notation to alert the reader that information is included.

Although the letter in figure 10.9 was written to a dealer, the same principles apply when writing to a consumer. Each one - dealers and consumers - should be addressed in terms of individual interests. Dealers are concerned about mark up, marketability, and display; consumers are concerned about price, appearance, and durability. Consumers may require a more detailed explanation of credit terms.

The letter in figure 10.9 performed a dual function: it said “yes” to an application for credit and “yes, we are filling your order.” Because of its importance, the credit aspect was emphasized more than the order. In other cases (if the order is for cash or if the credit terms are already understood), the primary purpose of writing may be to acknowledge an order.

Figure 10.8: Poor Example of a Favorable Response to a Credit Request

August 16, 2000

Space Age Electronics
No.12, 7th Cross, 21st Main
BTM-II Stage
Bangalore 560030

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] Thank you for your order for 10 VISIONZ Video cameras. [2] They are being shipped today.

[3] We are pleased to inform you that your credit rating was investigated and found to be satisfactory. [4] Our credit terms are the usual 2/10, n/30.

[5] Welcome to our growing list of satisfied customers. [6] We look forward to doing business with you in the future.

Sincerely,

Kamlesh Mittal
Credit Manager

---

1. Delays the answer to the reader's question, "May I pay for them later?"
2. Implies the answer to the question of credit extension - if they are being shipped, credit must have been extended.
3. "Pleased" and "investigated" could have been taken for granted. The applicant may feel under suspicion.
4. Because this letter is to a dealer, the explanation of terms is probably sufficient. In letters to customers, more detailed explanation and interpretation are needed.
5. Uses a cliché, which is probably meaningless. By sending an individualized letter that explains what the dealer wants to know, the writer could imply the welcome.
6. A good credit manager would not have ended the letter with a standard, worn out remark.

Routine Letters about Orders

Like routine letters about credit, routine letters about orders put the main idea in the first sentence. Details are usually tabulated, especially when more than one item is ordered.

Order Letter. These letters constitute the offer portion of a contract that is fulfilled when the shipper sends the goods (the acceptance part of the contract). So if you want to receive shipment, you should make your order letter a definite order. The outline for order letters is deductive:

1. In the first sentence say "please ship," "please send," "I order," or some other similar statement that assures the seller of the desire to buy, Avoid indefinite statements like "I'm interested," or "I'd like to."

Figure 10.9: Good Example of a Favorable Response to a Credit Request

August 16, 2000

[1] Attention Order Department
Space Age Electronics
No.12, 7th Cross, 21st Main
BTM-II Stage
Bangalore 560030

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[2] Ten VISIONZ Video cameras were shipped by Fastgo Air Express and should arrive in time for your Winter Fest.

[3] Because of your favorable current credit rating, we are sending the shipment subject to the usual credit terms, 2/10, n/30. [4] By paying this invoice within ten days, you save Rs14000.

[5] The VISIONZ camera is known for its 8:1, fl.4 power zoom lens and 2-lux light sensitivity - features that will allow your customers to take high-quality pictures with a minimum of light. [6] The display inside the viewer will give your customers additional helpful information.

[7] See the enclosed folder for price lists and forms for ordering additional cameras or other video or photography equipment.

Sincerely,

Kamlesh Mittal
Credit Manager

Enclosure

---

1. Uses attention line in letter addressed to a company to assure efficient delivery.

2. Presents good news. Indicates that the writer has some consideration for the problems of a dealer. Implies the credit extension.

3. Recognizes the dealer for earning the credit privilege. Gives a reason for the credit extension; it was not extended arbitrarily. Introduces the credit terms. Addressed to a dealer, the letter does not need to explain what “2/10, n/30” means.

4. Encourages taking advantage of the discount in terms of profits for the dealer.

5,6 . Presents resale.

7. Looks confidently forward to future orders.

2. List the items ordered and give precise details. Be specific by mentioning catalog numbers, prices, colors, sizes and all other information that will enable the seller to fill the order promptly and without the need for further correspondence.
3. Include a payment plan and shipping instructions. Remember that the shipper is free to ship by the normal method in the absence of specific instructions from the buyer. Tell when, where, and how the order is to be shipped.
4. Close the letter with a confident expectation of delivery.

In large companies, the normal procedure is to use purchase-order forms for ordering. The most important thing you can do as a customer is to make sure your order letter or form is complete and covers all the necessary details.

In addition to the application of the outline principles, note the clarity of the physical layout in the order letter in figure 10.10.

Favorable Response to an Order Letter. When customers place an order for merchandise, they expect to get exactly what they ordered as quickly as possible. Most orders can be acknowledged by shipping the order; no letter is necessary. But for initial orders and for orders that cannot be filled quickly and precisely, companies send letters of acknowledgment. Since it is not cost effective to send individualized letters of acknowledgment, companies typically send a copy of the sales order. Although this method is impersonal, customers appreciate the company's acknowledging the order and giving them an idea of when the order will arrive.

Non-routine acknowledgments require individualized letters. Although initial orders can be acknowledged through form letters, the letters are more effective if written individually. If they are well written, these letters will not only acknowledge the order but also create customer goodwill and encourage the customer to place additional orders. Most people who write letters have no difficulty saying "yes"; but because saying "yes" is easy, they may develop the habit of making their letters sound too artificial.

Figure 10.10: Good Example of an Order Letter

October 1, 2000

Cecil Tree Farm

26 Hill Road

Shimla 820015

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please ship the following items, which are listed in your current catalog.

20 #RM80 Scotch Pine, 5' to 6' @ Rs 300	Rs 6000
50 #RM90 Scotch Pine, 7' to 8' @ Rs 350	17500
30 #ST20 Franzier Fir, 7' to 8' @ Rs 500	15000
Subtotal	38500
Transportation	2000
Total	40500

The enclosed check for Rs 41500 covers all charges including shipping fees of Rs 10 per tree. Unless you normally use some other means, please ship by Agarwal Shippers.

Sincerely,

Punam Singh, Owner

Figure 10.11: Poor Example of a Favorable Response to an Order Letter

November 3, 2000

Central Electronics
No.5 15th Cross
BTM Stage 3
Bangalore 560074

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] Thank you for your order, which we really appreciate. [2] We sincerely welcome you to our ever-growing list of satisfied customers.

[3] We were delighted to send you 30 Porta-phone telephones. [4] They were shipped by express today.

[5] We are sure you will find our company a good one to deal with and that our telephones are of the finest quality.

[6] Please find our latest price list enclosed. [7] Thank you for your patronage.

Sincerely,

V A R Partap
Sales Manager

Enclosures

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1. Begins with a cliché.
2. Says to this customer the same thing that has been said already to thousands of customers.
3. Sounds exaggerated and thus insincere.
4. Presents main idea that should have been presented earlier.
5. Includes unsupported statement of certainty.
6. Uses a cliché that states the obvious.
7. Ends with a cliché.

Take a look at the letter in figure 10.11. Is this letter good enough to create customer goodwill or generate future orders? As mentioned earlier - think about it! Read the commentary only after forming your own opinions, based on what you have learnt so far.

Now let's look at figure 10.12 to see how the same letter sounds when it confirms shipment of goods in the first sentence, includes concrete resale on the product and business establishment, and eliminates business jargon.

Figure 10.12: Good Example of a Favorable Request to an Order Letter

November 3, 2000

Central Electronics
No.5 15th Cross
BTM Stage 3
Bangalore 250008

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] Thirty CS 382 computer systems were shipped to your store by Fastgo Air Express today.

[2] Each unit has been customized according to your specifications. These modifications include one 5 ¼" disk drive, one 3 ¼" disk drive, math co-processor, and memory expansion card to facilitate future memory needs.

[3] With these distinctive features, these computers will provide your customers with leading edge technology.

[4] The flexibility of this system will allow your customers to take advantage of software innovations quickly and efficiently.

[5] With the custom features of these CS 382s, your customers can work optimally at the office. The NB-1 is available now. This notebook computer has the power your customers will need for work they take home or to other remote locations. [6] Its easy-to-use trackball and backlit liquid crystal display have made the NB-1 a popular portable.

[7] To make this preferred portable technology available to your customers, review the enclosed specifications and complete the enclosed order form. [8] Your order will be shipped immediately.

Sincerely,

V A R Partap
Sales Manager

[9] Enclosures

---

1. Sufficiently implies that the order has been received and filled. Refers to specific merchandise shipped and informs of method of shipment.

2. Confirms the specific modifications for this customer order.

3, 4. Points out specific qualities of the merchandise.(uses resale).

5-6. Mentions related merchandise (uses sales promotional material).

7. Refers to enclosures without using an entire sentence.

8. Implies that additional orders are expected.

9. Uses an enclosure notation to alert the reader that other information is included.

A major purpose of the acknowledgment letter is to encourage future orders. An effective approach for achieving this goal is stating that the merchandise was sent, including resale, and implying that future orders will be handled in the same manner. Future business cannot be encouraged by merely filling the letter with words like "welcome" and "gratitude" - they are overused words. Appropriate action, instead,

Figure 10.13: Poor Example of a Routine Request

December 3, 2000

Mr Vimal Ambani, Project Manager,

Prime Engineering Consultants

23, rue de Invalides

75008 Paris

FRANCE

Dear Mr Ambani:

[1] For the past five years, I have worked as a staff engineer in the Environmental Group at Prime. [2] Yesterday I received news of my impending transfer to Paris, France, to work in our plant location there.

[3] I am writing you to ask if you have any advice to help me make my transition to the Paris operation - my first assignment abroad.

Because you have been working in the Paris office for the past ten years, I felt you would already know the ropes and could be a great help.

[4] Any advice you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Dinesh Dave

Staff Engineer

1, 2. Delays request (the main idea of the letter).

3. Presents the request vaguely.

4. Superficial closing.

implies both gratitude and welcome. This is not to say that words of appreciation should not be used; they can be used, but they should sound sincere and original.

Letters about Routine Requests

Notice how routine requests and favorable responses to them use the same organizational pattern. Compared with persuasive requests (discussed later in Chapter 12), routine requests are shorter.

Routine Requests. Businesspeople often write letters requesting information about people, prices, products and services. Because the request is a door opener for future business, readers accept it optimistically. At the same time, they arrive at an opinion about the writer based on the quality of the letter. The following outline can serve as a guide for preparing effective letters of request.

Figure 10.14: Good Example of a Routine Request

December 3, 2000

Mr Vimal Ambani, Project Manager,

Prime Engineering Consultants

23, rue de Invalides

75008 Paris

FRANCE

Dear Mr Ambani:

[1] Would you please assist me as I begin plans to transfer to the Environmental Group in the Paris operation - my first assignment abroad? [2] Because you have been working in this location for several years, you may be able to give me some ideas on the following items:

[3] 1. Can you suggest a strategy to help me optimize my purchase of francs, especially during the transition period?

[4] 2. What degree of proficiency should I have in the French language? If I must speak French fluently, how can I manage until I learn the language?

[5] 3. Can you suggest any books or other resources that will prepare my family and me for living abroad?

[6] I will arrive on May 26 to begin work on June 2. [7] Even though my transfer is six months away, my family and I wish to make our transition as smooth as possible. [8] Consequently, receiving this information from you will help us achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

Dinesh Dave

Staff Engineer

1, 2. States request plainly.

3-5. Asks specific questions; uses enumeration for emphasis.

6-8. Expresses appreciation and alludes to action.

1. Make the major request in the first sentence.
2. Follow the major request with the details that will make the request clear. If possible, use tabulation for added emphasis.
3. Close with a forward look at the reader's next step.

Figure 10.13 is a vague request letter. The same request is handled more efficiently in figure 10.14. In the letter in figure 10.14 - the good example - the writer starts with a direct request for specific information. The request is followed by as much detail as is necessary to enable the reader to answer specifically. It ends confidently, showing appreciation for the action requested.

Figure 10.15: Poor Example of a Favorable Response to a Routine Request

December 7, 2000

Mr Dinesh Dave, Staff Engineer
Prime Engineering Consultants
59 South Kasturba Road,
Ahmedabad 207603

Dear Mr Dave:

[1] I read your request hurriedly and hopefully my response will provide the logistics for your transition to the Paris operation.

[2] The exchange rate fluctuates rapidly; I'd say you will need at least Rs 200000 ($5000) for starting expenses. [3] Your other questions are difficult to answer; you'll just have to work them out when you get here. [4] I will introduce you to some of the staff here and help you find your way around on the first day, but after that you're on your own.

[5] May we in the Paris office take this opportunity to welcome you to the overseas operation. 6 We look forward to your arrival on June 2.

Sincerely,

Vimal Ambani
Project Manager

---

1 Focuses on writer; tone suggests lack of interest in helping

2-4 Not specific or helpful; not directly related to the questions asked.

5,6 Uses too many words; is unconvincing because the rest of the letter is negative.

Favorable Response to a Routine Request. Many people say "yes" thoughtlessly. The letter in figure 10.15 grants a request, but it reports the decision in an uninterested manner.

With a little planning and consideration for the reader, the letter could have been written as illustrated in figure 10.16.

The principles of writing that apply to business letters also apply to all forms of communication. To make their business messages effective, writers must understand their audience and express their central idea clearly and in a way that is palatable to the audience. In other words, effective writing is "reader-oriented" writing. Reader orientation leads to powerful, well organized, clearly expressed and focused messages.

THINK ABOUT IT

Before beginning to express ideas, writers need to answer several questions: what, exactly, is the message going to be? In view of what the message is, how will it affect the receiver? In view of its effect on the receiver, which organization pattern is best?

When the receiver can be expected to be pleased by the message, the main idea is presented first, followed by the details. Likewise, when the message is routine and not likely to arouse a feeling of pleasure or displeasure, the main idea is presented first. In subsequent chapters we will discuss the organization pattern to be followed when the receiver can be expected to be displeased or not initially interested.

Figure 10.16: Good Example of a Favorable Response to a Routine Request

December 7, 2000

Mr. Dinesh Dave, Staff Engineer
Prime Engineering Consultants
59 South Kasturba Road,
Ahmedabad 207603

Dear Mr. Dave:

[1] Congratulations on your transfer to the Paris office. I am happy that we will be working together and am pleased to answer your questions.

[2] 1. The franc has been declining against the U.S. Dollar steadily for several weeks, and economists are predicting that this trend will continue. Therefore, I suggest you immediately purchase the francs you will need for the first several months. You can easily keep in touch with the fluctuating exchange rates by reviewing the "Money Rates" section of the Wall Street Journal each day.

[3] 2. English is used most often in the office. You will find it beneficial to become familiar with the French culture, customs, and economy. Several guidebooks are available from the director of International Operations at the home office. I recommend that you read these books throughly and share them with your wife and children.

[4] 3. Sam Ganesh has just left the Paris office to work in the Houston office. He would be able to answer many of your questions. You can reach him at (403) 555-1393.

[5] Please fax me your travel plans, and I will make arrangements to meet you at the airport and help you get settled in your new home.

Sincerely,

Vimal Ambani
Project Manager

---

1 Shows sincere interest in the request and the person.

2, 3 Provides specific answers and guidelines.

4. Provides additional helpful information.

5. Specific offer to help communicates genuine interest in the person and his transition.

From a writer's point of view, the task of writing is simplified if a prior decision has been reached on the organization pattern to be followed for a given situation. From a reader's point of view, well-organized messages are easier to understand and promote a more positive attitude toward the writer.

The deductive approach is appropriate for the following types of letters: routine claim letters, routine letters about credit, routine letters about orders, routine requests, and favorable responses to all such routine letters. The inductive approach is essential when writing about the unpleasant or when writing to persuade. This approach will be examined in detail in Chapters 11 and 12.

Chapter 11

Writing about the Unpleasant

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Writing for the Reader
- Saying “No” to an Adjustment Request
- Saying “No” to a Credit Request
- Saying “No’ to an Order for Merchandise
- Saying ‘No’ to a Request for a Favor
- Special Problems in Writing about the Unpleasant

After reading Chapter 10 you must be feeling comfortable about mentally putting yourself in your reader's shoes. Now take a look at the following letter refusing a credit request. If you were the recipient, how would you respond to it?

Your order of July 6 has been received and your request for credit privileges has been given to me for evaluation. At this time, we do not believe it is in our interest to sell to you on a credit basis.

As you read this chapter, think how you would have written this letter. Like you, no one enjoys giving people bad news. Unfortunately, businesspeople sometimes (maybe often) have to convey bad news. Companies must inform customers of unpopular changes; banks often have to refuse loans. Individuals and employees must alert companies of mistakes made in completing an order or handling an account. And at some point, everyone (individuals and companies) must refuse a request for a favor.

The ability to communicate bad news as delicately and clearly as possible is an essential business skill. A skillful manager will attempt to say "no" in such a way that the reader (or listener) supports the decision and is willing to maintain and continue a positive relationship with the company. To do this successfully, the manager must try to understand how the recipient of the unpleasant news will feel.

The importance of effective bad-news communication is illustrated by the story of a man who carried in his coat pocket a job-refusal letter he had received from a company some years ago. He would frequently show the superbly written letter to others and comment, "I'd accept a job from this company any day because this letter made me feel good about myself even though the company couldn't hire me." Obviously, this letter was not an impersonal form letter, nor was it written in haste without genuine understanding of and appreciation for the reader's feelings.

The techniques and examples presented in this chapter will help you refine your ability to convey bad news diplomatically so that you earn the respect and/or continued business of the disappointed reader.

WRITING FOR THE READER

Without empathy for the audience's feelings, it is hard to gain its cooperation or persuade it to accept tough decisions. So, before composing a letter containing unpleasant news, always ask yourself, "if I were the receiver of the message I am about to transmit, how would I react?" The answer to that question has an impact on the sequence in which the ideas are presented and the style in which they are expressed. (Refer Exhibit 11.1 to see how bad news is conveyed in other countries).

Sequence of Ideas

Just as good news is accompanied with details, bad news is accompanied with supporting details (explanation, specific reasons). If the bad news is presented in the first sentence, the reaction is likely to be negative: "That's unfair," "This just can't be." After having made such a judgement on the basis of the first sentence, readers are naturally reluctant to change their minds before the last sentence - even though the intervening sentences present valid reasons for doing so. Instead, disappointed readers tend to concentrate on rejecting (and not understanding) supporting details.

From the writer's point of view, details that support a refusal are very important. If the supporting details are understood and believed by the reader, the message may be readily accepted and a good business relationship preserved. Because the reasons behind the bad news are so important, the writer needs to organize the message in such a way as to emphasize the reasons. The chances of getting the reader to understand and accept the reasons are much better *before* the bad news is presented than *after* the bad news is presented. If the reasons are presented afterwards, the reader may not even read them.

Exhibit 11.1

How Other Countries Convey Bad News

Bad news is unwelcome in any language - but the conventions for passing it on to business associates can vary considerably from country to country. To save yourself grief when sending and receiving bad news internationally, be familiar with the customary approach.

For instance, French business letters are very formal and writer-oriented (without reference to audience needs or benefits). That's because French businesses traditionally write for one purpose: to establish evidence for any future litigation. The preferred style is prudent, precise, and respectful, even if the writer and reader know each other very well. Letters begin with courteous titles ("Monsieur," "Madame," but not "Dear_") and close with flowery salutations ("With our anticipated thanks, we beg you to accept, Sir, our sincere greetings," or "Awaiting your reply, we offer you, Sirs, our assiduous greetings"). Despite their respectful wording, French business letters never become personal or friendly - which is sometimes misinterpreted as coolness, nonchalance, or indifference.

When the news is bad, French writers take a direct approach. They open with a reference to the problem or previous correspondence and then state the bad news clearly. They don't try to avoid negative words, nor do they refer to the audience's needs; but they often apologize and express regret for the problem. A bad-news letter in France won't necessarily end on a positive note, but the close remains gracious: "Accept, Sirs, our distinguished greetings."

In Japan all letter writing is regarded as a troublesome task, even when the news is good. To preserve or establish the appropriate level of respect and humility for the relationship between writer and reader, Japanese letter writers select different forms of nouns, pronouns, and verbs, depending on whose actions they're referring to. Also, their letters traditionally open with remarks about the season taken from books that provide standard phrases for each month - such as, "The season for cherry blossoms is here with us and everybody is beginning to feel refreshed." This is followed by a reference to the reader's business prosperity or health.

When the message is bad news, these opening formalities serve as a buffer. Explanations and apologies follow; then comes the bad news or refusal. Also, Japanese writers protect the reader's feelings by wording the bad news ambiguously - which can sometimes be misinterpreted by Western readers as a condition of acceptance rather than as the refusal it truly is.

British bad-news letters may surprise readers who know that British culture values politeness, tact, and diplomacy. Centuries of business tradition dictate a direct approach for all business letters, even when the message is unsettling. A typical bad-news letter opens with a reference to the subject and continues with a few paragraphs explaining the bad news in an abrupt and blunt, but logical, sequence. The writer then expresses apology and regret, which further emphasizes the bad news. Some British letters end there; others close with a few words wishing the reader success or hoping for continued goodwill. Recently, however, some leading British companies have begun to see the value of considering their audience's feelings and are using the indirect approach common in the United States.

Source: C L Bovee, and John V. Thill. *Business Communication Today.* *(New York: McGraw Hill, 1995).IV edition.*

People who are refused want to know why. To them (and to the writer) the reasons are vital; they must be transmitted and received in a way that satisfies the reader and fulfils the writer's purpose in communicating the message.

The inductive sequence-of-ideas pattern used in unpleasant messages is as follows:

1. Begin with a neutral idea that leads to the reason for the refusal.
2. Present the facts, analysis, and reasons for the refusal.
3. State the refusal using a positive tone and de-emphasizing techniques.
4. Close with an idea that moves away from the refusal.

These four steps of organization are applied in the letters illustrated in this chapter. Before reading these letters, let us consider the reasoning behind each step in the organization of unpleasant messages.

Step 1: Introductory Paragraph. The first paragraph in a good-news letter contains the good news, but the introductory paragraph in the bad-news or refusal letter has a different function. It should (1) let the reader know what the letter is about (without stating the obvious) and (2) serve as a transition into the discussion of reasons (without revealing the bad news or leading the reader to expect good news). If these objectives can be accomplished in one sentence, that sentence can be the first paragraph.

Step 2: Facts, Analysis, and Reasons. Explanations for the refusal have to appear fair and realistic to the reader. And to persuade the reader to accept them, they have to precede the bad-news. Compared with explanations that follow bad-news, those that precede have a better chance of being received with an open mind. By the time a reader has finished reading this portion of the message, the upcoming statement of refusal may be foreseen and accepted as valid.

Step 3: Refusal Statement. If the preceding statements are expressed tactfully and appear valid to the reader, the sentence that states the bad news may arouse little or no resentment. In strictly inductive writing, the refusal statement would be placed at the end of the letter. However, placing a statement of refusal in the last sentence or paragraph would have the effect of placing too much emphasis on it. (Preferably the reasons for the refusal should remain uppermost in the reader's mind.) So a refusal statement should not be placed at the end of the letter; in addition, it should not be placed in a paragraph by itself since this arrangement would place too much emphasis on it.

Step 4: Closing Paragraph. A closing paragraph that is about some aspect of the topic other than the bad news itself helps in several ways. It assists in (1) de-emphasizing the unpleasant part of the message, (2) conveying some useful information that should logically follow bad news, (3) showing that the writer has a positive attitude, and (4) adding a unifying quality to the message.

Although the preceding outline has four points, a bad-news letter may or may not have four paragraphs. More than one paragraph may be necessary for conveying reasons. In the illustrations in this chapter, note that the first and final paragraphs are seldom longer than two sentences. In fact, letters that begin with one-sentence paragraphs looks more inviting to read.

The sequence of these paragraphs, as well as the manner of expression, is strongly influenced by empathy for the recipient of the message.

Style of Expression

Three stylistic qualities of bad-news messages merit special attention: emphasis/de-emphasis, positive language, and implication.

To maintain good human relations, it is vital to emphasize the positive and de-emphasize the negative. The outline recommended for bad-news messages puts the statement of bad news in a subordinate position. In the same way, stylistic techniques work toward the same goal: subordinating bad news by placing it in the dependent clause, using passive voice, expressing in general terms (where possible and necessary), and using abstract nouns or things (instead of the person written to) as the subject of a sentence. Although a refusal (bad news) needs to be clear, subordination of it allows the reasoning to get deserved emphasis.

Positive language accents the good instead of the bad, the pleasant instead of the unpleasant, what can be done instead of what can't be done. Compared with a negative idea presented in negative terms, a negative idea presented in positive terms is more likely to be accepted. When you are tempted to use the following terms, search instead for words or ideas that sound more positive:

chargrined	failure	mistake
complaint	ignorant	misinformed
disappointed	inexusable	nonsense
error	irresponsible	ridiculous

The words in the preceding list evoke feelings that contrast sharply with the positive feelings evoked by words such as:

accurate	concise	productive
approval	correct	prosper
assist	generous	recommendation
commend	gratitude	true

To increase the number of pleasant sounding words in your writing, practice thinking positively. Strive to see the good in all the difficult business situations you could be in.

Implication is often an effective way of transmitting an unpleasant idea. For example, during the lunch hour one employee says to another, "Will you go with me to Midways? We can watch the cricket match on their TV." The answer "No, I won't" communicates a negative response, but it seems unnecessarily direct and harsh. The same message can be indirectly implied:

"I wish I could."

"I must get my work done."

"If I watched cricket this afternoon, I'd be transferred tomorrow."

By implying the "no" answer, the foregoing responses use positive language; convey reasons or at least a positive attitude; and seem more respectful. These implication techniques - as well as emphasis/de-emphasis, positive language, and inductive sequence - are illustrated in the letters that follow.

SAYING "NO" TO AN ADJUSTMENT REQUEST

Assume a seller of oriental furniture receives the following request for reimbursement.

Please reimburse me for the amount of the attached bill.

When I ordered my oriental chest (which was delivered yesterday), I paid in full for the price of the chest and the transportation charges. Yet, before the transportation firm would make delivery, I was required to pay Rs 1050. Recalling that our state does not collect sales tax on foreign purchases, and holding a purchase ticket (sh - 311) marked "paid in full," I assumed an error that you would be glad to correct.

The Rs 1050 was a federal tax (import duties). Before placing the order, the purchaser had been told that purchasers were responsible for import duties that would be collected at the time of delivery. In addition, a statement to that effect was written in bold print on the buy-sell agreement of which she was given a copy. Even though the purchaser is clearly at fault, the seller's response could be more tactful than the one illustrated in Figure 11.1.

In the revised letter in figure 11.2, observe that the first letter reveals the subject matter of the letter and leads into a presentation of reasons. Reasons precede the refusal, the statement of refusal is subordinated, and the final statement is about something other than the refusal.

Figure 11.1: Poor Example of a "No" Response to an Adjustment Request

March 3, 2000

Ms. Jamilla Rehman

Banjara Hills, Plot # 170-14-25

Hyderabad 350007``

Dear Ms. Rehman

[1] Your request for a Rs 1050 reimbursement has been received, and I am sorry to say it cannot be made. [2] Clearly, the charge is for import duties.

[3] In the discussion that preceeded the purchase and in the documents you signed at the time, it was clearly pointed out that you would be responsible for import duties. [4] Duties are not collected at the time of sale because they cannot be accurately predicted.

[5] I am sure you can understand my position in this matter. [6] Thank you for doing business with us; and if you have any further questions, do not hesitate to call or write.

Sincerely

Ramandeep Sidhu

Manager

---

1. Begins with an idea that is not needed (receipt of the request could be taken for granted). Apologizing for a justified decision hardly seems appropriate. Refusing in the first sentence places emphasis on the refusal.

2. Offers explanation that may not receive the emphasis it deserves, especially if reaction to the first sentence has been "they're crooks" or "it's totally unfair."

3. Presents needed information; but if the reader is still smarting from reaction to the first sentence, the point may not register with sufficient impact.

4. Commendably presents a reason for the method of operation.

5. Uses a cliché.

6. Uses another cliché. The words may seem polite but insincere. If taken literally, they could lead to unnecessary correspondence.

As discussed earlier, adjustment letters that say "no" follow a general sequence of ideas: (1) begin with a neutral or factual sentence that leads to the reasons behind the "no" answer, (2) present the reasons and explanations, (3) present the refusal in an unemphatic manner, and (4) close with an off-the-subject thought. The ending should of course be related to the letter or to the business relationship; but it should not be specific about the refusal. Although the same pattern is followed in credit, order and favor refusals, those letters are sufficiently different to make a discussion of each helpful.

SAYING "NO" TO A CREDIT REQUEST

Once we have evaluated a request for credit and have decided to say "no," our primary writing problem is to say "no" so tactfully that we keep the relationship on a cash basis. When requests for credit are accompanied with an order, our credit refusals may serve as acknowledgment letters. And, of course, every business letter is directly or

Figure 11.2: Good Example of a "No" Response to an Adjustment Request

March 3, 2000

Ms Jamilla Rehman

Banjara Hills, Plot # 170-14-25

Hyderabad 350007

Dear Ms Rehman

[1] Your hand-carved, teakwood chest was delivered about a month sooner than we had predicted when purchase papers were signed. [2] The invoice you received with the chest does show prepayment of cost and transportation.

[3] Because the import duty can only be calculated on the shipping date, the tax is paid when shipment is delivered. [4] Before sales contracts are written, buyers are told of their responsibility to pay for import tax. [5] (The sales ticket has a bold-face statement to that effect.)

[6] Responsibility for the tax is yours, but you have reason to feel good about your purchase. [7] By ordering directly from the overseas manufacturer rather than regional markets, you saved about 40 percent. You now have a beautiful chest that is exquisitely hand carved.

Sincerely

Ramandeep Sidhu

Manager

---

1. Reveals the subject matter of the letter. Leads to a discussion of reasons. Includes a reminder of a positive quality (it's hard carved).

2. Begins explanation

3. Presents reason for the procedure followed.

4, 5. Completes the explanation

6. Reveals the refusal, which is stated in a compound sentence. The positive idea in the second clause takes some emphasis away from the you-must-pay idea in the first clause.

indirectly a sales letter. Prospective customers will be disappointed when they cannot buy on a credit basis. However, if we keep them interested in our goods and services, they may prefer to buy from us on a cash basis instead of seeking credit privileges elsewhere.

In credit refusals, as in other types of refusals, the major portion of the message should be the explanation. Both writers and readers benefit from the explanation of the reasons behind the refusal. For writers, the explanation helps to establish fair mindedness; it shows that the decision was not arbitrary. For readers, the explanation not only presents the truth (to which they are entitled), it also has guidance value. From it they learn to adjust their credit habits and as a result qualify for credit purchases later.

Including resale - favorable statements about the product ordered - is helpful for four reasons: (1) it might cause credit applicants to prefer our brand, and may even make them feel like buying it on a cash basis; (2) it suggests that the writer is trying to be helpful; (3) it makes the writing easier because negative thoughts are easier to de-emphasize when cushioned with resale material; (4) and it can confirm the credit applicant's judgement in choosing the merchandise, thus making an indirect compliment.

Figure 11.3: Poor Example of a "No" Response to a Credit Request

June 16, 2000

Laxman's Office Supply
54 Panjagutta Lane
Hyderabad 350021

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] Your order of July 6 has been received, and your request for credit privileges has been given to me for evaluation. [2] At this time, we do not believe it is in our best interest to sell to you on a credit basis.

[3] As you may be aware, many leaders in the field of finance recommend that businesses maintain a 2-to-1 ratio of current assets to current liabilities. [4] Because your current ratio is approximately 1 ¼ to 1, your orders will need to have payment attached. [5] We trust you will understand. [6] An envelope is enclosed for your convenience in sending your check for Rs 60000, after which your order will be shipped.

[7] For a look at the latest in video games, see the enclosed folder.

Sincerely,

Sumit Sarkar
Credit Manager

Enclosure

---

1. States ideas that could have been left to implication.
2. Reveals the negative decision before revealing the basis for it.
3. Presents an explanation but unnecessarily raises doubts about the applicant's knowledge of financial matters.
4. Continues with figures that should have preceded the statement of refusal.
5. Reveals that the writer has doubts about the strength of the explanation.
6. Uses worn expressions in referring to the enclosure.

Assume a retailer of electronic devices has placed an initial order and requested credit privileges. After examining the enclosed financial statements, the wholesaler decides the request should be denied. The letter shown in figure 11.3 is inadequate for the purpose. Since you have probably identified the drawbacks in the first paragraph of the letter, read the entire letter before glancing at the commentary.

The credit refusal in figure 11.4, in contrast, explains, refuses, and offers to sell for cash. Although credit references have been checked, it says nothing about having conducted a "credit investigation." It does not identify referents, and it makes no apology for action taken.

Figure 11.4: Good Example of a "No" Response to a Credit Request

June 16, 2000

Laxman's Office Supply

54 Panjagutta Lane

Hyderabad 350021

Ladies and Gentlemen:

[1] The items listed in your order of July 6 have been selling very rapidly in recent weeks. [2] Supplying customer's demands for the latest in electronic technology is consistent with sound business practice.

[3] Another sound practice is careful control of indebtedness, according to specialists in accounting and finance. [4] Their formula for control is to maintain at least a 2-to-1 ratio of current assets to current liabilities. [5] Experience has taught us that, for the benefit of all concerned, credit should be available only to purchasers who meet the ratio. [6] Because your ratio is approximately 1 ¼ to 1, you are encouraged to make cash purchases.

[7] By continuing to supply your customers with timely merchandise, you should be able to improve the ratio. [8] Then, we would welcome an opportunity to review your credit application. [9] To send your check (Rs 60000) for your current order, just use the enclosed envelope; your order will be shipped promptly.

[10] Other timely items (such as the most recent in video games) are shown in the enclosed folder.

Sincerely,

Sumit Sarkar

Credit Manager

Enclosures

---

1. Implies receipt of the order. Leads to an explanation.

2 Introduces explanation. Implies approval of one of the applicant's practices (supplying most recently developed items).

3. Leads to discussion of another practice that is the basis for the subsequent refusal.

4. Provides further detail.

5. Continues with the explanation.

6. Uses positive language in expressing the refusal. Conveys "no" to credit purchases by recommending cash purchases - a counterproposal to the refusal. If a writer thought the statement of refusal should be more direct, the sentence could be expanded: "Because your ratio is approximately 1 ¼ to 1, the order will not be filled on a time-payment basis; but you are encouraged to make cash purchases."

7. Looks confidently to the future and reminds the applicant of the commendable practice discussed in the second sentence.

8. Encourages subsequent application and thus implies expectation of continued business relationship.

9. Reminds the merchant of the desired action.

10. Uses sales-promotional material as a closing sentence. Uses "timely" as a reminder of the applicant's commendable business practice and as a technique for developing unity

SAYING "NO" TO AN ORDER FOR MERCHANDISE

For several reasons, businesses must sometimes convey bad news concerning orders. When doing so, writers have three basic goals:

- To work toward an eventual sale along the lines of the original order.
- To keep instructions or additional information as clear as possible.
- To maintain an optimistic, confident tone so that the reader won't lose interest.

Unclear Orders

When you have received an incomplete or unclear order from a customer, your first job is to get the information needed to complete the order. Make it as simple as possible for the customer to provide the information.

Whether you phone or write for the required data, the indirect approach is usually the best. The first part of your message, the buffer (neutral statement), should confirm the original order; by doing so, it might bolster the sale by referring to desirable features of the product (resale). Then the source of the confusion could be stated or the problem defined. A friendly, helpful, and positive close should make it simple for the audience to place a corrected order. Take a look at the following letter and the accompanying commentary.

You will be pleased with your order for two dozen Wilson tennis racquets. You'll find that they sell fast because of their reputation for durability. In fact, tests reveal that they outlast several other more expensive racquets.

[The buffer has a resale emphasis]

Wilson racquets have a standard face, but their patented "Handi-Grip" handles come in several sizes so that players can enjoy the tightest, best fitting grip possible. Handles range in 1/8 inch increments, from 4 ¼ inch (for the average ten year old) to 4 ¾ inch (for an adult male). Please consider your customer mix and decide which sizes will sell best in your store.

[The reason for not immediately filling the order precedes the actual bad news - which is implied - in order to show the positive side of the problem.]

To let us know your preferences, please fill in the enclosed postage-paid card and mail it back today. All sizes are in stock, Mr. Kumar, so your order will be shipped promptly. You can be selling these handsome racquets within a week.

[The close tells how the customer can solve the problem and describes the benefits of acting promptly.]

Back Orders

When you must back order for a customer, you have one or two types of bad news to convey: (1) you are able to send only part of the order, or (2) you are able to send none of the order. When sending only part of the order, you actually have both good news and bad news. In such situations, the indirect plan works very well. The buffer contains the good news that part of the order is on the way, along with a resale reminder of the product's attractiveness. After the buffer come the reasons explaining the delay in shipment of the rest of the order. A strong close encourages a favorable attitude toward the total transaction. For a customer whose order for a lawn mower and its accompanying grass catcher can be only partly filled, your letter might read like the one in Figure 11.5.

Figure 11.5: Letter Advising of a Back Order

April 5, 2000

Mr and Mrs Verma

Banjara Hills, Plot # 256-12-345

Hyderabad 350028

Dear Mr and Mrs Verma:

[1] Your lawn mower is being shipped to you today. The 22-inch Kleen-Kut mower with the vacuum grass catcher will give you not only a clean, beautifully manicured lawn but also one free of brown rot, the disease that afflicts lawns when cuttings are not removed.

[2] So far this spring, almost every customer who has purchased a Kleen-Kut lawn mower has also taken advantage of the special savings on the vacuum grass catcher. Because such demand was not anticipated, our supply of grass catchers is temporarily depleted.

[3] When we realized that we were running out of this popular product, we phoned the manufacturer to order additional vacuum grass catchers. This shipment is now on its way, and we should have it within one week. On the day the grass catchers reach us, we will send yours by parcel service. Within two weeks, you can be enjoying the convenience of your grass catcher.

[4] Other Kleen-Kut products that will help you maintain your lawn and flower beds are shown in the enclosed catalog. Note that during our Baisakhi promotion, the prices of some products have been reduced by as much as 50 percent. At those savings, your lawn could be the envy of the entire neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Ramesh Chopra

Manager

br

Enclosure

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1. The buffer conveys the good news and confirms the wisdom of the customer's choice.
2. The reason for the bad news shows that the grass catcher is popular and therefore a good choice.
3. The bad news itself is implied by telling the reader what is being done, not what cannot be done.

Had you been unable to send the customer any portion of this order, you would still have used the indirect approach. However, because you would have no good news to give, your buffer would only have confirmed the sale, and the explanation section would have stated your reason for not filling the order promptly.

Substitutions

A customer will occasionally request something that you no longer sell or that is no longer produced. If you are sure that the customer will approve a substitute product, you may go ahead and send it. When in doubt, however, first send a letter that "sells" the *substitute* product and gives the customer simple directions for ordering it. In either case, avoid calling the second product a substitute because the term carries a negative connotation and detracts from the sales information. Instead, say that you now stock the second product exclusively.

Figure 11.6: Poor Example of a “No” Response to an Order for Merchandise

July 3, 2000

Mr. Rakesh Kapoor
Kapoor Construction Company
203 Lal Chand Road,
Ludhiana 782001

Dear Mr. Kapoor:

SUBJECT: Purchase Order No.430-9831-8

[1] We received your order for 400 incandescent light bulbs (Stock No.71731). [2] However, we need to explain why this particular bulb is inappropriate.

[3] The incandescent bulb is not appropriate for your intended use. [4] We have another product better suited to your purposes. May we have your permission to substitute halogen bulbs? [5] Although these bulbs are more expensive, we feel the benefits will far out-weigh the costs in the long run.

[6] Your order will be held until we hear from you.

Sincerely,

Satyan Chandrashekhar
Sales Manager

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1. Presents information that could have been implied; focuses on writer
2. Reveals the refusal before the explanation. “However” immediately lets the reader know that negatives follow.
3. Provides no reasons; repetitive and vague.
4. Implies lack of expertise on part of customer.
5. Provides a major disadvantage but does not provide any benefits for making the substitution; uses “in the long run,” a cliché.
6. Presents needed information, but the idea of “holding” the order seems a little negative. “Hear from you” is worn and literally implies oral communication.

As you can imagine, the challenge is greater when the substitute is more expensive than the original item. So that additional charges seem justified to your customer, show that the more expensive item can do much more than the originally ordered item. Suppose a customer has ordered a drill that is no longer manufactured. Because of problems with the original drill, the motor has been upgraded. As a result, the price of the drill has increased from Rs 995 to Rs 1200. So you write a letter to *persuade* your audience to buy the more expensive drill:

Tri-Tools, manufacturer of the Mighty-Max drill you ordered, is committed to your satisfaction with every product it makes.

[The buffer includes resale information on the manufacturer.]

For this reason, Tri-Tools conducts extensive testing. Results for the ¼ inch Mighty-Max with the 1/8 horse-power motor show that although it can drill through 2 inches of wood or ¼ inch of metal, thicker materials put a severe strain on the motor. Tri-Tools knows that household jobs come in all sizes and shapes, so it now makes a more powerful ¼ inch drill with a 3/8 horsepower motor. The new Mighty-Max drill can cut through materials twice as thick as those the former model could handle.

[The reasons for the bad news are explained in terms of the customer's needs.]

Even with its superior capabilities, the new Mighty-Max costs only about 20 percent more than the discontinued model. Using this more powerful drill, you can be confident that even heavy-duty jobs will cause no overheating.

The bad news is stated positively. The writer emphasizes the product the firm carries rather than the one it does not.]

You can be using your new heavy-duty drill by next week if you just check the YES box on the enclosed form and mail it in the postage-paid envelope along with a check for Rs 205. Your new, worry free Mighty-Max will be on its way to you at once.

[The close asks the reader to authorize shipment of the substitute item, makes action easy, and reinforces the benefits described earlier.]

Offering a More Suitable Product

Sometimes customers order one item when they can more profitably use another. Suppose a contractor has ordered light bulbs that are inappropriate for his needs. Filling the order as submitted would be a mistake, and the customer is likely to be dissatisfied. Although the form letter in figure 11.6 may get the desired results (convince the recipient that the type of light bulb ordered is not the type needed), the letter in figure 11.7 applies sound writing principles more effectively.

Taking the time required to write such a long letter to a customer may at first seem questionable. But since such circumstances often occur, the letter can be stored in the computer and quickly adapted, whenever necessary, to a similar situation. Moreover, such a letter would be more appealing to the audience than a coldly worded, impersonal form letter.

When people say "no" in a letter, they usually do so because they think "no" is the better answer for all concerned. They can see how recipients will ultimately benefit from the refusal. If the letter is based on a sound decision, and if it has been well written, recipients will probably recognize that the sender did them a favor by saying "no."

SAYING "NO" TO A REQUEST FOR A FAVOR

When a request for a favor must be denied, the same reasons before refusal pattern is recommended. To ensure the continuance of positive relationships, the recipient of a request for a favor may offer an alternative to the favor requested, i.e. a counterproposal. In the letter in Figure 11.8, the writer explains why the company cannot lend an executive to direct a major community effort and recommends a member of the company's senior executive corps as a counterproposal.

The effective letters in this chapter used the principles of sequence and style that are recommended for letters that initiate communication about unpleasant topics. In Chapter 15, Writing Effective Memos, we will see that the same principles should be applied when communicating through memorandums.

Figure 11.7: Good Example of a "No" Response to an Order for Merchandise

July 3, 2000

Mr Rakesh Kapoor

Kapoor Construction Company

203 Lal Chand Road

Ludhiana 782001

[1] Re: Purchase Order No.430-9831-8

Dear Mr Kapoor:

[2] The incandescent bulb you ordered has been proven to be 10 percent brighter than others of its type and is ideal for occasional use for short intervals.

[3] According to our sales representative, T Raja, you plan to install the bulbs in the parking lot lights of the new Westside Mall. [4] Because these bulbs will burn all night for security reasons, the halogen bulb designed for heavy-duty, long-term use is better suited for your needs.

[5] The longer-life of the halogen will more than compensate for the larger initial investment required. [6] You will also benefit from the convenience and cost efficiency of replacing bulbs less frequently. [7] Refer to the enclosed pamphlet for additional details about the performance of the halogen bulb (Stock No.97913).

[8] Instead of filling your order as requested, we would like permission to ship the long-lasting halogen bulb. [9] To authorize this shipment, simply check the appropriate square on the enclosed card and return in the enclosed envelope with your payment for the additional cost.

Sincerely,

Satyan Chandrashekhar

Sales Manager

[10] Enclosures

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1. Reference line, not subject line, directs reader to source documents.

2. Acknowledges order but is noncommittal about shipment. Includes resale on the contractor's choice, which also serves to begin the explanation

3, 4. Continues with the explanation by providing specific details about the needs of this reader.

5, 6. Reveals a disadvantage of the alternative, but de-emphasizes it by putting it in a sentence that states primary advantages.

7. Includes an enclosure to present additional details and to reinforce ideas presented in the letter.

8, 9. Seeks permission to send what is needed instead of what was ordered. Makes response easy. On the card, one of the squares (the options) could be to cancel the order. Mentioning this option in the letter would give it undesired emphasis, so no reference is made to it.

10 Includes enclosure notation to alert reader that other information is enclosed.

Figure 11.8: Good Example of a "No" Response for a Favor, Including a Counterproposal

January 6, 2000

Mr. Jay Prakash
Tata Foundation
212 Fort Street
Mumbai 620005

Dear Jay

[1] You are to be commended for your commitment to create an endowment for the Central Homeless Shelter. [2] This much needed project will aid the hundreds of homeless and increase the community's awareness of the needs of this sector of our population.

[3] The success of this project depends on a good project director. [4] The organizational, leadership, and public relations activities you described demand an individual with upper-level managerial experience.

[5] During the last year, Teldo has decentralized its organization, reducing the number of upper-level managers to the minimal level needed.[6] Although our current personnel shortage prevents us from lending you an executive to direct the project, we do want to support this worthy project.

[7] Makarand Joshi in our senior executive corps directed a similar short-term project, Homes for Humanity.[8] He organized the campaign, solicited area coordinators, and managed publicity.[9] If you can benefit from his services, call him at 6250432, extension 91.

Sincerely

Nazneen Modi
Director

1,2. Introduces the subject without revealing whether the answer will be "yes" or "no."

3-5. Gives reasons

6. Subordinates the refusal by placing it in the dependent clause of a complex sentence. Alludes to help in another form.

7-9. Closes on a more positive note by offering a counterproposal. Summarizing the executive's responsibilities and providing his phone number increases the genuineness of the offer.

SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN WRITING ABOUT THE UNPLEASANT

While studying the preceding pages, you may have thought about the following questions:

1. Is an inductive outline appropriate for all letters that convey bad news? It is, for *almost* all. Normally, the writer's purpose is to convey a clear message and retain the recipient's goodwill. In the rare circumstances in which a choice must be made between the two, clarity is the better choice. When the deductive approach will serve a writer's purpose better, it should be used. For example, if you submit a clear and tactful refusal and the receiver resubmits the request, a deductive presentation may be justified in the second refusal.

Placing a refusal in the first sentence can be justified when:

a) The letter is the second response to a repeated request.

b) A very small, insignificant matter is involved.

c) A request is obviously ridiculous, immoral, unethical, illegal or dangerous.

d) The writer's intent is to shake the reader.

e) The writer-reader relationship is so close and longstanding that satisfactory human relations can be taken for granted.

f) The writer wants to demonstrate authority.

In most writing situations, the preceding circumstances do not exist. When they do, a writer's goals may be accomplished by stating the bad news in the first sentence.

2. Don't readers become impatient when a letter is inductive, and won't that impatience interfere with their understanding of the reasons? Concise, well-written explanations are not likely to make readers impatient. They relate to the reader's problem, present information not already known, and help the reader understand. Even if readers do become impatient while reading a well-written explanation, that impatience is less damaging to understanding than would be the anger or annoyance that often results from encountering bad news in the first sentence.

Let us now examine the difficulties involved and pitfalls to be avoided when writing the introductory paragraph (the buffer), stating the bad news, and composing the closing lines

First Paragraph

The introductory paragraph should let the reader know the topic of the letter without saying the obvious. It should build a transition into the discussion of reasons without revealing the bad news or leading a reader to expect good news. In other words, it should be a neutral, relevant, succinct lead-in to the bad news. And, above all, it should not be misleading.

Here are some other things to avoid when writing a buffer:

Avoid saying "no." An audience encountering the unpleasant news right at the beginning will react negatively to the rest of the message, no matter how reasonable and well phrased it is.

Avoid using a know-it-all tone. When you use phrases such as "you should be aware that," the audience will expect your lecture to lead to a negative response and will, as a result, become resistant to your message.

Avoid wordy and irrelevant phrases and sentences. Sentences such as "we have received your letter," "this letter is in reply to your request," and "we are writing in response to your request" are irrelevant. You can make better use of space by referring directly to the subject of the letter.

Avoid apologizing. An apology weakens your explanation of the unfavorable decision.

Avoid writing a buffer that is too long. The point is to identify briefly something that both you and the audience are interested in and agree on before proceeding in a businesslike way.

Figure 11.9 shows types of buffers you could use to open a bad-news message tactfully.

After you have composed a buffer, evaluate it by asking yourself four questions: is it pleasant? is it relevant? is it neutral (saying neither yes nor no)? does it provide for a smooth transition to the reasons that follow? If you can answer "yes" to every question, you may proceed confidently to the next section of your message.

Figure 11.9: Types of Buffers

BUFFER (neutral opening statement)	**EXAMPLE**
Agreement: Find a point on which you and the reader share similar views.	We both know how hard it is to make a profit in this industry.
Appreciation: Express sincere thanks for receiving something.	Your check for Rs. 8000 arrived yesterday. Thank you.
Cooperation: Convey your willingness to help in any way you realistically can.	Employee Services is here to smooth the way for those who work to achieve the company's goals.
Fairness: Assure the reader that you've closely examined and carefully considered the problem, or mention an appropriate action that has already been taken.	For the past week, we have carefully monitored those using the photocopying machine to see whether we can detect any pattern of use that might explain its frequent break-downs.
Good news: Start with the part of your message that is favorable.	A replacement knob for your range is on its way, shipped February 10 via Blue Dart.
Praise: Find an attribute or an achievement to compliment.	Your résumé shows an admirable breadth of experience, which should serve you well as you progress in your career.
Resale: Favorably discuss the product or company related to the subject of the letter.	With their heavy-duty, full-suspension hardware and fine veneers, the desks and file cabinets in our Eleganza line have become a hit with value-conscious professionals.
Understanding: Demonstrate that you understand the reader's goals and needs.	So that you can more easily find the typewriter with the features you need, we are enclosing a brochure that describes all the Orma typewriters currently available.

Bad-News Sentence

In a sense, a paragraph that presents the reasoning behind a refusal at least partially conveys the refusal before it is stated. Yet, one sentence needs to convey (directly or by implication) the conclusion to which the preceding details have been leading. The most important considerations are *positive language* and *emphasis*. Take a look at the following examples and the accompanying critique:

Your request is therefore being denied.

[Being negative, the idea is not pleasant. Stated in negative terms, the idea is still less pleasant. And the word "denied" stands out vividly because it is the last word.]

We are therefore denying your request.

[The simple sentence structure is emphatic. The active voice makes it emphatic and abrasive.]

The preceding figures do not justify raising your credit limit to Rs 30,000 as you requested, but they do justify raising the limit to Rs 15,000.

[The sentence uses negative language, but it does use commendable techniques of subordination: it places the negative in a long, two-clause sentence, and it includes a positive idea in the sentence that contains the negative idea.]

To soften the impact of a negative idea, a very helpful technique is implication. The following sentences illustrate techniques for implying a refusal.

My department is already shorthanded, so I'll need all my staff for at least the next two months.

[Bad-news is implied and subordinated in a complex sentence.]

If the price were Rs 35,000, the contract would have been signed.

[States a condition under which the answer would have been "yes" instead of "no." Note the use of the subjunctive words "if" and "would."]

By accepting the arrangement, the ABC company would have tripled its costs.

[States the obviously unacceptable results of complying with the request.]

Last Paragraph

After having presented valid reasons and a tactful refusal, a writer needs a closing paragraph that includes useful information and demonstrates empathy for the audience.

The purpose of the close is to end the message on a more upbeat note. Follow these guidelines for the last paragraph of a bad-news letter:

- Don't refer to or repeat the bad news.
- Don't apologize for the decision or reveal any doubt that the reasons will be accepted (avoid statements such as "I trust our decision is satisfactory").
- Don't urge additional communication (e.g. "if you have further questions, please write), unless you are really willing to discuss your decision further.
- Don't anticipate problems (avoid statements such as "should you have further problems, please let us know").
- Don't include clichés that are insincere in view of the bad news (e.g. "if we can be of any help, please contact us").
- Don't reveal any doubt that you will keep the person as a customer (avoid phrases such as "we hope you will continue to do business with us").

The final paragraph is usually shorter than the preceding explanatory paragraph. Sometimes a one-sentence closing is enough; in other cases, two or three sentences may be needed. The final sentence should bring a unifying quality to the whole message. The repetition of a word or reference to some positive idea that appears earlier in the letter serves this well. Avoid restating the refusal or referring to it because that would only serve to emphasize it.

Possibilities for the final sentence include reference to some pleasant aspect of the preceding discussion, resale, sales promotional material, an alternative solution to the reader's problem, some future aspect of the business relationship, or an expression of willingness to assist in *some other way.*

Consider the following closures which use the preceding suggestions. In a letter denying request for free repair: "According to a recent survey, a four-headed VCR produces sound qualities that are far superior to a two-headed VCR; it was an ideal choice." The writer uses resale, reminding the reader that his four-headed VCR has a superior feature.

In a letter refusing permission to the reader to interview certain employees on the job, the writer seeks to show a good attitude by offering to do something else: "If you would like to see the orientation film we show to management trainees, you would be most welcome."

THINK ABOUT IT

An understanding of the reader's needs and feelings enables the writer to anticipate the reader's likely reaction to the message and, as a result, sequence the ideas in the most effective way. The inductive outline is recommended when the reader can be expected to be displeased with the message.

In addition to using the inductive sequence, stylistic techniques can help convey bad news effectively. Writers should avoid overly negative words and phrases that automatically set up barriers to successful communication of the message. Instead, they should consider more positive techniques such as stating what they can do rather that what they cannot do, including a positive fact in the sentence containing the negative idea, or offering a counterproposal to minimize the reader's disappointment.

Sentence structure can be used de-emphasize negative ideas: the "bad news" can be placed in a dependent clause or complex sentence to reduce its impact. Avoid using simple sentences to convey the refusal unless the intention is to emphasize the "no."

Use of the inductive outline and a positive tone enables the writer to convey bad news diplomatically and build lasting relationships.

Chapter 12

Writing to Persuade

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages - Identifying Objectives
- The Basis of Persuasive Sales Messages - Organizing the Message
- Writing a Complete Sales Letter
- Claim Letters and Requests for Favors
- The Collection Series
- Strong Appeal or Urgency

All business messages are essentially persuasive messages. After all, writers convey messages with the aim of persuading readers to their point of view. For the sake of convenience, however, those letters whose primary purpose is persuasion are discussed separately: sales letters, requests for information and collection letters. The fundamentals of communication remain the same: know your subject, your purpose, and your audience. In other words, what are you writing, why are you writing, and to whom you are writing. Understanding the audience is vital in all forms of communication, but it gains more importance in the construction of persuasive messages.

Since you must be quite comfortable now with the concept of reader-oriented writing, try to identify the drawbacks in the following paragraph. This is the first paragraph of a letter requesting information:

Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the envelope provided. I dislike having to impose on the valuable time of a busy executive such as you, but in order for me to complete the research for my thesis at the university, I must seek first-hand information from business leaders.

The audience is clearly a busy, senior executive - so busy that perhaps he is not interested in answering such letters. We'll get back to this letter later. In the meantime, consider how you would rewrite it.

Although persuasion is generally associated with sales letters, it is also a strategy that business people must master to gain the support of others for important decisions. Persuasion involves the ability to win others to your point of view. Cover letters, résumés, essays for scholarship or admission - all involve the ability to persuade others.

THE BASIS OF PERSUASIVE SALES MESSAGES - IDENTIFYING OBJECTIVES

There are two important steps in constructing persuasive sales messages (and all persuasive messages for that matter). The first is identifying the objectives of the letter; the second is organizing the message.

To identify the objectives of a persuasive message, you must answer three questions:

1. What product or service is being promoted? (the subject)
2. To whom is the message being directed? (the audience)
3. What are the desired results? (the purpose)

These questions require knowledge of the product or service, the customer, and the desired action.

Know the Product or Service

The better you understand the product or service to be sold, the more effective you will be in writing a persuasive message. For example, to promote a low cost life insurance policy, you might - if you were aware of the low-price - begin a sales letter in the following way:

"You can insure your family's security for only two rupees a day."

To persuade someone to buy your product or service, you cannot be satisfied with knowing the product in a general way. You need details. Before you write, you need concrete answers to such questions as:

1. What will the product do for the people concerned?
2. From what materials is it made?

3. By what process is it manufactured?
4. What are its superior design features?
5. What is its price?
6. What kind of servicing, if any, will it require?

Similar questions must be answered about competing products. Of particular importance is the question, "what is the major difference?" People are inclined to choose an item that has some advantage not available in a similar item at the same price.

Know the Customer

A persuasive letter must appeal to the reader. This means you must know something about the individual to whom the letter is directed. For example, in the case of those people receiving the letter announcing a low-cost insurance policy, you need to know their age range, their general need for insurance, and how much coverage they are likely to require. The targeted group should be people who currently have little insurance and can profit from an inexpensive supplement to their current coverage.

When writing to a group of customers, try to answer these questions:

1. Who would buy this product?
2. Why would they buy it?
3. How frequently would the product be purchased?
4. How would the product be used?
5. Is this product a necessity or a luxury?
6. What do people like about it?
7. What do people dislike about it?

You can ask yourself many similar questions to examine and uncover the needs of the readers and their attitude toward the product. To this end, demographic data and psychographic profiles of readers provide useful information.

Know the Desired Action

What do you want your reader to do? Fill out an order form and enclose a personal check? Return a card requesting a representative to call? Whatever the desired action, you need to have a clear definition of it before beginning to compose the letter.

THE BASIS OF PERSUASIVE SALES MESSAGES - ORGANIZING THE MESSAGE

An inductive or indirect approach is effective for sales letters and other persuasive messages. The selling procedure includes four steps:

1. Getting the readers' *Attention*.(A)
2. Introducing the product and arousing *Interest* in it. (I)
3. Generating *Desire* for the product through convincing evidence. (D)
4. Encouraging *Action*. (A)

These steps - popularly known as AIDA - Constitute the basic outline for sales letters (See Exhibit 12.1). Each step is essential, but the steps do not necessarily require equal amount of space. Good sales writing does not require that we have separate sentences and paragraphs for each phase of the letter. Points (1) and (2) could appear in the same sentence; point (3) could require many paragraphs.

Exhibit 12.1

THE AIDA PLAN

Persuasion requires the indirect approach. One specialized version is the AIDA plan, which has four phases: (1) attention, (2) interest, (3) desire, and (4) action.

In the attention phase, you convince the audience right at the beginning that you have something useful or interesting to say. The audience wants to know, "What's in this message for me?" Try to tell them without making extravagant claims or threats and without bringing up irrelevant points:

You've mentioned several times in the past two weeks that constructing an employee schedule has become increasingly difficult. Let me share an idea that could substantially reduce the time you spend making and revising schedules.

In the interest phase, you explain how your message relates to the audience. Continuing the theme that you started with, you paint a more detailed picture with words. Your goal is to get the audience thinking, "This is an interesting idea; could it possibly solve my problems?"

Inc. magazine ran an article in the July 2 issue about a scheduling concept called flextime. It gives employees leeway to schedule their own work, within certain guidelines. Two companies profiled in the article were having problems (as we have been) with late arrivals, long lunches, early departures, and too many "sick days." They found it nearly impossible to set up a schedule that everyone would adhere to. However, once these companies instituted flextime, their problems practically disappeared.

This interest section ties together a factual description and the benefits of instituting the program. Also, the benefits relate specifically to the attention phase that precedes this paragraph. Even though the flextime system might help improve employee morale, that benefit is secondary to the main interest of the intended audience (to reduce the frustration of devising useless schedules) and is therefore not mentioned.

In the desire phase of a persuasive message you back up claims and thereby increase your audience's willingness to take the action that you'll suggest in the next section. Whatever you use to prove your claim, make sure the evidence is directly relevant to your point:

One of the people interviewed in the article, the head of manufacturing for a $10 million company, said: "I seemed to be spending all my time making schedules and then tearing them up. Now I let my employees figure out their own schedules. I have more time to oversee the work that's being done and to track the quality of the products we ship." This company had a flextime program in full operation within three months of deciding to start it. Attached is a copy of an article about the factors to consider before going to flextime and the three steps involved in instituting it.

This example draws attention to the evidence and suggests the lessons that may be drawn from it.

In the action phase, you suggest the action you want your audience to take. All persuasive messages end with a section that urges specific action, but the ending is more than a statement such as "Institute this program as soon as possible" or "Send me a refund." In fact, this section offers a good opportunity for one last reminder of the main benefit the audience will realize from taking the action you want:

Let's meet early next week (Monday 3:00 p.m.?) to see how we might implement a flextime schedule. With a little bit of extra effort now, you could soon be concentrating on something more important than scheduling.

Source: C L Bovee. and J V Thill. Business Communication Today (New York: McGraw Hill, 1995.)

The four-point outline is appropriate for *unsolicited* sales letters. *Solicited* sales letters have been invited by the prospect; unsolicited letters have not. Someone who has invited a sales message (by requesting information) has given some attention to the product already; as a result the attention-getting sentence is hardly necessary. Such a sentence is essential, however, when the recipient is not known to have previously expressed interest. The very first sentence is then deliberately designed to get the reader's attention.

To understand the organization and composition of a persuasive sales letter, let us examine four-broad divisions of the message: using the attention-getter, introducing the product, convincing the reader, motivating action.

First Paragraph: An Attention-Getter

Various attention-getting techniques have been successful in convincing recipients to put aside whatever they are doing and considering an unsolicited letter. Some commonly used methods are illustrated below:

- *A solution to a problem:* Writing-analysis software that identifies your mistakes helps you create error-free, professional documents.
- *A startling announcement:* More teens die as a result of suicide each month than in auto accidents.
- *A what-if opening:* What if the boss announced, "we're going to increase efficiency in our department by 30 percent"?
- *An outstanding feature of the product:* An answering machine that lets you check messages in the office when you are hundreds of miles away on business!
- *A gift:* Ten free sheets of embossed, personalized stationery are enclosed as a free sample.

You can experiment with many such action-oriented, attention-getting openings. See Figure 12.1 for more suggestions on such opening statements. Unfortunately, many action-oriented statements lose the reader's interest. Here are some guidelines that can prevent this.

Figure 12.1: Attention-Getting Techniques

Attention-Getters

- *Offer the reader a bargain:* 35 percent off the list price if you act today!
- *Present an interesting fact:* With just six minutes of planning a day the average manager can increase personal productivity by 25 percent.
- *Offer a challenge:* Try our new aerobic machine for ten days and if we can't take two inches of your waist, we'll refund the money.
- *A provocative question:* Are you tired of watching inflation eat away at your hard earned profits?
- *A specific trait shared by the audience:* Busy executives need another complicated "time-saving" device like they need a hole in the head.

Source: Compiled and adapted from Gibson, J W and R M Hodgetts, Business Communication (New York: Harper and Row, 1990), and Bovee, C L and J V Thill, Business Communication Today (New York: McGraw Hill, 1995).

- *Avoid clichés:* Boring, oft repeated statements should be avoided. Try not to use introductions like, "A penny saved is a penny earned," "A stitch in time saves nine," "Time and tide wait for no man."
- *Avoid asking foolish questions:* "Are you interested in improving your health?" will always be answered with a "yes." So why ask it? Instead, focus on selling points: "We can help you get in shape in just three hours a week."

Regardless of the attention-getting technique we choose for any persuasive message, we should ask ourselves some pertinent questions: (1) Is the attention-getter related to the product and its virtues? (2) Does the first sentence introduce a central selling feature (3) Is the attention-getter addressed to the reader's needs? (4) Does the attention-getter sound interesting? (5) Is the attention-getter original? (6) Is the first paragraph short?

Start with the product. The beginning sentence of the first paragraph must suggest a relationship between the recipient and the product. And the sentences that follow the first sentence should grow naturally from it. If readers do not see the relationship between the first sentences and the sales appeal, they may react negatively to the whole message - they may think they have been tricked into reading.

The main problem lies in getting the reader's attention in an appropriate way. Is the following attention-getter related to the product and its virtues?

Would you like to make a million?

We wish we knew how, but we do know how to make you feel like a million. Have you tried our latest mentholated shaving cream?

The beginning sentence is short and, being a question, emphatic. But it suggests that the remainder of the letter will be about how to make a million, which it is not. All three sentences combined suggest that the writer is using high-pressure techniques. The mentholated cream does have virtues; one of them could have been emphasized by placing it in the first sentence.

Focus on a central selling feature. Almost every product will in some respects be superior to the competing products. If it is not, such factors as favorable price, fast delivery, or superior service may be used as the primary appeal. This primary appeal (central selling point) must be emphasized, and one of the most effective ways to emphasize a point is by position. An outstanding feature mentioned in the middle of a letter may go unnoticed, but it will stand out if mentioned in the first sentence. Note how the following sentence introduces the central selling feature and leads naturally into the sentences that follow:

A complete collection of Hussain prints - only at PosterShop.

You can select complete sets of prints by Bendre and Aziz, as well as Hussain, at the PosterShop, the only fine arts poster dealer with this comprehensive selection of works of art by the "masters." PosterShop will also frame these prints professionally so you can display them in your home as proudly as you would the originals.

Address the reader's needs. Few people will buy just because doing so will solve a problem for someone else. How would a student react to the following sales opening?

After years of effort and expense, we have developed an electronic dictionary.

With the emphasis on the seller and the seller's problems, the sentence isn't particularly appealing. Revised, the beginning paragraph is changed to focus on a problem the reader has:

Your first draft is complete. Time is short and your spelling must be perfect. You can use Right-Spell (an electronic dictionary) to meet your term-paper deadline.

This "you" attitude - empathizing with the audience's needs - is an important factor in all communication; and it is particularly important in persuasive communication. Before and during writing, think in terms of reader interests.

Keep paragraphs short. The spaces between paragraphs provide convenient resting places for the eyes. What is your psychological reaction to a fifteen-line paragraph? Doesn't reading it seem an arduous chore?

A reader is encouraged to take the first step if it is a short one. If possible, hold the first paragraph to three or fewer lines. A one-line paragraph (even a very short line) is acceptable. You can even use paragraphs less than one sentence long! Put four or five words in the first line and then, after a series of dots, complete the sentence in a new paragraph. Be careful to include key attention-getting words that either introduce the product on lead to its introduction.

Introducing the Product

A persuasive message is off to a good start if the first sentences cause the reader to think, "Here's a solution to one of my problems," "Here's something I need," or "Here's something I want."

We may lead the recipient of the message to such a thought in the first sentence. If we do, we've succeeded in both getting attention and arousing interest in one sentence. If the introduction of the product is to be effective, we need affirmative answers to the following questions: (1) Is the introduction natural? (2) Is the introduction action-oriented? (3) Does the introduction stress a central selling point?

Be natural and cohesive. If the attention-getter does not introduce the product, it should lead naturally to that introduction. One sentence should grow naturally from another. Note the abrupt change in thought in the following example:

Strained eyes affect human relationships. The Lakeview Association of Office Managers has been conducting a survey for the last five months. Their primary aim is to improve lighting conditions.

"Strained eyes," the first words of the first sentence, are related to "lighting conditions," the last words of the last sentence. But the thoughts are too far apart. Moreover, no word or phrase in the first sentence is readily identified with the words in the second sentence. The abrupt change in thought is also confusing. See how the relationship between the two sentences has been improved in the following example:

Strained eyes affect human relationships.

That's one thing the Lakeview Association of Office Managers learned from their five month survey of office lighting conditions. For light that is easy on the eyes, they're switching to Philips Easy Glow. When you flip on your Easy Glow lights, you get....

The second sentence is tied to the first by the word "that's." The light of the third sentence refers to the "lighting" of the second sentence. And the Easy Glow light is introduced as a solution to the problem of strained eyes. It is not enough just to have ideas that are related to each other; these ideas must be closely woven together in such a way that one sentence leads smoothly to another.

Be action oriented. To introduce a product in an interesting way, we should be action oriented (that includes using the active voice). Action is eye catching - it holds attention and interest more readily than description.

Place the product in your reader's hands and talk about their using it. The reader will get a clearer picture by reading about something "happening" instead of a tedious product description. And the picture is all the more vivid when the recipient is the hero of the story - the person taking the action.

A small amount of product description is necessary and natural, but too many sales writers overdo it, as in the following excerpt from a sales letter promoting a projector:

This VM601 Kamcord is housed in a die-cast aluminum case. It has a 750-watt bulb, pitch-control knob, and easy-to-use, swing-out film gate.

See how each sentence has a thing as the subject. We're looking at a "still" picture. Now let's turn on the action. We'll make a person the subject and watch that person do something with our projector.

Lift this Kamcord. See how easy it is? That's because of the lightweight aluminum case. Now swing the film gate open and insert the film. All you have to do is keep the film in front of the groove embossed on the frame. See how easily you can turn the pitch-control knob for the range of sound that suits you best. And notice the clear, sharp pictures you get because of the powerful 750-watt projection bulb.

In a sense, we don't sell products - we sell what they will do. We sell the pleasure people derive from the use of a product. Logically, then, we have to write more about that use than we do about the product.

Stress the central selling point. If the attention-getter doesn't introduce a distinctive feature, it should lead to it. We can stress important points by position and by space. As soon as readers visualize our product, their attention has to be drawn to its outstanding features. These features are emphasized by being mentioned first. Moreover, if we want to devote much space to the outstanding features, we have to introduce them early. In the following example, note how the attention-getter introduces the distinctive selling feature (ease of operation) and how the subsequent sentences keep the reader's attention focused on that feature:

Your child can see vivid moving pictures of this year's birthday party - and from a machine so easy to use that your child can operate it.

Watch your child lift the Kamcord combination video recorder. See how easy? We kept the weight down to 2kg by using an all-aluminum case. Let your youngster set it on a coffee table, chair, or kitchen table - easily.

Now, swing the film gate open and insert your film. All you have to do is keep the film in front of the groove embossed on the frame. See how easily you can turn the pitch-control knob for the range of sound you like best. And notice the clear sharp pictures you get because of the powerful 750 watt bulb.

By stressing one point, you do not limit the message to that point. For example, while ease of operation is being stressed, other features - pitch control, swing-out film gate, 750-watt bulb - are mentioned. A good sales letter should stress a central selling point; but this does not mean that other points have to be excluded.

Convince the Readers with Evidence

After introducing the product in an interesting way, we have to present enough supporting evidence to convince our readers to purchase the product (or take suitable action).

We should keep one or two main features of the product uppermost in the reader's minds, and the evidence we present should support those features. It would be inconsistent, for example, to use appearance as an outstanding selling feature of compact cars while providing abundant evidence to show economy of operation.

Use concrete language. Merely saying that a children's book is durable will not convince people. We must present information that shows what makes it durable; we must also define how durable.

In the "convincing-evidence" portion of the sales letter, we need all the information we have gathered about the product. We can establish durability, for example, by presenting information about the manufacturing process, the quality of the raw materials, or the skill of the workers:

TCC Publishing's Arora Classics will last your child a lifetime - pages bound in durable gold-embossed hardback, treated with special protectants to retard paper aging, and machine-sewn (not glued) for long-lasting quality. The 100-percent cotton fiber paper can withstand years of turning the pages. The joy of reading can last for years as your children explore the world of classic literature with TCC's Arora classics.

The evidence presented must not only be authentic, it must also sound authentic. In certain cases, the use of facts and figures can be powerful. Facts can be very impressive and increase reader confidence. However, do not go overboard and inundate your readers with an abundance of facts or technical data that will bore, frustrate, or alienate them. Never make your readers feel ignorant by trying to impress them with facts and figures they may not understand.

Be objective. Use language that people will believe. Specific, concrete language makes letters sound authentic. Unsupported superlatives, exaggerations, flowery statements, unsupported claims and incomplete comparisons make letters sound like high-pressure sales talk. Examine the following statements to see whether they give convincing evidence. Would they make a reader want to buy?

These are the best plastic pipes on the market today. They represent the very latest in chemical research.

How do we know these pipes are the best? We don't know, and the writer can't convince us by simply using superlatives. The writer should have researched plastic pipes, identified the qualities that made them superior, and then illustrated those features in the pipes referred to in the sales letter.

Take a look at the following statement:

Gardeners are turning cartwheels in their excitement over our new weed killer!

Doesn't that statement sound preposterous? And if we don't believe in the cartwheels, can we believe in the weed killer?

Use interesting attention-getters, describe the product in a lively manner, but be objective at all times. Go overboard with the descriptions, and your reader might just trash your sales letter.

Interpret the evidence. Since your readers will be less familiar with the product and its uses than you will be, you will have to interpret the evidence for them where necessary. In other words, indicate how the information will benefit the readers. For example, note the limitations in the following description:

This calculator weighs 14 grams. Its dimensions are 7 ½ by 5 ¼ by 1/10 centimeters. It comes in black or ivory.

In what way is a 14 gram unit superior to a 200 gram one? Or is a 200 gram unit actually better? Is there any advantage in having a calculator of these dimensions? What would be the disadvantage if it were twice as big?

Now see how interpretation makes the letter more convincing:

Compare the weight of this calculator with the weight of a credit card. The credit card may be heavier than the calculator's 14 grams. See how easily it fits inside a wallet. That's because its dimensions are 7 ½ by 5 ¼ by 1/10 centimeters - about the size of a playing card.

The revision shows what the figures mean in terms of reader benefits. It also makes use of a valuable interpretive technique - the comparison. We can often make a point more convincing by comparing something unfamiliar with something familiar. Most people are familiar with the size of a playing card, so they can now visualize the size of a calculator.

Be careful when you talk about price. Once readers start learning about the benefits, they wonder "How much is this going to cost?" If this question is not handled properly, the sale will be lost. Here are a few guidelines for handling the price discussion:

1. Introduce price only after presenting the product and its virtues.
2. Keep price talk out of the first and last paragraphs - unless price is the distinctive feature. The price should be mentioned at the beginning of a paragraph only if it is the most important selling point.

3. Use figures to illustrate how enough money can be saved by the product to pay for the expenditure.
4. State price in terms of small units. (Twelve rupees a month seems a lot less than Rs 144 a year.)
5. If practical, invite comparison with similar products.
6. If facts and figures are available, use them to illustrate that the price is reasonable.
7. Mention price in a complex or compound sentence that refers to the virtues of the product. In this way, the sentence that mentions the price also reminds readers of the benefits they get in return.
8. The price should appear in some position other than the first or last word of a sentence. First and last words are emphatic; but unless it is the central selling point, price should be subordinated.

When talking about the price, bear in mind that the objective is to present the product or service as affordable.

Last Paragraph: Motivating the Reader to Action

Our chances of getting action are increased if we (1) state the specific action wanted; (2) refer to the reward for taking action in the same sentence in which action is encouraged; (3) present the action as being easy to take; (4) provide some stimulus for quick action; and (5) ask confidently for action.

Mention the specific action you want. Unless specific instructions are included, such general instructions as “let us hear from you,” “take action on the matter” are ineffective. Whether the reader is to fill out an order card and return it with a check, place a telephone call, or return an enclosed card, define the desired action in specific terms.

Refer to the reward for taking action. For both psychological and logical reasons, readers are encouraged to act if they are reminded of the reward for acting. So the distinctive selling feature of the product should also be worked into the parting words.

Present action as being easy to take. Instead of asking readers to fill in their names and addresses on order forms or return cards and envelopes, do that work for them. If action is easy or consumes little time, they may act immediately. Otherwise, they may procrastinate.

Provide a stimulus for quick action. The longer the reader waits to take action on our proposal, the dimmer our persuasive evidence will become. Reference to the central selling point helps to stimulate action. Here are some commonly used appeals for getting action.

Buy while present prices are still in effect.

Buy while the present supply lasts.

Buy before Diwali.

Buy now while a rebate is being offered.

Ask confidently for action. Avoid statements like “if you agree...” and “I hope you will.” Such expressions indicate doubt on the part of the writer. Instead of saying “if you want to save time in cleaning, fill in and return..,” say confidently, “to save time in cleaning, fill in and return....”

For good appearance and proper emphasis, the last paragraph should be kept relatively short. Yet the last paragraph has a lot to do: it must indicate the specific action wanted, refer to the distinctive selling feature, present action as being easy to take, encourage quick action, and ask for it confidently.

Figure 12.2: Good Example of a Complete Sales Letter

April 30, 2000

Dr Laxman Reddy

290 Medical Court, Domalguda

Hyderabad 350006

Dear Dr Reddy:

[1] If you need an afternoon swinging a golf club, but you're worried you'll miss an important call, you need the WiproCall pager.

[2] To make sure you will be able to catch that important call wherever you are, WiproSystems is introducing the WiproCall pager. [3] Wherever you go, you carry it with you. [4] When people need to reach you, they simply call WiproCall's 800 number and key in your code. [5] Within seconds, our nationwide satellite system relays the message to your WiproCall pager - and you never miss a call.

[6] The WiproCall system reaches you almost anywhere in the India and weighs less (50 grams) than a golf ball driving down the fairway. [7] The WiproCall pager keeps you on top of your game and in touch with your important calls for only Rs 300 a month (about Rs 16 a day).

[8] To receive your WiproCall pager, just initial the enclosed card. [9] Mail the card before June 1 and receive your first month of service free.

Sincerely,

J.Kumarmangalam

Sales Manager

Enclosure

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1. Seeks to get attention by introducing an experience the recipient has probably had. Presents important business calls as the central selling point.
2. Introduces the product as a solution to a problem. Uses "important call" to achieve transition from the preceding sentence and to reinforce the central selling point.
3. Begins presentation of evidence. Uses a pronoun for coherence. Uses reader as subject of active-voice sentence.

4, 5. Shows how easy it is to solve the problem - the reason for buying.

6. Continues presentation of the evidence. Uses active voice.
7. Presents price in a sentence that reinforces the primary reward for paying that price.

8,9. Associates action with reward for taking action. Identifies specific action desired, makes action easy, and rewards quick action.

WRITING A COMPLETE SALES LETTER

Now that we have learned the strategy for writing the various parts of sales letters, let's read and analyze some complete letters. Note the inductive sequence of ideas in the letters depicted in this section.

The letters in this section illustrate the principles discussed in the preceding pages. Figures 12.2 and 12.3 are illustrations of unsolicited sales letters. The same principles apply in writing a solicited letter, with one exception: the attention-getter is not essential because the solicited letter is a response to a request for information.

Figure 12.3: Good Example of a Complete Sales Letter

January 15, 2001

Ms Manisha Lalachandani
378 South Panjagutta Street
Hyderabad 350068

Dear Ms Lalchandani:

[1] You've heard it before...

"FLY WITH OUR BONUS FLYER PLAN!"

[2] … of course, you end up flying 50,000 miles before earning discounts to places you don't want to go anyway, and then only if the tickets cost under Rs 4000 normally.

[3] No longer! [4] With Jet Airways EXECPLAN, fly only 20,000 miles and receive free tickets to anywhere in India! [5] And if you wish, save your unused free domestic tickets and receive free tickets to locations in Europe! [6] Our EXECPLAN is very flexible.

[7] Your options don't end when you leave the Jet Airways terminal. [8] You not only gain mileage in flight; but with every car rental in conjunction with your Jet Airways flight, you earn 500 bonus miles!

[9] Then drive your rental car to your hotel room at VIP Accommodations or First Class Inns. [10] By selecting one of these hotels, you can earn an additional 500 bonus miles!

[11] Just give your EXECPLAN number from your blue-and-silver membership card when making hotel, car, or flight reservations and receive an instantly adjusted mileage credit! [12] Making reservations couldn't be easier!

[13] You will receive 1,000 bonus miles if you complete and return the enclosed application form by August 21. [14] Fly toward free tickets, discounts, and other benefits with Jet Airways EXECPLAN now.

Sincerely,

Gopal R Ponnuswamy
Vice President of Sales

Enclosure

1,2. Seeks to gain attention by using a split sentence and introducing an experience the reader has probably had.

3,4. Introduces the product as the solution to a problem. Use parallel items to first sentence for transition.

5,6. Emphasizes central selling point (ease and flexibility).

7,8. Presents more features of the plan and repeats central selling point.

9-12. Establishes chronological transition and more evidence; involves the reader in the action by using active-voice sentences with the reader as the subject.

13. Reinforces central selling point.

14. Gives reader an incentive for specific action and restates the central selling point.

CLAIM LETTERS AND REQUESTS FOR FAVORS

Claim letters and letters that request special favors are common types of persuasive requests. Although their purpose is to get favorable action, the letters invite action only after attempting to arouse a *desire* to take action.

Figure 12.4: Poor Example of a Persuasive Claim

April 19, 2000

Mr Ravi Mehta
General Manager
ABC Auto, 120 Narayanguda
Hyderabad 350008

Dear Mr Mehta

I respectfully ask that you reimburse me Rs 600, the amount on the attached work order.

When my Premier 118NE failed the state's emission control test, I took it to your service department. Four hours later, the office called and informed me that the car was ready to be picked up.

Stopping at the cashier's desk a few minutes before closing time, I paid the Rs 600 your clerk said was due and received the keys. Then, I noticed the mechanic's comments on the work order. I needed a new carburetor. The cost, I found out, was Rs 1020.

Talking with the service manager, I discovered that the Rs 600 was for labor - all for taking the carburetor apart and putting it back together. He said that a previous owner had evidently replaced the original with one of inferior quality, that it could not be fixed, and that the car would still not pass the state's inspection.

I pointed out I had purchased the car new from your agency and the carburetor had never been repaired or replaced. For Rs 600, I had received no value at all.

He pointed out that the mechanic had spent three hours working on my car and that his charge was in line with company policy.

Is it in line with your advertising: "Integrity is the bottom line"? After spending Rs 600, I still have my emission-control problem. Where is all that integrity? Please refund. I'll try to solve my problem some other way - without buying an expensive, new carburetor.

Sincerely

Making a Claim

Claim letters are often routine because the basis for the claim is a guarantee or some other assurance that an adjustment will be made without requiring persuasion. However, when an immediate remedy is doubtful, persuasion is necessary. In a large business, the claim letter is typically passed on to the claims adjuster for response.

In modern businesses, any reasonable claim will probably be adjusted to the customer's satisfaction. Therefore, venting strong displeasure in the claim letter is of little value. It can alienate the claims adjuster - the one person from whom cooperation is sought.

Like sales letters, persuasive claim letters should use an inductive sequence. Unlike routine claims, persuasive claims do not begin by asking for an adjustment. The poor example in Figure 12.4 uses a deductive sequence.

Figure 12.5: Good Example of a Persuasive Claim

April 19, 2000

Mr. Ravi Mehta
General Manager
ABC Auto, 120 Narayanguda
Hyderabad 350008

Dear Mr. Mehta:

[1] When I bought my Premier 118NE from ABC Auto two years ago, I was influenced by your advertising: "Integrity is the bottom line." [2] After the car failed this year's emission-control test, I took it to your service department. [3] You have serviced the car for two years, and I have had confidence that the job was being done right - with integrity.

[4] After paying Rs 600 for the repairs, I noticed the mechanic's comment on the work order: "Needs a new carburetor." [5] The charge on the work order was totally for labor - the three hours spent in taking the unit apart and reassembling it. [6] The service manager said a previous owner had evidently replaced the original carburetor with one of inferior quality that cannot be fixed. [7] The car still does not pass inspection, and a new carburetor will cost Rs 1020.

[8] I bought this car new from ABC and have been its sole owner. [9] The car has needed no repairs other than normal servicing. [10] ABC would not have exchanged carburetors before selling the car new - because of concern for integrity. [11] Yet the service manager explained that ABC was justified in charging for the employee's working time and is not responsible for replacing the carburetor.

[12] Please refund Rs 600 and replace the carburetor free of charge, proving that integrity is your bottom line.

Sincerely,

Mohan Singh

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1 Seeks attention by using the company's name and slogan. Reveals the subject of the letter (the writer's car) and introduces a central appeal.

2. Uses "car" - Premier 118NE in (1) - for cohesion and transition.

3. Includes a further reminder of the central appeal. Adds emphasis to the appeal (integrity) by placing it last in the sentence and paragraph. Refers to the length of the relationship - the customer has demonstrated confidence in the company and contributed to its profits.

4-8. Continues with needed details.

8-10. Presents further reasoning (if an inferior unit had been installed, ABC is responsible). Makes further reference to the central appeal.

11. Continues to lead up to the request for a refund.

12. Connects the request with ABC's need to make actions and advertising consistent.

Two major changes would improve this letter: (1) writing inductively (to reduce the chance of a negative reaction), and (2) stressing an appeal throughout the letter (to emphasize an incentive for taking favorable action). In a persuasive claim letter, an appeal serves the same purpose that a central selling feature does in a sales letter. Both serve as a theme; both remind the receiver of a benefit that accrues from doing as requested. Note the application of these techniques in the revised letter in Figure 12.5.

Figure 12.6: Poor Example of a Letter Asking a Favor

March 23, 2000

Ms Esha Ahmed
General Manager
Crystal Stream
P.O. Box 2383
Pune 550017

Dear Ms Ahmed:

[1] The Lakeside Medical Association (LMA) will hold its annual dinner/dance on Saturday, November 5.

[2] We would very much like to have this event at Crystal Stream. 3 We would like to hold the formal dinner/dance from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. that evening.

[4] We expect several hundred guests to attend.

[5] Will you let me know as soon as possible if we may hold the dinner/dance at Crystal Stream?

Sincerely,

Kashyap Mankodi
Program Chair

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1. Begins with an announcement that may be of little interest to the recipient.
2. Asks the favor before letting the person see any reason for accepting.
3. Does not include important information such as the type of dance, food, and number of people involved.
4. Overuse of the first person pronoun "we" throughout the letter.
5. Sounds somewhat doubtful.

Asking a Favor

Occasionally, everyone has to ask someone for a favor - action for which there is not much reward, time, or inclination. For example, suppose a professional association wants to host its annual fund-raiser dinner at an exclusive country club. The program coordinator of the association must write a letter to the club's general manager requesting permission to use the club.

Will a deductive letter be successful? The letter in Figure 12.6 uses a direct request style in what is really a persuasive-letter situation.

Contrast this letter with the revision in figure 12.7.

Note that the persuasive and appealing letter in figure 12.7 uses an inductive approach. When a deductive approach is used in a persuasive situation, chances of getting cooperation are minimal.

Requests for information for research reports is frequently obtained through questionnaires. The validity and reliability of reports are strongly influenced by the percentage of return. If the letter inviting respondents to complete the questionnaire is written carelessly, responses may be insufficient.

Figure 12.7: Good Example of a Letter Asking a Favor

March 23, 2000

Ms Esha Ahmed
General Manager
Crystal Stream
P.O. Box 2383
Pune 550017

Dear Ms Ahmed:

[1] The opening of Crystal Stream was a landmark event.

[2] People all over the city are applauding your signature golf course designed to challenge golfers of all skill levels. [3] The beautiful clubhouse and exquisite homes complement our upscale, growing community.

[4] Because of the intense community interest in your facility, the Lakeside Medical Association (LMA) believes Crystal Stream is the perfect location for its annual charity dinner/ dance for the Kids for Life Foundation.

[5] Last year, this foundation defrayed medical expenses for five children from our community who suffer from muscular dystrophy. [6] We're confident that holding this event at Crystal Stream would increase participation in this worthy community event by at least 25 percent.

[7] Many LMA members are very interested in memberships in Crystal Stream. [8] While participating in this community event, these members would have an ideal chance to learn more about recreational and social opportunities of the much talked about, exclusive Crystal Stream.

[9] This black-tie dinner/dance is scheduled for November 5, from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. [10] Typically 400 guests have attended; however, we would expect at least 500 if the event were held at Crystal Stream. [11] A definite number can be confirmed two weeks prior to the event.

[12] We would appreciate your confirmation by May 1 that Crystal Stream will be the site of this year's dinner/ dance. [13] Then we can finalize the details and promote this sure-to-be-spectacular event at the renowned Crystal Stream.

Sincerely,

Kashyap Mankodi
Program Chair

1-3. Begins on a point that is related and of interest to the receiver.

4. Reveals member's enthusiasm for holding the dinner/dance at the club and presents benefits that help to increase the reader's enthusiasm for the proposal.

5,6. Provides additional benefits for saying "yes."

7,8. Provides additional benefits for saying "yes."

9-12. Provides details that will be useful if the reader accepts

13. Seeks specific action

Take a look at the letter in Figure 12.8. By now you must be in a position to identify its weaknesses. Yes, the letter asks too quickly for action and provides no incentive for action.

Figure 12.8: Poor Example of a Request for Information

February 1, 2000

Mr. Mustafa Mohammad
Purchasing Agent
City National Bank
250 Bank Street
Ahmedabad 368001

Dear Mr. Mohammad:

[1] Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the envelope provided. [2] I dislike having to impose on the valuable time of a busy executive such as you, but in order for me to complete the research for my thesis at the university, I must seek first-hand information from business leaders.

[3] The study deals with the attitudes of purchasing agents toward vendor gratuities. [4] As I believe you know, gifts from sellers to executives who do the buying for companies pose a problem of great concern. [5] The questionnaire seeks information about practices in your firm and about your own opinions.

[6] Responses will be kept confidential, of course. [7] Please return the questionnaire to me by February 20.

Sincerely,

Anand Shah

Enclosure

---

1. Invites action without having first given any incentive.
2. Puts writer and reader on different levels by suggesting humility. Use of "impose" could serve as a reminder that the request is an imposition and therefore should be denied.
3. Does reveal the nature of the research - a point that should have been introduced earlier.
4. Risks alienation by introducing doubts about the reader's knowledge.

5, 6. Lets the reader know what to expect, but needs to include some incentive for responding.

7. Uses an action ending, but it seems a little demanding, especially when no incentive has been introduced.

Note the inductive outline, the attention - getting techniques and the "reward" in the revised version in Figure 12.9.

Persuasive messages are usually longer than routine messages. To provide enough information on which to base a decision, and to provide incentive for action, persuasive messages require more space.

THE COLLECTION SERIES

As in other persuasive letters, the primary purpose of a collection letter is to get action - in this case, payment. A secondary goal is to maintain a customer's goodwill.

Like other persuasive letters, collection letters are generally written inductively (exceptions are discussed later in this chapter); but they are shorter. Normally, customers know what they owe (detailed information is not necessary); and they expect

Figure 12.9: Good Example of a Request for Information

February 1, 2000

Mr Mustafa Mohammad
Purchasing Agent
City National Bank
250 Bank Street
Ahmedabad 368001

Dear Mr Mohammad:

[1] What if vendors continue making more and larger gifts to purchasing agents? [2] For ethical and economic reasons, this question is of vital importance to purchasing agents. [3] Yet it has not been answered in the literature, and recent purchasing journals have emphatically called for answers based on research.

[4] For my master's thesis on purchasing behavior, I am seeking opinions from selected purchasing managers. [5]Results will be shared with participants soon after the data are interpreted.

[6] So the study will be complete and authoritative, please participate by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me in the envelope provided. [7] Your answers, which can be indicated quickly by making check marks, will be confidential and reported only as part of group data. [8] To get a report of the findings to you and other participating managers before term ends in early June, I need to receive the enclosed forms by February 20.

[9] I appreciate your help and am eager to share with you a summary of what I learned about vendors and gratuities.

Sincerely,

Anand Shah

[10] Enclosure

---

1. Seeks purchasing agent's attention. Use of "purchasing agents" establishes the letter as a document related to the recipient's work. Because the topic is current in the literature, agents may have already become interested.
2. Calls attention to the importance of the topic. At this point, the reader may think, "I've often struggled with this problem, but I wish I could have found an answer."
3. Leads to an introduction of the questionnaire as one step toward finding answers.
4. Introduces the questionnaire.
5. Reminds managers of the reward for taking action. Professional managers who now have (or already had) an interest in the problem would see the sharing of results as a positive. Thus, they would be more inclined to say "yes" when the specific request is made.
6. Makes the request for action in a complex sentence that contains an additional idea that is positive.
7. Presents some needed assurance. With "check marks," the effort is pictured as consuming little time.
8. Mentions a deadline in a sentence that reminds managers of the reward for complying.
9. Expresses gratitude, alludes to the reward for participating, and adds unity by using the words "vendors" and "gratuities," words that tie in with the first paragraph.
10. Includes enclosure notation to alert reader that information is enclosed.

to be asked for payment (no need for an attention-getter and no need for an apology). If a letter is short, its main point (pay is expected) stands out vividly. Compared with a long letter, a short letter has a greater chance of being read in its entirety. In a long letter, the main point could end up in the skipped-over portion or may have to compete for attention with minor points.

Since slow-to-pay customers may not respond to the first attempts at collection, businesses that use collection letters normally use a series (if the first letter doesn't bring a response, a second letter is sent, then a third, and so on). An effective series of collection letters incorporates the following characteristics: timeliness, regularity, understanding and increasing stringency.

1. *Timeliness.* A collection writer should not put off sending a letter. The longer debtors are given to pay, the longer they will usually take. Effective collection efforts should be made promptly, and they should encourage payment by certain dates.
2. *Regularity*. Never let the obligation out of the debtor's mind. A regular system for mailings impresses on debtors the efficiency of collection practices.
3. *Understanding*. This involves adaptability and skill in human relations. The collection series must be adaptable to the nature of the debtor. Good-pay risks should probably be given more time to pay than debtors with poor-pay reputations. Many debtors have very good reasons for not having paid on time. They should be given every opportunity to meet their obligations or to explain why they are unable to do so.

   Understanding also influences the regularity of the collection series. Letters should not be sent so close together that the debtor won't have a chance to pay before the next letter arrives. And no one likes to receive a collection letter after the bill has been paid.
4. *Increasing stringency*. The fourth characteristic of the collection series is increasing stringency in letter tone as the seriousness of the delinquency increases.

Most collection authorities classify the letters in the series according to the names that describe the seriousness of the problem. We can call this the collection series.

The number of letters in a collection series varies with the collection philosophy of the company and the nature of the debtor. Companies will have to write as many letters as necessary to collect the money - until legal action is required. The following stages are used: (1) reminder, (2) inquiry, (3) appeal, (4) strong appeal or urgency, and (5) ultimatum. Figure 12.10 illustrates the steps in a typical collection series.

Reminder

Many people will pay promptly when they receive a bill. Soon after the due date, a typical reminder will usually bring in most of the remaining accounts. The reminder is typically a duplicate of the original statement with a rubber-stamped notation saying “second notice,” “past due,” or “please remit.” To send a collection letter at this stage would be risky for goodwill. The assumption is that the obligation has been overlooked and will be paid when the reminder is received. Very often companies will use two or three reminders before moving to the letter-writing stage.

Inquiry

After sending the normal number of reminders without success, companies resort to letters. To increase efficiency, many organizations use form letters that may be generated automatically by the computer or by a collector.

In all letters at the inquiry stage, the assumption must be that something has prevented the debtor from paying. The aim is to get some action from the customer, in the form of either a check or an explanation. Follow these guidelines for writing effective inquiry letters:

Figure 12.10: Stages in the Collection-Letter Series

REMINDER	INQUIRY	APPEAL	URGENCY	ULTIMATUM
"SECOND REQUEST" "REMINDER" Send copy of invoice. Do not use hand-written reminders. State amount due.	"We believe something has prevented you from continuing your prompt-paying habits. Please send an explanation." Use personalized form letter. Aim for action from customer: payment or explanation. State amount due. Assume something has prevented customer from paying. May include resale or sales promotion.	"Keep your part of the agreement." "Send your check today." Inductive outline. Appeal to fair play, closure, pride, fear. State amount due. May require several appeal letters; become increasingly strong.	"We must have payment by return mail." Deductive outline may be useful. Have chief executive sign letter. State amount due. Add stringency, fear. Use adverbs to make language stronger.	"Pay now or face the consequences." Deductive outline. Warn of legal action. State amount due. Stay professional, maintain self-control. Have chief executive sign letter. Use adverbs to make language stronger.

1. Because reminders have failed to bring payment, something is wrong.
2. Action on the part of the debtor is necessary. Either a payment or an explanation is expected.
3. With empathy, think and write positively.
4. Make it easy for the debtor to reply, but do not provide excuses for nonpayment.

One letter of helpful inquiry is sufficient because additional letters may give the debtor the idea that you will continue to wait. You must increase stringency by reducing the proportion of helpful talk as you proceed from one stage to the next.

Appeal

By writing a short letter restricted to one appeal, a collection writer (1) increases the chances that the entire letter will be read; (2) places emphasis on the appeal used; and (3) reserves something new to say if an additional letter is needed. Typically, the following types of appeals are used:

- *Fair play*. Collectors often appeal to the debtor's sense of cooperation, loyalty, and honesty. For example, "The mutual contract we entered into was based on two things. The first was our ability to make delivery as agreed. The second was your ability to pay as agreed. We kept our part of the agreement, and the only way to complete the agreement is for you to send a check for Rs 15,000 today."
- *Closure*. People gain satisfaction from concluding that which they have begun. In a business transaction, payment is the final step: "Send your check for Rs 15,000 today so that we can mark your account 'paid in full'."

- *Pride*. Many people wish to preserve their reputation: 'You must be proud of your excellent credit rating. Let us help you retain that rating by keeping your account in our 'preferred file,' Mr. Kumar."
- *Fear*. Collectors know that many people fear loss of credit privileges loss of possessions, and the possibility of litigation. For example, "so that you can continue to offer your customers the quality merchandise they demand, you must safeguard your good credit report. To do so, please send your check for Rs 15,000 today".

Concentrate on one appeal. Multiple-appeal letters don't provide time or space to develop a single appeal properly. Appeals in this stage intimidate only slightly, if at all. Typically, fear appeals are reserved for the strong-appeal or ultimatum letters.

STRONG APPEAL OR URGENCY

The strong-appeal letter emphasizes urgency. It says, in effect, "we must have the payment by return mail." By developing the basic appeals and insisting on payment for the debtor's own good, the writer adds stringency. Comments about the cost of a lawsuit are common in urgency letters. Although the loss of credit or possessions may be implied, the best psychology is to let the reader know you are still willing to settle things without undue embarrassment.

The deftness with which the writer handles the collection problem at this stage determines which customers are retained for the company. At the same time, the account has reached a crucial stage at which the assumption is that the customer will pay only after considerable pressure is applied.

To develop the strong appeal from the mild appeal, follow these suggestions.

1. Change the appeal from one of challenging the debtor's *retention* of a favorable credit rating, a good reputation, or a prized possession to one of definitely implying that a debtor is about to lose something of value or face a distasteful situation.
2. Decrease the persuasive tone. Become more demanding.
3. Instead of discussing why the debtor *doesn't* pay, talk about why the debtor *must* pay.
4. Offer the debtor a choice between two or more things (partial payment, time notes), none of which enables the debtor to get off the hook.
5. Let the debtor know that the weight of evidence and the legal aspects definitely favor you and not the debtor.
6. Consider using the deductive approach.

Recall from chapter 11 that sometimes bad news is appropriately placed in the first sentence. Late in the collection series, nothing (including the inductive approach) has worked. At this stage a deductive letter might "shake" the debtor and achieve the desired result. If the letter shocks a debtor into payment, good. If it doesn't, little is lost by trying the deductive approach.

Ultimatum

When strong appeals fail to do their work, the collection writer must take the only remaining course of action: a letter that says, "you must pay now of your own volition or we will use every possible legal means to enforce collection." In this letter you must mention whatever action you plan to take to obtain final collection.

But be careful that your letter does not use language that makes you susceptible to legal action! Do not start name-calling. And avoid preaching because debtors who get to this stage do not react favorably do advice about how they should have acted.

The ultimatum letter in Figure 12.11 shows that the tone has changed from "must pay" to "pay now or else." Note that the ultimatum reviews the sequence of events, past and future, to indicate the seriousness of the matter. At this late stage, deductive writing is an option. To emphasize the ultimatum, the letter could have used the third paragraph as the beginning paragraph.

Figure 12.11: Good Example of an Ultimatum

May 20, 2000

Mr Karan Das
36, Chowrangee Lane
Kolkata 782001

Dear Mr Das:

When we agreed some three months ago to ship automotive supplies, you agreed that you would pay the Rs 300000 within 30 days. Yet the 30 days have gone by, then 60. Now more than 90 days have elapsed.

During this time, we have sent you several overdue notices and letters - all without a single reply from you. Because our overdue notices and letters have gone unanswered, our patience is exhausted; however, our interest in you and in your welfare is not.

As members of the National Dendar Credit Association, we are compelled to submit your name as "nonpay" unless we receive your check for Rs 300000 by May 27. The effect of a bad report could very well restrict your ability to purchase supplies on credit. In addition, our legal department would be forced to bring suit for collection.

We have every right to enforce legal collection. You have until May 27 to retain your good record and to avoid legal embarrassment.

Sincerely

Sharad Ram

If the ultimatum letter does not result in collection, the only recourse is to tell the debtor you are taking the steps promised.

THINK ABOUT IT

The purpose of a persuasive message is to get action. Since people will act only if they want to, persuasive messages must arouse the reader's interest (desire).

When a writer's purpose is to sell a product or to request a special favor, ideas should be presented in the inductive sequence: get the reader's attention, introduce the product or request, give evidence to indicate that the reader gains by buying or complying, and encourage action. Effective persuasive letters build on a central selling point. The readers, rather than the product, serve as the subject of many of the sentences.

Compared with other persuasive letters, collection letters are shorter. This is because debtors already know that they owe money. A short letter that presents one good reason for paying has a better chance of success than a long letter that presents many reasons. In the collection series of increasingly stringent letters, each letter presents one appeal. If no response is received, the next letter presents a different appeal.

Résumés and cover letters, which will be discussed in chapters 13 and 14, are also persuasive messages. And the product is You!

<u>Chapter 13</u>

Communication for Employment – Résumé

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Content of the Résumé
- Formulating Career Plans
- Planning your Résumé
- Structuring the Résumé
- Electronic Résumés

Ajith, a management graduate, with general management as his area of specialization, was recently interviewed by a consumer goods firm that was looking for salespeople who were willing to travel. Part of the interview went as follows.

Recuiter: I see by your résumé that you have specialized in general management. What prompted you to think of a career in sales?

Ajith: Well, I guess it's just the fact that I like meeting people. And of course, Fundamentals of Marketing was part of our syllabus.

Recruiter: But if you were interested in sales, you could have specialized in marketing.

Ajith: Oh, I really didn't think it would make much of a difference. After all, you really learn to sell on the job, don't you?

Recruiter: Do you know much about our company?

Ajith: Frankly, I don't. I only know that you make a large number of household products.

Recruiter: Tell me, why would you like to work for us?

Ajith: The first reason is the salary. I know that you pay higher wages than anyone else in the industry.

When the allotted time was up, the recruiter thanked Ajith and promised that the company would get in touch with him within two weeks. Nine day later Ajith received a rejection letter. After talking to some of his friends who were offered jobs by the same company, Ajith realized that 80% of those who were hired had marketing as their area of specialization.

CONTENT OF THE RÉSUMÉ

You are graduating from business school in another month and entering the job market. Your education has equipped you with a set of resources – qualifications, skills – that you now have to sell to prospective employers. Remember, you'll be competing with thousands – perhaps hundreds of thousands – of other applicants, all vying for the same jobs that you would like to get. To make yourself heard above the din of the marketplace you must not only have a clear idea of exactly what kind of employment would suit you best, but also the ability to sell yourself effectively to would- be employers. Lack of a sense of direction and poor communication skills could cost you a job. Look at the following example.

Now ask yourself a few questions. Why did Ajith not get the job? What could he have done to improve his chances of getting the job? Once you read the first section of this chapter, you'll come up with a number of answers about where Ajith had slipped up.

FORMULATING CAREER PLANS

An effective job search begins with careful career planning, a process that includes self-analysis, career analysis, and job analysis.

Self Analysis

Remember, the résumé is primarily a sales letter, selling a particular commodity – you. In order to sell yourself effectively, you need above all to identify your strengths, your interests and your achievements. Answering the questions in figure 13.1 is a good way to begin your self-analysis. This will help you to get a fairly good idea of where you stand at the moment and where you want to go from there. It will also help you to provide ready answers to questions asked during an employment interview.

Figure 13.1: Self-Analysis Questions

Self-Analysis Questions

The kind of person I am

1. Do I have a high level of aspiration?
2. Do I communicate well?
3. Am I dependable?
4. Am I energetic?
5. Am I free of personal habits that would interfere with my work?
6. Am I financially independent?
7. Am I a leader?
8. Am I people oriented (or would I like to work alone)?
9. Am I self-confident (without being egotistical)?
10. Do I spend time wisely?

My aptitudes

1. Do I have a high verbal aptitude (written and oral)?
2. Do I have a high aptitude for learning foreign languages?
3. Do I have a high mechanical aptitude?
4. Do I have a high aptitude for problem solving?

My achievements

1. What is my overall grade-point average?
2. What is the grade-point average in my subject?
3. In which courses have I excelled?
4. Which courses have been most difficult?
5. Have I done well in problem-solving courses?
6. What have been my achievements in extracurricular activities, in jobs I have held, or in volunteer work?

My interests

1. What are my favorite academic interests (the courses I liked best, not necessarily the ones in which I made the best grade)?
2. Which professional magazines or journals are most appealing?
3. What type of books or magazines do I read for pleasure?
4. To which campus and off-campus organizations do I belong?
5. How do I prefer to spend leisure time?
6. Do I like to travel?

My education

1. What is my area of specialization in college, and when do I expect to graduate?
2. What special training have I received – internships, workshops, and seminars?
3. What special skills do I possess – foreign languages, computer competency?

My experience

1. What part-time jobs have I held?
2. What full-time jobs have I held?

Source: William. C. Himstreet, Wayne Murlin, Baty and Carol M. Lehman, Business Communication, 10th edition (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993).

Figure 13.2: Career Analysis Questions

Career-Analysis Questions

Type of career (such as accounting, finance, sales, etc.)

1. Which aptitudes (quantitative, verbal, mechanical) would be most beneficial?
2. Is the occupation considered a "pressure" occupation?
3. Are there significant health hazards?
4. Is relocation or frequent travel expected?
5. Is the field crowded, or is it short of workers?

Preparation

1. What are the academic requirements (degree, major)?
2. What are the professional requirements (certificates)?
3. Are continuing education or training programs expected and available?
4. What experiences are considered prerequisite?

Rewards

1. What is the standard salary of entry-level workers?
2. Are there significant opportunities for advancement in salary and responsibility?
3. What are the fringe benefits?
4. What are the intangible rewards?

Future of the field

1. Is the field expected to expand or contract?
2. Will the field be strongly influenced by changes in technology?
3. Is competition in the field increasing?
4. Will changes in political administrations or governmental regulation have a significant impact on the field?

Source: William. C. Himstreet, Wayne Murlin, Baty and Carol M. Lehman, Business Communication, 10th edition (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993).

Career Analysis

Asking questions and answering them is equally effective in career analysis. Figure 13.2 provides a set of questions that help you to channel your job search, and to decide whether your chosen career is the right one for your or whether you should consider other options. Once you are sure you have selected the right field for your career, you have to start looking at a specific job in that field.

Job Analysis

Most college graduates look for entry-level positions. Before deciding to take up a particular job, it would be helpful to answer the questions in figure 13.3. Interviewing a person who is doing the same job can provide some useful insights.

Matching Personal needs with Job Profile

After you have collected enough information about the job you're considering, compare your interests, skills and strengths with the company and job requirements. This will help you to determine whether a match between you and the potential job is possible.

You are unlikely to find the job and the organization that will satisfy all your needs and meet all your requirements. It is for you to decide what factors are more important to

Figure 13.3: Job-Analysis Questions

Job-analysis questions

1. What are the specific duties and responsibilities?
2. Do the specified duties and responsibilities seem compatible with my personal characteristics aptitudes, interests? Others – dependability, leadership, aspirations, desire to work alone or with others, willingness to relocate or travel?
3. Does my education satisfy requirements for the position (degrees earned or in progress, cooperative education, internships, special training programs, directly related courses)? Would I be willing to continue my education?
4. Are my experiences directly related to the job's specified duties and responsibilities? (List related part-time jobs or full-time jobs. If experience is scant, what aspects of the academic program, school-related activities, volunteer work, or other jobs are related to the job in which you are interested?)

Source: William. C. Himstreet, Wayne Murlin, Baty and Carol M. Lehman, Business Communication, 10th edition (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993).

you. Getting a job with a company that does not value or utilize your talents, or working on a job that needs resources that you do not have, will only create problems for everyone concerned.

PLANNING YOUR RÉSUMÉ

After you have carefully weighed all the options that are open to you, the next important step is planning your résumé. Remember, your résumé will probably be vying for the employer's attention, with 100 or 200 other résumés, perhaps more. Also, as an employer spends two minutes or less reading a résumé, you have very little time to tell him why you are the best person for the job. You must selectively choose what to say and how to say it, and then present it in a visually appealing manner so that the reader can read through it quickly without missing important facts. A concise, informative, easy-to-read résumé can become an effective advertising tool that will not only help you to get an interview, but tell the employer that you have the communication skills required to make a mark in today's information-intensive world.

Before you actually start structuring your résumé, it would be a good idea to take inventory of all the information you actually want to include. The format, content and style of your résumé will depend on your specific qualifications, the job profile and the individual personality you wish to portray. For instance, you must decide what personal details to include, whether to give references or not and which previous experience should be highlighted. Before including any information, ask yourself the question, *"Does this information enhance my chance of getting an interview?"* If the answer is 'yes," go ahead and include it. If the answer is 'no,' have no qualms about cutting it out.

STRUCTURING THE RÉSUMÉ

While structuring the résumé, never let your prospective reader out of sight. A résumé that emphasizes the compatibility of your qualifications and the prospective employer's job requirements is more likely to get a favorable response than one that highlights all your strong points but is of little use to the employer. For instance, there's no sense in telling an employer how well you play football when you are applying for a system analyst's job.

Figure 13.4: Chronological Résumé

<u>OBJECTIVE</u>	Accounting manager, focus on international finance
<u>EXPERIENCE</u>	
March 1990 to present	Staff Accountant/Financial Analyst INDO-AMERICAN IMPORTS, DADAR, BOMBAY Prepared general accounting reports for wholesale gift items importer with annual sales of Rs 15 million. Audited all financial transactions between company headquarters and suppliers in 12 South East Asian countries. Created a computerized model to adjust accounts for fluctuations in currency exchange rates. Represented company in negotiating joint venture agreements with major suppliers in Mexico and Columbia
October 1984 to March 1990	Staff Accountant VIVIDHA AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS, JAIPUR Handled budgeting, billing, and credit processing functions for the Jaipur branch of Vividha's Agricultural Chemicals division. Audited travel and entertainment expenditures of Vividha's 10-member overseas sales force. Assisted in launching an on-line computer system (IBM).
<u>EDUCATION</u>	ICFAI BUSINESS SCHOOL 1990-1993 M.B.A with emphasis on international business.
<u>REFERENCES</u>	Available on request. <u>Résumé submitted in confidence</u>

Résumés can be organized in one of three ways: chronological order, functional order, or a combination of chronological and functional orders.

Chronological Résumé

The traditional and the most common kind of résumé is the chronological résumé. Here you provide relevant information about your educational qualifications and employment history (if any) sequentially in reverse order. Which one should come first? Education or experience? Figure out which one would be more impressive to the employer and put that one first. Many recruiters prefer the chronological approach. Burdette E. Bostwick says in *How to Find the Job You've Always Wanted, "Unless you have a really compelling reason, don't use any but the standard chronological format. Your résumé should not read like a treasure map, full of minute clues to the whereabouts of your jobs and experience. I want to be able to grasp quickly where a candidate has worked, how long, and in what capacities."* Figure 13.4 shows an example of a chronological résumé.

The Functional Résumé

In the functional approach, the résumé is organized around a series of skills and accomplishments and employment and academic experience is put in subordinate sections. Here the focus is on individual areas of competence, and it's useful for people who are just entering the job market.

Figure 13.5: Functional Résumé

Amrita Singh

201, Alpine Retreat,
Sard Mahal, Canning Road
Bombay 6574932

Phone number (022) 4567893

WRITING/EDITING:

- Wrote arts and entertainment articles for college newspaper
- Edited University of Bombay Handbook, guidebook mailed to all incoming freshmen
- Wrote editorial on student attitudes for Teenagers Today.
- Wrote prize-winning script for skit in inter-college talent show.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

- Participated in over 100 debates as member of college debating team.
- Led seminars to teach job-search skills to under-privileged teenagers as part of campus outreach program.
- Performed in summer theater productions in Prithvi Theatre, Bombay.

MANAGING

- Developed budget, schedule, and layouts for college handbook; assigned work to photographers and copywriters.
- Developed publicity campaign for a talent show that raised Rs 7,000 for the University of Bombay's Arts Council.

EDUCATION:

The University of Bombay, September 1991– June 1995 (B.A. Journalism)

EXPERIENCE:

June 1993-April 1994, Editor, University of Bombay Handbook Summer 1992, Actress, Prithvi Theater Bombay

PERSONAL DATA:

Willing to relocate; have traveled extensively.

REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS: Available from placement office, The University of Bombay

In functional résumés, the points of primary interest to employees – your special skills – appear in major headings. These headings highlight what the applicant can actually do for the employer and are best arranged in their order of importance. Figure 13.5 is an example of a functional résumé.

Combination Chronological and Functional Résumé

This kind of résumé, as the very same suggests, combines features of the chronological & functional résumés.

In this kind of a résumé entries under 'education' and 'experience' are sequenced in chronological order, while other entries are listed under separate headings that emphasize skills that are of special relevance to the job in question. The example shown in figure 13.6 will give you a fair idea of how this is done.

Figure 13.6: Chronological-Functional Résumé

C. SRIDEVI

School Address	Permanent Address
Bal Bhavan Colony, Raja Ramnagar Pune (023)564738	903, Alien Apartments, Insaf Gandhinagar

CAREER OBJECTIVE	To enter a management-trainee program and later specialize in human resources management.
MANAGERIAL EDUCATION	Will receive a PGDBA diploma in Management with concentration in human resources management, May 1, 2001.
	Achievements: Received Kothari Academic Scholarship
MANAGERIAL	**Desk manager**, Domeview Hotel in Punjagutta. Worked part-time since May 1998. Reserved rooms, registered guests, and kept computerized records. **Residence Hall Director,** Ferguson College, August 1998 to present. Supervised 72 male residents. Enforced college regulations. Provided individual and group counseling to residents having academic and personal problems. Prepared work schedules and handled payroll for 5 resident assistants and 13 desk assistants.

CONTENT OF THE RÉSUMÉ

Although the content sections of résumés are fairly standard, you do have some freedom in deciding what section you want to include and what you want to leave out. Typically, a résumé has the following sections:

1. Heading
2. Career goals or objectives
3. Education
4. Work experience
5. Summary of job skills/ key qualifications
6. Activities, honors and other achievements

Figure 13.7; Chronological Résumé with Volunteer Work and Honors and Activities in Separate Sections

AMMINIKUTTY NAIR

809/2 Koil Street, Mylapore, Chennai
Phone (044) 56784934

CAREER OBJECTIVES	To obtain a management position in the information systems division of a major corporation or consulting firm. Emphasis in developing applications and implementing programs.
SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS	Bachelor's degree in Management Information Systems; proficient in operations of MS-DOS and Unix systems and primary applications software. Applied computer knowledge and acquired valuable work habits while completing cooperative-education requirements with a leading company. Willing to relocate.
EDUCATION	B.B.A. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS, Karnataka University. Anticipated graduation date: June 2001. Computer Systems — MS-DOS and Unix Languages — COBOL, BASIC and Pascal Application Software — dBase IV, Clipper, Wordperfect 5.1, Lotus 1-2-3, and Harvard Graphics
RELATED EXPERIENCE	Management Assistant, Cooperative Education, Central Computer Services, Manipal, Karnataka, January 2000 to May 2000. Provided technical support to end users for hardware and software approved by the company. Applied knowledge of languages and application software in realistic MIS environment; assisted in the installation of a local area network; developed interpersonal skills while interacting with computer users. Clerk/Cashier, Simpson Foods, Mangalore, June 2000 to present. Promoted from clerk to cashier in six months. Acquired valuable work habits – responsibility, dependability, time management, and human relations.
VOLUNTEER WORK	Served as unpaid assistant at Manipal Community Hospital.
HONORS AND ACTIVITIES	Dean's Scholar Data processing and Management Association Vice President Chair, Program Committee Assisted others in selecting computer systems and learning applications software.
REFERENCES	Available on request.

7. Special interests
8. References

Heading

Headings on a résumé usually include the applicant's name, address, telephone number and e-mail address or fax number.

E.g.: Rashmi Srivatsava
145, Gulmohar Park
New Delhi - 110008
(011) 4289634
E-mail- shrivas@yahoo.com

Career Goal or Objectives

It is the career goals section of the résumé that tells the reader about your career aspirations. It helps him to see if the job you are seeking matches the one he has to offer. Therefore, a good career/job objective must be clear and as specific as possible. If you look at the examples that follow, you will notice that you may use either complete or incomplete sentences. If you use two or more sentences, make sure you are consistent: every sentence must be either complete or incomplete.

Look at these examples:

1. Responsible position as a systems analyst. Willing to travel.
2. To obtain a responsible entry-level job as a data-entry operator and eventually to become the manager of a data-entry center.

Figure 13.8: Electronic Résumé

Keywords: Accountant Bookkeeper. Cashier. Accounts receivable ledger. Accounts payable ledger. Bachelor's degree. Business Administration. Lotus 1-2-3. Windows. Ensemble. Japanese. CFA examination. Karnataka. Beta Gamma Sigma. Leadership. Leadership, Phi Kappa Phi Dean's Honor List. President's Honor List. Excellent oral communication skills. Excellent written communication skills. Self-motivated Quick learner: Detail minded. Top 10 percent of class IBM-compatable computers. Karnataka University.

Goal:	To work as an accountant and to pass the CFA Examinations. Want to become a partner in a large CPA firm.
Education	Karnataka University, Karnataka. 1997 to 2001
	Accounting major. Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration awarded June 1, 1999. High honors.
Experience	Ahmed'sAuto sales, Manipal, Karnataka, January 1999 to June 1999.
	Manipal Health Center, Karnataka, June 1999 to December 1999.
College	Beta Gamma Sigma. 200x-200x-200x: Delta Sigma Pi. 200x to 200x.
	Vice President, 200x to 200x, President, 200x to 200x.
	Kappa Phi, 200x to 200x: Dean's Honor List, 200x; President's Honor List, 200x

Education

The information in the education section, as in the experience section, generally appears in reverse chronological order. Include the following information in this section.

1. Colleges/Universities/Technical schools attended including location and inclusive dates of attendance.
2. Major area of study
3. Degree(s) awarded or to be awarded
4. Actual or anticipated graduation date
5. Marks/grades
6. Details of other courses you have done that are relevant to the position for which you are applying.

The information in this section can be presented in two formats: (a) by date, (b) by college/university/ institute. Given below are examples of each:

(a) 1997-1999: University of Madras, M.A. In English Literature. Received Masters Degree in June 2000. Average Marks - 67%

1995-1997 - Annamalai University, Madras, B.A. With English Literature Main. Average Marks - 62%.

(b) University of Madras - 1997-1999; M.A. In English Literature. Masters Degree in June 2000. Average Marks - 67%

Annamalai University -1995-1997; BA with English Literature Main. Average Marks 62%.

The education section could also include a list of special skills & abilities such as knowledge of a foreign language and computer competency. Make sure all the information you provide is accurate. Avoid making false claims, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Work Experience

The "Work Experience" section provides information about your employment history. The information you present about each of your work experiences should include the following:

- The title of the job, including its major responsibilities;
- The inclusive dates of employment for the job;
- The name of the employer and the location of the job;
- Significant accomplishments on the job.

Arrange the order in which the information is presented in such a way that the most important information is emphasized. Omit obvious job duties that can be inferred from the job title. It is by stressing what you accomplished on the job that you can set yourself apart from other applicants. Use a direct and crisp style to help the reader evaluate your skills quickly.

Pronouns referring to yourself (I, me, my) are superfluous. Begin sentences with action words like completed, developed, drafted, established, initiated, assisted and so on.

For instance, instead of saying, *"My duties included designing computers and writing user documentation manuals,"* it would be better to say, *"Developed computer programs to monitor accounting systems, including documentation manuals."* Avoid using too many adjectives or adverbs that seem overly strong.

Summary of Job Skills/Key Qualifications

This section outlines the important job skills you've picked up and the qualifications that make you suitable for the post for which you are applying. It is this section that gives you an edge over other applicants by putting you in a more competitive position. To make this section really work for you it is best to tailor it to meet the needs of each organization. Given below is an example of how this section can be presented.

Among my job skills that would be helpful in this position are the following: excellent oral and written communication skills, ability to motivate others, ability to work well with others, and fluency in French and Japanese. The key qualifications I have for this job are a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, a post-graduate diploma in marketing management and two years' experience as a Management Trainee with ICTAR Ltd.

Activities, Honors and Achievements

You may want to present information about your college activities, including honors, awards club/organization memberships, and positions held in these clubs/organizations, that will allow the reader to assess your leadership potential, your ability to work well with others or your ability to communicate effectively. (See figure 13.7). The two most common formats for presenting information about your activities, honors and achievements are by date and by title.

Exhibit 13.1
Checklist for Résumés

A. Contents and Style

1. Prepare the résumé before the application letter to summarize the facts the letter will be based on.
2. Present the strongest qualifications first.
3. Use short noun phrases and action verbs.
4. Use facts, not opinions.
5. Avoid excessive use of personal pronouns.
6. Omit the date of preparation.
7. Omit mention of your desired salary, work schedule, or vacation schedule.

B. Contact Information

1. Use a title or your name and address, as a heading.
2. List your name, address, area code, and telephone number - for both school or work and home, if appropriate.

C. Career Objective and Skills Summary (optional)

1. Be as specific as possible about what you want to do.
   (a) State a broad and flexible goal to increase the scope of your job prospects.
   (b) Prepare two different résumés if you can do two unrelated types of work.
2. Summarize your key qualifications.
3. State the month and, if you know it, the day on which you will be available to start work.

D. Education

1. List all relevant schooling and training since high school, with the most recent first.
   - List the name and location of every institution you have attended, with the dates you entered and left and the degrees or certificates you obtained.
   - Indicate your major (and minor) fields in college work.
   - State your marks/grades average, if your average is impressive enough.
2. List relevant required or elective courses in descending order of importance.
3. List any other related educational or training experiences, such as job-related seminars or workshops attended and certificates obtained.

E. Work Experience

1. List all relevant work experience, including paid employment and volunteer work.
2. List full-time and part-time jobs, with the most recent one first.
   - State the month/year when you started and left each job.
   - Provide the name and location of the firm that employed you.
   - List your job title and describe your functions briefly.
   - Note on-the-job accomplishments, such as an award or a suggestion that saved the organization time or money.

F. Activities, Honors, and Achievements

1. List all relevant unpaid activities, including offices and leadership positions; significant awards or scholarships not listed elsewhere; projects you have undertaken that show an ability to work with others; and writing or speaking activities, publications, and roles in academic or professional organizations.
2. In most circumstances, exclude mention of religious or political affiliations.

G. Other Relevant Facts

1. List other information, such as your typing speed or your proficiency in languages .
2. Mention your ability to operate any machines, equipment, or computer software used in the job.

H. Personal Data

1. Omit personal details that could be regarded negatively or be used to discriminate against you.
2. Omit or downplay references to age if it could suggest inexperience or approaching retirement.
3. Describe military service (branch of service, where you served, rank attained, and the dates of induction and discharge) here or, if relevant, under "Education" or "Work Experience."
4. List job-related interests and hobbies, especially those indicating stamina, strength, sociability, or other qualities that are desirable in the position you seek.

I. References

1. Offer to supply the names of references on request.
   - Supply names of academic, employment, and professional associates – but no relatives.
   - Provide a name, a title, an address, and a telephone number for each reference.

- List no name as a reference until you have that person's permission to do so.

2. Exclude your present employer if you do not want the firm to know you are seeking another position, or add "Résumé submitted in confidence" at the top or bottom of the résumé.

Source: C L Bovee and J V Thill, Business Communication Today (New York: McGraw Hill, 1995) 363

Special Interests

A list of your special interests helps the employer to determine what interests you and basically what type of person you are. Hobbies or personal qualities that relate to your career goals could be particularly useful. Each item you list in this section should be a legitimate special interest, because during the interview, interviewers often ask questions about these special interests.

References

These days employers do not attach much significance to references; however, they can be useful in some cases. Some applicants indicate that references are available on request.

If you are including this section in your résumé, then list the full name, title, addresses, telephone number, and the nature of the relationship between you and the reference. You may need to obtain the concerned person's permission before you use him as a reference. Your professors, previous employers, influential friends or community leaders could all be references.

We have looked at how a résumé is structured and what actually goes into it. The checklist in Exhibit 13.1 gives you the dos and don'ts of résumé writing in a nutshell.

ELECTRONIC RÉSUMÉS

The use of electronic résumés is increasing dramatically as more and more individuals are using electronic résumé database service companies to find a job.

An electronic résumé differs from a traditional résumé in some significant ways. (See figure 13.8). Let us see how.

1) While traditional résumés use action verbs, electronic résumés use nouns.

2) Electronic résumés are scanned for input into a database. To ensure effective scanning, a sans serif font like Helvetica should be used and the size of the font should range between 10 and 14 points. Italics, shadow lettering, underlining, horizontal or vertical lines and bullets should be avoided.

3) The electronic résumé is dependent on key words. These are usually listed in a separate section immediately after the heading. This is done because some résumé scanning softwares identify only a limited number of keywords – say 50. If the keywords are interspersed with other information, the scanner may fail to identify some crucial ones, thus making the applicant seem less competitive than other applicants, when in fact, he may be better qualified than any other. Among the items included in the keyword list are the following:

A) Jobs held

B) Job-related tasks performed

C) Special skills or knowledge

D) Degree(s)

E) Class/University rank

F) Special awards or honors

G) Interpersonal skills

THINK ABOUT IT

In this chapter we've dealt with some important facts you need to keep in mind when you communicate with a prospective employer.

An effective self-analysis, a thorough career and job-analysis, and a well-thought-out, well-structured résumé can go a long way in ensuring that you get that much awaited call for an interview.

Chapter 14

Communication for Employment - Application Letter

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Qualities of Well-Written Application Letters
- Letter Plan

You have identified the position for which you would like to apply. You have prepared an effective résumé. The next step is to write a letter of application. Like the résumé, the application letter is a tool to sell yourself. To use this tool effectively, focus on what you can do for your prospective employer and why you believe you are well qualified for the position. Your letter must arouse the employer's interest in your résumé and improve your chances of being granted an interview. The more effectively you consider the employer's perspective, the more attention your letter will receive. Tailor the letter to the unique requirements of the position for which you are applying, the company to which you are applying, and the industry to which the job belongs.

When you send an application letter to a company in response to an advertisement of an opening, or upon learning about an opening from some other source, such an application is a solicited letter of application. When you send a letter without knowing whether an opening actually exists, you are sending an unsolicited application letter. This must have more powerful attention-getters than the solicited letter.

If a résumé is sent along with the letter, as is generally the case, the letter doesn't have to be as thorough as the letter sent without a résumé. A letter accompanying a résumé is a supplement to, rather than a substitute for, the résumé.

QUALITIES OF WELL-WRITTEN APPLICATION LETTERS

The You-Attitude

One of the most important qualities of a well-written application letter is the use of the you-attitude. In other words, focus on the reader and his needs rather than on your own wishes.

Consider these two opening sentences:

- *I wish to be considered an applicant for the position of sales representative.*
- *A degree in marketing and my interpersonal skills would enable me to be the "enthusiastic, hard-working sales representative" you advertised for in the Economic Times dated October 12.*

Which of these two openings do you think is more effective? Why?

Length

The length of an application is another important quality. It is best to limit the application letter to one page, and to four or five paragraphs, unless a longer letter is absolutely essential. Of course, you must provide all relevant information that is likely to rouse the reader's interest and help him see how your services would benefit the organization.

Addressed to a Person not to a Title

Whenever possible address your letter to a person, not to a title. It is worthwhile to spend some time and effort to learn the name of the person to whom you are sending the letter. After all, a letters addressed to "Mr Gagan Bhujbal" does create a more favorable impression than one addressed to the "Human Resources Manager." Provided of course, that you haven't misspelt the manager's name.

Knowledge of Employer's Activities

The company to which you are applying may have recently acquired another company or introduced a new product. Sentences that imply your knowledge of these developments are likely to make a favorable impression. They show that you are really interested in the field, that you gather information before making decisions and so on.

Knowledge of Job Requirements

You don't have to repeat the job requirements. The employer already knows them. But if a particular job lays emphasis on certain skills, then you could always provide information that shows your awareness of the emphasis without stating it directly. For example, a marketing job requires frequently traveling. Instead of writing, *"I understand the job requires frequent traveling,"* you could refer to other work experience that required you to travel a lot or your preference for work that requires traveling.

Reader-Benefit Information

A well-written application letter usually contains reader-benefit material, explaining what you can do for the reader. Your education and training and/or personal traits usually constitute the main reasons the employer will recruit you. It is for you to ensure that you convert factual information of this nature into material that the reader can use to his advantage.

Organization

Like the sales letter, the application letter focuses on a central selling point. This is introduced in the first or the second paragraph and stressed in the paragraphs that follow. Reference to the enclosed résumé is best included at the end of the middle section of the letter. Putting it earlier may prompt the reader to put the letter aside and look at the résumé.

Style

The style you employ must convey an impression of confidence, without making you seem a braggart or an egotist. Use of terminology commonly used on the job implies familiarity with the job and the language used. Avoid stating the obvious. Statements like *"This is an application," "Consider me an applicant for the post,"* etc. are redundant. Most importantly, you must take care to ensure that there are no misspelt words, incorrect job titles, typographical errors, and grammatical and punctuation errors. Many companies view such carelessness negatively and upon discovering an error, automatically eliminate an applicant from further consideration.

Mechanics

The physical appearance of the letter communicates something about you. If it conveys a negative impression, it may not be read at all. The size, color and quality of paper influence the reader's reaction; so do margins, letter format and the arrangement of paragraphs.

Use plain paper for the application letter. While any of the letter formats described in Chapter 16 can be used, the complete-block style is the most popularly used one. The letter in figure 14.1 shows the proper format for an application letter.

LETTER PLAN

A letter of application, like most other types of letters, follows a suggested plan. The following elements are included.

- An opening that arouses the reader's interest and makes him want to read the résumé.
- A middle section touching upon your key qualifications and skills.
- A closing section requesting an interview.

Figure 14.1: Sample Unsolicited Application Letter

216 Riverview Circle
Raj Bhavan Road, Hyderabad
June 16, 2001

Mr. William D' Souza, Managing Partner
Samba & Samba Financial Planning Associates
1775 Airport Road
Hyderabad 500 089

Dear Mr. D'Souza:

Congratulations on being featured in this month's Business Standard article about the coming developments in corporate tax planning. After reading about your firm's innovative electronic tax-reporting programs, I believe my background in computerized accounting and bookkeeping methods would benefit Samba & Samba.

My degree in accounting and courses in electronic data processing have equipped me to work with computer-based clients like yours. Training in business writing, human relations, and psychology should help me achieve a good rapport with them. My advanced studies in tax accounting will enable me to analyze their financial needs from a planning perspective.

Because your company specializes in tax-shelter planning, my work experience could also be beneficial. After two years as a part-time bookkeeper for a securities brokerage firm, I was promoted to full-time financial analyst intern in the corporate investment division. When making recommendations to the firm's corporate clients, I analyzed and selected specific tax-shelter programs. After three months my accomplishments were acknowledged by a substantial salary increase.

Mr. Vikram Saluja, vice president of Citibank, and other references listed on the enclosed résumé will confirm my potential for the staff accountant position.

At a time convenient for you, I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss my qualifications for beginning a career with your company. I will phone you early next Wednesday to see whether we can arrange a meeting at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Satish Kumar

Enclosure

Opening Section

The opening of your application letter will probably "make or break" the letter, i.e. it will decide whether the reader will respond favorably to the request for an interview or not.

There is no one standard opening. The information you want to include varies according to the circumstances. You may name the person from whom you learnt about the job opening, or provide information about how your qualifications fit the job requirements. You may even mention one of the company's significant accomplishments to catch the reader's eye. Whatever type of opening you choose, make sure you include the title of the position for which you are applying in your first paragraph.

In solicited letters of application it is advisable to mention how you found out about the vacancy. Provide the name of the person who informed you or the publication that listed the vacancy. Being specific will create more interest in the letter, especially if the reader and the person you name in the opening are acquainted. Look at the three openings given below.

- *Please consider me an applicant for the position that I recently learned was available in your company.*
- *Mr. Ashok Ahuja, an HR Manager, informed me about an opening for an editor in your publishing department. Because my diploma in journalism and three years' experience on the newsdesk of a national newspaper qualify me for such a position, please consider me for the post.*
- *Your advertisement in The Hindu dated October 31, for an ambitions, hard-working sales representative lists requirements similar to my qualifications. A degree in marketing and four years of sales experience make me confident of my ability to be the type of employee you would like to have in your organization*.

Notice the difference between the first opening and the second and third ones. The first one is weak as it lacks specificity and seems to be written without care. The second and third openings are more effective, as they are more specific, are written from a you-viewpoint and mention the positions for which the writers are applying.

If you choose an opening that lists your most important qualifications for the job, then again, the you-attitude makes the letter more effective. Look at these examples.

- *I would like to have the opportunity to put my educational and work experience to use as an employee in your company.*
- *Several years of retail work experience in a women's garments boutique, a degree in international marketing and an ability to put in long hours of work would enable me to perform well as the business head of the export division you are seeking.*
- *An ability to communicate well both orally and in writing, a degree in business administration with PGDCA and a six-month live project with a software engineering company are the qualifications I have that closely match the requirements of the systems analyst position open in your company.*

The first example is based on the I-attitude, and lacks specificity, which makes it far less effective than the other two openings.

Another way to attract the reader's attention is by opening with a reference to a significant accomplishment of the company. Look at these examples:

- *The article that I recently read about your company has convinced me that your company would be an excellent place for me to begin my career. Please consider me an applicant for any opening in your company.*
- *The recent article about Ispat Steel, which appeared in Business Standard, convinces me that the foresight of your managers will allow the company's expansion plans to succeed. Please consider me for the area manager's post advertised in the September 23 issue of The Economic Times.*
- *When you begin hiring the accounting staff for your plant in Kandivilli that will open in February next year, please consider me for an auditor's position if an opening should come up for a person with my educational and work background. An article I recently read about the state-of-the-art equipment that will be installed in your new plant was fascinating. This equipment should enable Mahindra and Mahindra to continue as the leading manufacturer of tractors in the country.*

Figure 14.2: Sample Solicited Application Letter

2893 Subhash Bose Road
Chowrangee 57, Kolkata.
February 2, 2001

Ms. Anjana Parikh
Director of Administration
Cummings and Welbane, Inc.
770 Campus Point Drive
Kolkata

Dear Ms.Parikh:

Your advertisement in the January 31 issue of the Chapel Hill Post attracted my attention because I believe that I have the "proven skills" you are looking for in an administrative assistant. In addition to having previous experience in a variety of office settings, I am familiar with the computer system that you use in your office.

I recently completed a three-course sequence at St. Xavier's College on operation of the Beta Computer System. I learned how to apply this technology to speed up letter-writing and report-writing tasks. A workshop on "Writing and Editing with the Beta Processor" gave me experience with other valuable applications.

As a result of this training, I am able to compose many types of finished documents, including sales letters, financial reports, and presentation slides.

These specialized skills have proven valuable in my work for the past eight months as assistant to the chief nutritionist at the University of Kolkata campus cafeteria. As my résumé indicates, my duties include drafting letters, typing finished correspondence, and handling phone calls. I'm particularly proud of the order-confirmation system I designed, which has sharply reduced the problem of late shipments and depleted inventories.

Because "proven skills" are best explained in person, I would appreciate an interview with you. Please phone me any afternoon between 3 and 5 p.m. at 8675432 to let me know the day and time most convenient for you.

Sincerely,

Tarun Ghosh

Enclosure

Note how weak the first opening is because of its vagueness. The two others refer to specific features about the company that the writers found impressive, and are therefore far more effective.

When sending an unsolicited application letter, opening with a list of your qualifications may be essential, as you need to convince the reader that the company would benefit by hiring you, even though there is no specific opening. E.g.:

If you have an opening for a systems analyst who has done a six-month live project for a software engineering company, has a degree in business administration and a PGDCA, please consider me for the post.

Middle Section

This being the section where you discuss your qualifications for the job, it will be the longest one. This section should assure the reader that you are indeed qualified. In developing this section, it is up to you to choose which of the following elements you want to include, after a careful consideration of how appropriate each would be for you and for the job for which you are applying.

- Your understanding of the job requirements.
- Your educational achievements that qualify you for the job.
- Your work experience that helps qualify you for the position.
- Any special qualifications that may give you an edge over other applicants.
- Personal information, such as your marks/grade average, the college activities in which you have participated, honors and awards you have received, evidence of your ability to shoulder responsibility and so on.

As the application letter is ideally limited to one page, focus on your key selling point – something that the reader can use to his advantage.

As mentioned earlier, when reviewing the requirements for the position, don't just state the job requirements – the reader already knows these. Your job is to convince the reader that you have studied the position sufficiently to know that your qualifications match the requirements.

Look at this e.g.: I understand you are looking for a hard-working, ambitious employee.

Does this kind of a statement enhance the effectiveness of your letter? The employer knows he wants a hard-working, ambitious employee. But, how do you lead him to believe that you may be just the person he's looking for? Now, look at this e.g.:

A background in statistics qualifies me as the research coordinator you are seeking, who is required to have an analytical background and to be familiar with statistical applications.

The second example specifies what makes the applicant suitable for the opening, and is therefore more effective.

While summarizing your key qualifications, make sure you present your education and work achievements in such a manner that their significance to the job in question is immediately apparent. As mentioned earlier, you don't have to clutter your letter by enumerating every course you've taken or every job you've held. Focus on the areas that give you an edge over other applicants. Don't repeat the facts presented in your résumé; interpret those facts for the reader. Look at these two statements.

- *The training I received as a student of business administration will enable me to perform well as an employee in your company.*
- *The accounting and data processing courses I studied at the Bhartidasan University enabled me to become familiar with accounting theory, procedures and practices, as well as with computerized accounting processes. An understanding of the role of data processing in accounting would enable to work effectively with clients who have installed computerized accounting systems. Selective courses in written and oral communication will also enable me to communicate effectively with these clients.*

Notice how skillfully the second example connects the applicant's educational qualifications to the job requirements.

Figure 14.3: Checklist for Application Letters

Checklist for Application Letters

A. Attention (Opening Paragraph)

1. Open the letter by capturing the reader's attention in a businesslike way:
   a) Summary opening. Present your strongest, most relevant qualifications, with an explanation of how they can benefit the organization.
   b) Name opening. Mention the name of a person who is well known to the reader and who has suggested that you apply for the job.
   c) Source opening. When responding to a job ad, identify the publication in which the ad appeared and briefly describe how you meet each requirement stated in the ad.
   d) Question opening. Pose an attention-getting question that shows you understand an organization's problem, need, or goal and have a genuine desire to help solve or meet it.
   e) News opening. Cite a publicized organizational achievement, contemplated change, or new procedure or product; then link it to your desire to work for the organization.
   f) Personalized opening. Present one of your relevant interests, mention previous experience with the organization, or cite your present position or status as a means of leading into a discussion of why you want to work for the organization.
2. State that you are applying for a job, and identify the position or the type of work you seek.

B. Interest and Desire, or Evidence of Qualifications (Next Several Paragraphs)

1. Present your key qualifications for the job, highlighting what is on your résumé: job-related education and training; relevant work experience; and related activities, interests, and qualities.
2. Adopt a mature and businesslike tone.
   a) Eliminate boasting and exaggeration.
   b) Back up your claims of ability by citing specific achievements in educational and work settings (or in outside activities).
   c) Demonstrate a knowledge of the organization and a desire to join it by citing its operations or trends in the industry.
3. Link your education, experience, and personal qualities to the job requirements.
   a) Relate aspects of your training or work experience to those of the target position.
   b) Outline your educational preparation for the job.
   c) Provide proof that you learn quickly, are a hard worker, can handle responsibility, and/or get along well with others.
   d) Present ample evidence of the personal qualities and the work attitudes that are desirable for job performance.
   e) If asked to state salary requirements, provide current salary or a desired salary range, and link it to the benefits of hiring you.
4. Refer the reader to the enclosed résumé.

C. Action (Closing Paragraph)

1. Request an interview at the reader's convenience.
2. Request a screening interview with the nearest regional representative, if company headquarters is some distance away.
3. State your phone number (with area code) and the best time to reach you, to make the interview request easy to comply with, or mention a time when you will be calling to set up an interview.
4. Express appreciation for an opportunity to have an interview.
5. Repeat your strongest qualification, to help reinforce the claim that you have something to offer the organization.

Source: Bovee & Thill. Business Communication Today (NewYork, McGraw Hill, 1995) 372

In presenting information about your work experience too, show how your experience

1) will be useful in the job for which you are applying;
2) has helped you to develop your skills and made you a responsible, hard-working employee;
3) has given you an opportunity to work with others.

If you believe you have special qualities for the position, it may be to your advantage to discuss them. For instance, the ability to speak several languages may be an added qualification when applying for a marketing job in an MNC. But whatever qualities you mention, make sure you do it from a 'you-viewpoint' rather than an 'I-viewpoint'. The employer is looking for that extra something that his organization can use, not for an individual whose biography would make elevating reading.

Be sure to provide all information requested in the job advertisement. If the advertisement asks you to specify the salary you expect, then provide the requested information. Some applicants who are not comfortable with specifying an amount, prefer to put it something like this: "I would expect a salary commensurate with the requirements of the position and with my qualifications." If you prefer to specify an amount, make sure you have some idea about what other firms, or may be even the same firm pays for the kind of job you are applying for. Once you know what you can reasonably expect, you can communicate your expectations by saying, *"Given my background, training, the going rates for this position, and the cost of living in Hyderabad, a starting salary of Rs.18, 000 per month would be acceptable."*

Toward the end of the middle section, refer to the enclosed résumé. Of course, a statement like. *"A résumé is enclosed"* is unnecessary. A more appropriate reference may be:

"My work experience, outlined on the enclosed résumé, has taught me valuable lessons about working with others."

Closing Section

In the closing section of your letter, your primary task is to ask the reader for a specific action, basically ask for an interview and to make a reply easy. But don't simply ask for an interview – that would be too abrupt. To make it sound less so, include other material, such as an offer to provide additional information that the reader may require or the dates on which you might be available for an interview. Take a look at these examples:

- *May I have an interview on a convenient date?*
- *Additional information about my qualifications for this position can be discussed during an interview, although this letter and the attached résumé do outline several. You can reach me at (040) 8823404 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day of the week to let me know a time that is convenient for you to talk with me about the auditing position.*
- *After you have read my résumé, please call or write to let me know a time that is convenient for you to discuss the chief editor's position with me. Should you need additional information, please let me know.*

While the first example sounds rather abrupt, the two other examples motivate the reader to call the applicant for an interview in a tactful manner.

Figure 14.1 shows you an effective unsolicited application letter, while Figure 14.3 gives you a checklist for application letters which provides in a nutshell the important aspects that you must bear in mind when drafting an application letter.

THINK ABOUT IT

A job application letter is addressed to an employer who wants to see quickly why you have written and how he should respond to you. It is usually an interpretation of your résumé, so only the relevant parts should be highlighted. Summarize your relevant qualifications and your work experience and conclude with some reference to an interview.

Chapter 15

Writing Effective Memos and E-mails

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Fundamentals of Effective Memos
- Categories of Memos
- Memos about the Unpleasant
- Persuasive Memos
- E-mails: Features and Problems
- E-Mail Etiquette

Your boss has sent you the following memo:

The intercultural concepts that were discussed at the most recent managerial convocation lead me to believe that it would behoove you to investigate the causal factors that account for these differences and to determine how we might capitalize on these findings through a detailed analysis of our international management agreements with our overseas suppliers and concessionaires.

So now you know what to do!

It is not uncommon to find memos so full of gobbledygook that they are totally incomprehensible. An ironic state of affairs, considering that memos are supposed to convey information in a direct, efficient manner.

The content of a memo should depend on its objectives. These objectives will help determine the type of memo that should be used: request, confirmation, periodic report, ideas and suggestions, or informal study results. Depending on the audience and writing situation, memos can be either informal or businesslike, short and to the point or detailed; self promoting or adhering strictly to facts. The overall structure of a memo also varies, depending on the subject and the reader's attitude. As discussed earlier in Chapters 10, 11 and 12, some situations require a deductive approach while other, more delicate, circumstances need an inductive approach. Similar considerations are also applicable for e-mails.

FUNDAMENTALS OF EFFECTIVE MEMOS

A memo is a written message designed to provide a quick, convenient way for personnel to communicate with each other. Memos can range from informal, handwritten notes to formal, typewritten reports. The former are more common and are often used for handling day-to-day activities like conveying telephone messages, reminding people of upcoming events, and responding to inquiries. Formal, typewritten (word processor) memos are used to convey information such as quarterly sales reports, detailed suggestions for cost improvements, and analyses of customer concerns.

There are a number of reasons for using memos. First, they are convenient. Second, they usually (not always!) take little time to write or read. Third, they provide a written record for future reference. This explains why millions of organizational memos are written every day.

Organization

Memos are designed to provide information and, often, to get action. Since these messages are usually short and direct (usually, but not always), organization is important. The reader must be able to understand quickly the reason for the message and the action (if any) that is desired. Consider the following case. Subhashini Mehta is scheduled to present a strategic plan to the board of directors next week. The president has assigned Ravi Kumar to assist her, so Subhashini has asked Ravi to check on the agenda, the room, and the materials to be distributed.

She wants to be sure that everything will be ready in time for the meeting. Subhashini also wants to conduct a trial run by presenting her report to some of the senior managers and getting feedback on how the presentation can be improved. When Ravi finished the assignment Subhashini had given him, he sent her the memo depicted in figure 15.1. Read this carefully and note how well it is organized.

Notice that each point in the memo develops a specific idea. The logic and flow are easy to follow. Additionally, Ravi used one of the most important rules of business writing: start with the simple and move to the complex. Subhashini should have no trouble understanding this memo, but if she does, Ravi has left a number where she can call him.

Figure 15.1: A Well Organized Memo

DATE:	November 22, 2000
TO:	Subhashini Mehta
FROM:	Ravi Kumar
SUBJECT:	Strategic Plan Trial Presentation

I have checked on the materials and equipment you will need for your presentation to the board of directors next week. I have learned the following:

1. The agenda will be typed and in your hands by 10 a.m. tomorrow.

2. The transparencies will be completed late Wednesday afternoon. They will be on your desk by 9 a.m. Thursday.

3. The presentation room will have all the audio-visual and support equipment you need.

4. You can use the boardroom on Friday from 9 to 11 a.m. for a trial run of the presentation. There will be five senior managers in attendance. When the presentation is over they will offer you suggestions and recommendations for the final presentation to the board.

Clarity

Since most memos are designed to be brief and to the point, they must be easily understood. Sometimes a memo will lack clarity. Examine the vague and unclear memo in Figure 15.2.

Figure 15.2: A Vague and Unclear Memo

DATE:	November 1, 2000
TO:	Kiran Kukreja
FROM:	Ramesh Singhal
SUBJECT:	Our Previous Talk

I would be interested in receiving copies of that material that you and I talked about at the annual meeting last December.

Note the date on the memo. Will Kiran remember this conversation? It has been many months since their discussion. Now read the improved example in Figure 15.3.

The second version clarifies Ramesh's topic and sets a time by which the information should be sent. If Kiran does not have the information or cannot get it to Ramesh by Friday, she can tell him.

Figure 15.3: A Precise, Clear Memo

DATE:	November 1, 2000
TO:	Kiran Kukreja
FROM:	Ramesh Singhal
SUBJECT:	Employee Turnover Data

At the annual management meeting last December, you mentioned data that you had collected on employee turnover. Could you send me a copy of this material by Friday? Thanks.

The lack of clarity in Figure 15.2 was due to the vague and general manner in which information was requested. Problems of clarity also arise due to the nature of the language used. Take a look at the memo in Figure 15.4.

Figure 15.4: A Wordy and Ambiguous Memo

DATE: December 2, 2000

TO: Shirin Lakdawalla

FROM: Bairam Pestonjee

SUBJECT: Improving Communication with our Overseas Suppliers

The intercultural concepts that were discussed at the most recent managerial convocation lead me to believe that it would behoove you to investigate the causal factors that account for these differences and to determine how we might capitalize on these findings through a detailed analysis of our international management agreements with our overseas suppliers and concessionaires.

Yes, that's the same memo you read at the beginning of the chapter. Have you deciphered it yet? The memo in Figure 15.5 tones down the language and eliminates wordiness and ambiguity.

Figure 15.5: A Direct, Concise, and Simple Memo

DATE: December 2, 2000

TO: Shirin Lakdawalla

FROM: Bairam Pestonjee

SUBJECT: Improving Communication with our Overseas Suppliers

As a result of our recent management meeting, I think an evaluation of all contracts with our overseas suppliers and concessionaires is in order. I would like you to find out what can be done to improve our relationships with these people. Please send me your ideas as soon as possible.

Direct, concise, and simple - now anyone can understand it. Sadly, many memos circulating in companies require a certified wizard to decipher them. See Exhibit 15.1 for snippets from some "real" memos.

Sometimes a memo needs to be more than just well written; it requires graphic support. This is often the case when reporting financial or quantitative data. Consider the memo in Figure 15.6.

The memo contains the information the reader requested. However, one of two things should be added to the memo. Either the absolute or percentage differences in monthly sales should be computed or a graph of each month's sales should accompany the memo. By themselves the figures are hard to interpret; but a graph would have provided a visual comparison of the results. Graphic support can be an important supplement to a memo containing quantitative information.

CATEGORIES OF MEMOS

Most memos fall into one of five basic categories: request, confirmation, periodic report, ideas and suggestions, and informal study results.

Request Memo

The objective of a request memo is to gain a favorable response to a request. The memo must be written in a convincing way. Consider the following case: Hirdesh

Exhibit 15.1
Memos from Hell

Fortune magazine reported that Better Communications, a firm in Lexington, Massachusetts, that teaches writing skills to employers, clipped these management speak phrases from what it described as "memos from hell" circulating at Fortune 500 companies.

- Top leadership helicoptered this vision. (The bosses are looking beyond next week.)
- Added value is the keystone to exponentially accelerating profit curves. (Let's grow sales and profits by offering more of what customers want.)
- We need to dimensionalize this management initiative. (Let's all make a plan.)
- We utilized a concert of cross-functional expertise. (People from different departments talked to each other.)
- Don't impact employee incentivization programs. (Don't screw around with people's pay.)
- Your job, for the time being, has been designated as "retained." (You're not fired yet.)

Why do businesspeople talk so mysteriously about thing like core competency (what we do well) or empowerment (delegating) or paradigms (how we do things)? It's gotten so bad that in a book entitled Fad Surfing in the Boardroom, the author had to publish a dictionary on nouveau business words, and The Wall Street Journal (June 8, 1998) has uncovered a new sport called "buzzword bingo." Employees tally points in meetings by tracking the jargon and clichés their bosses spout.("Deliverables," "net" and "impactfulness" all score points.)

Source: Jack Trout, The Power of Simplicity. (New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill, 1999).

Figure 15.6: Information in Memo Requires Graphic Support

DATE: October 10, 2000

TO: Padma Lal

FROM: Vishnu Kumar

SUBJECT: Comparative Annual Sales Data

In response to your request for sales data comparing this past fiscal year with the previous one, I have compiled the following information.

		Past Fiscal Year	Previous Fiscal Year
January	Rs	2,200,000	2,300,000
February		2,800,000	2,650,000
March		3,000,000	3,350,000
April		3,200,000	2,800,000
May		3,500,000	3,450,000
June		3,000,000	3,900,000
July		3,200,000	4,350,000
August		3,500,000	4,700,000
September		3,100,000	4,100,000
October		2,900,000	3,650,000
November		3,000,000	3,100,000
December		3,900,000	3,750,000

If you need more information, call me at extension 210.

Humayun would like to attend a time management training program that will be sponsored by the chamber of commerce at a local hotel. The manager has asked Hirdesh to put his request in writing. Figure 15.7 depicts Hirdesh's memo.

Figure 15.7: Poor Example of a Request Memo

DATE:	December 5, 2000
TO:	T M Chopra
FROM:	Hirdesh Humayun
SUBJECT:	Attendance at Time Management Seminar

May I attend the time management seminar that is being offered by the Chamber of Commerce next Thursday? Thanks.

The memo is direct and clear, but not suitable from the reader's point of view. As a result it may even fail to achieve its objective. Consider the manager's situation. If many of the departmental personnel make a similar request, the manager may have to limit the number who can attend. To achieve its objective, Hirdesh's memo will have to be like a sales message (recall our discussion in Chapter 12). The request should be clearly stated.

Figure 15.8: Good Example of a Request Memo

DATE:	December 5, 2000
TO:	T M Chopra
FROM:	Hirdesh Humayun
SUBJECT:	Attendance at Time Management Seminar

As I mentioned to you last week, the Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring a time management seminar. It is being conducted by one of the professors in the Management Department of Unpad University. The seminar will be held at the Chamber and because of the low overhead involved, the participant fee is only Rs 500 for the entire day.

Since the personnel cutback six months ago, I have been working without an assistant. A time management seminar would help me improve my productivity and reduce some of the work backlog. The attached brochure presents the contents of the seminar. Many of these topics are productivity-oriented.

Five hundred rupees is an excellent price for the training. I have checked with personnel and learned that the average time management seminar conducted by national training groups costs between Rs 2000 and Rs 2500 per day. In addition, these seminars are at distant locations requiring travel and hotel expenses.

Considering the value of this training and the low cost to the firm, I would like approval to attend the seminar. Although registration closes on Wednesday, December 13, I am sure that the enrollment cap of 30 will be filled before the end of this week. May I hear from you before Friday?

The memo should motivate the reader to take the desired action. The guidelines given below should be followed:

1. The reasons for the request should be presented.
2. If any financial costs are involved, they should be explained.
3. All expenses should be justified.

4. Recommendations for action should be presented.
5. Throughout the memo tact and diplomacy should be used.

If the memo is persuasively written, it should be easy for the reader to say “yes.”

Following these six guidelines, Hirdesh’s memo has been improved - see Figure 15.8.

Notice the difference between the first and second drafts of the memo. The second version reminds the reader of a previous conversation during which the seminar was discussed. This serves as an introduction to the main memo. The reasons are then presented persuasively - showing indirect and direct benefits to the company (i.e. reader oriented). Finally, there is a request for action.

Confirmation Memo

A confirmation memo is designed to confirm in writing something that has been agreed to verbally. Consider, for example, the sales manager who promises to provides sales coverage to six more cities if the general manager provides him with three additional salespeople. When the general manager and the sales manager agree on this plan of action, it is common to find the general manager confirming this agreement with a memo.

Figure 15.9: A Sample Confirmation Memo

DATE: June 10, 2000

TO: Narayan Murthy

FROM: Krishna Murli

SUBJECT: Hiring New Salespeople

This is a confirmation of our discussion of June 8, during which we agreed to hire new salespeople to expand the focus of sales coverage in your region. Here are the specific points on which we agreed.

1. Three new salespeople for the southern region are to be hired. These salespeople will be on board by July 1 and in the field by July 15.

2. These people may be paid up to Rs 8000 per month as a base salary and will receive the standard 10 percent commission paid to all salespeople. You are not authorized to pay any of them over Rs 8000; and if you can keep the average salary below Rs 7000, you may use the extra Rs 3000 to hire an office assistant.

3. The three new people will spend their first month in the field where they will learn how we sell our product line. Then they will each be given a sales territory. One will cover Hyderabad and Vijaywada; another will be assigned to Rajamundhry and Guntur; and the third will cover Vishakapatnam and Kakinada.

4. Since the Hyderabad/Vijaywada territory is very large, this salesperson will commute by car between the two cities.

5. If first year sales in Andhra Pradesh do not meet the sales forecasts submitted by the marketing research people, we will reassign the three salespeople. One will handle Hyderabad-Vijaywada-Guntur; the second will be responsible for Vishakapatnam-Kakinada-Rajamundhry; the third will be moved to Tamil Nadu and work out of the Chennai office.

If you have any questions, please call me. If I do not hear from you within the week, I shall assume that this memo accurately reflects our conversation and you are taking steps to hire the three salespeople.

In such cases, three important guidelines should be followed for writing the memo:

1. Be specific regarding the major points that were discussed and verbally agreed upon.
2. Enumerate the major points to emphasize them and allow easy reference to them in future discussions.
3. Encourage feedback on any misunderstood or unclear points.

Figure 15.9 depicts a confirmation memo about hiring new salespeople.

This message follows the three guidelines for confirmation memos. In this memo Krishna Murli first raises the major points that were previously discussed and agreed upon. Then he outlines the five major points he wants his sales manager to understand. By numbering them, Krishna ensures that all of them are equally emphasized. Finally, he gives Narayan Murthy the opportunity to ask questions.

Periodic Report Memo

Periodic report memos - monthly cost control reports, quarterly sales reports - are submitted at regular intervals.

Since these memos are written frequently, they are designed and preprinted so that the writer can complete them quickly. There are three helpful guidelines for constructing a periodic report memo:

1. The memo should be designed as a fill-in form on which data can be entered quickly.
2. The form should be designed so that it can be duplicated and reused.
3. If narrative or descriptive commentary is necessary, a place should be provided on the form.

The value of a periodic memo is best illustrated with a comparison. Take a look at the memo in Figure 15.10 and then see how the readability and comprehension is improved by the style used in Figure 15.11.

The memo in Figure 15.10 is difficult to read, grasp and make comparisons. But the report memo in Figure 15.11 is concise, comprehensive and easy to understand. And every quarter all that the manager has to do is to enter the relevant data.

Figure 15.10: Periodic Report Memo: Poor Formatting Results in a Hard-to-Read Memo

DATE:	April 6, 2000
TO:	Azim Azad
FROM:	Pankaj Pinto
SUBJECT:	Quarterly Sales Report for the Southern Region for January 1 - March 31

During the first quarter in the Kerala-Karnataka area, T. Ramesh made sales of Rs 184,612. This was an increase of Rs 22,435 over the first quarter of last year. C. Parekh had sales of Rs 122,655. This was his first quarter with us. B. Bharat had sales of Rs 144,446. This was Rs 35,442 less than this quarter last year. A. Elijah had sales of Rs 202,978. This was an increase of Rs 47,990 over last year.

In the Tamil Nadu area, W. Pavan had sales of Rs 124,326. T.Chopra had sales of Rs 63,488. W. Singh had sales of Rs 101,496. Each of these people has been with us for less than six months.

In the Maharashtra-A.P.-Orissa area, J. Krishnamurti had sales of Rs 224,116, which was an increase of Rs 51,406. R. Kumar had sales of Rs 175,283, which represents a decline of Rs 31,509. D.Lapang had sales of Rs 258,407, which was an increase of Rs 68,407. B.Somaiah had sales of Rs 231,663, which was an increase of Rs 19,322. T.Saiwai had sales of Rs 109,582, which was a dramatic decline of Rs 81,764. However, it should be pointed out that he was sick for four weeks during this quarter.

Figure 15.11: Periodic Report Memo: Improved Layout Conveys Information Clearly

DATE: April 6, 2000

TO: Azim Azad

FROM: Pankaj Pinto

SUBJECT: Quarterly Sales Report for the Southern Region for January 1 - March 31

Salesperson	This Year	Last Year	Increase	Decrease	Comments
Kerala-Karnataka					
T.Ramesh Rs	184,612	162,177	22,435		
C. Parekh	122,655	-----			1st year with us
A. Bharat	114,446	149,886		35,442	
A. Elijah	202,978	155,078	47,900		
Tamil Nadu					
W. Pavan	124,326				1st year with us
T. Chopra	63,488				1st year with us
W. Singh	101,496				1st year with us
Maharashtra-Andhra Pradesh-Orissa					
J. Krishnamurti	224,116	172,710	51,406		
R. Kumar	175,283	206,792		31,509	
D. Lapang	258,407	190,000	68,407		
B. Somaiah	231,663	212,341	19,322		
T. Saiwai	109,582	191,346		81,764	Sick for 4 weeks

Additional Comments: The salespeople in Tamil Nadu should eventually have sales equal to those in the other regions. This should become evident by the third quarter of this year.

Ideas and Suggestions Memo

Sometimes memos are used to convey ideas or suggestions. Very often managers ask subordinates for suggestions for tackling certain problems. In such instances, an ideas and suggestions memo is required. Follow the guidelines listed below for writing this type of memo:

1. Write directly - the manager would not have asked for ideas unless he thought the writer had something to offer.
2. Begin with positive comments about the current situation (no one likes to be shot down), and then tactfully present suggestions for change.
3. Group ideas according to subject and use headings to highlight them.
4. Be specific and don’t stray off the point.

Read the memo in Figure 15.12 and identify its drawbacks.

What is wrong with this memo?

Figure 15.12: Poor Example of an Ideas and Suggestions Memo

DATE:	May 15, 2000
TO:	Krishna Parthasarthy
FROM:	Seema Pal
SUBJECT:	Suggestions for Reducing Absenteeism and Turnover

Thank you for asking me for suggestions regarding how we can reduce absenteeism and turnover. I think some of the areas we should examine include competitive salaries, the benefit package, job redesign, and union relations. I am sure that there are many other areas that warrant attention, and you know them a lot better than I do. I simply throw these out as some that should be considered. I'll be more than happy to go along with whatever you decide to do.

Figure 15.13: Good Example of an Ideas and Suggestions Memo

DATE:	May 15, 2000
TO:	Krishna Parthasarthy
FROM:	Seema Pal
SUBJECT:	Suggestions for Reducing Absenteeism and Turnover

I am happy to respond to your request about suggestions for reducing absenteeism and turnover.

The current rate of absenteeism and tardiness is not much higher than the industry average, so we do not need to make radical changes. However, I believe we should take the following steps.

COMPETITIVE SALARIES

In most jobs, we are paying competitive salaries. However, we are below the industry average in our wage rates for incoming secretarial help and for unit managers with 3 to 5 years experience. Since these are the two groups in which we are having the greatest turnover, we must raise their salaries to those of the competition.

BENEFIT PACKAGE

Our health benefit package is too limited. Coverage of major medical problems such as hospital confinement is excellent. However, the package provides only minimal assistance for routine expenses such as prescription medicines or doctor's visits. Over 40 percent of the people leaving our firm say that the medical insurance package is poor. We need a package that is at least as good as those of our major competitors.

JOB REDESIGN

More attention needs to be given to redesigning jobs. In particular, three things should be done:

1. Start giving the workers greater autonomy over their work.
2. Increase the amount of self-feedback in the jobs so that the personnel can tell for themselves when their work is satisfactory.
3. Investigate the value of installing quality circles throughout the organization, especially on the shop floor.

UNION INTERFACE

Greater attention needs to be focused on union relations. If we can win union support for the new medical insurance benefit package and job redesign changes, we should be able to reduce absenteeism and turnover. There are two things we can do to gain this support:

1. Meet with the union representatives and discuss what we want to do.
2. Form a committee with union representation to institute these changes.

If you would like to discuss any of these ideas, please give me a call.

1. The writer is too general. She has not pointed out what the company should do to tackle its problems.
2. She is more concerned with keeping her boss happy than with presenting useful suggestions.

Now read the memo in figure 15.13 and see how powerful it is.

Much better, isn't it? The opening paragraphs define the problem tactfully. The recommendations are grouped by headings, and each is carefully explained. The conclusion is action oriented. The writer indicates how the recommendations can be implemented.

Informal Study Results Memo

Organizational personnel are sometimes asked to write the results of an informal study in a memo. The objective of the message is to present the information in an easy-to-read, understandable form. To this end, follow the guidelines listed below:

1. State the purpose at the beginning (and stick to it).

Figure 15.14: Good Example of an Informal Study Results Memo

DATE: May 3, 2000

TO: Priyanka K Kapoor

FROM: Vijay Swaraj

SUBJECT: Review of Customer Complaints

In response to your request, I have examined the large number of customer complaints we have recently received about our compact electric hair blower. In all, there were 779 letters or postcards.

FINDINGS

Each piece of correspondence was classified according to the reported problem(s). In all, there were three major complaint areas.

1. Product Quality. The major problem is product quality. Two-thirds (522) of the letters reported that the product's quality is poor. Frequent travelers report that the jostling of the blower causes something inside the unit to break. A related complaint is that the plastic casing cracks and the customer is afraid to use the unit.

2. Refunds. The second most commonly cited complaint is that it is difficult to obtain a sale refund. Thirty-nine percent (306) of the letters were from customers who were unable to obtain a refund from the retailer. The latter claim that we do not reimburse them for damaged units, so they refuse to refund the sale price.

3. Price. The third most commonly cited complaint is that the price is too high. This was the primary comment from 4 percent (28) of the customers. When combined with one or both of the above complaints, price was mentioned by 25 percent (169) of the customers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, we need to take three steps.

1. Create a team of engineers, product design personnel, and manufacturing people to examine a sample of the returned units. It appears that a stronger casing and more durable parts are needed. The group should investigate how production costs can be reduced.

2. Send a letter to the retailers selling our product to inform them that we will replace or repurchase all damaged units.

3. Have the marketing people review our price vis-à-vis the competition.

I will be happy to discuss these ideas with you. Also, if you decide to implement recommendation number 1, I would be willing to serve as your direct liaison.

2. Use headings and subheadings to make the reading as easy as possible. Present data in a “Findings” section and interpret it in another called “Conclusions” (or other similar terms).
3. Be specific. Stay on the point and address different issues one by one, systematically.
4. Unless there is good reason to do otherwise, write the memo in informal language and use personal pronouns.

The memo in Figure 15.14 is an example of an informal study results memo that was written in response to a request from a top manager.

The opening paragraph states the purpose of the memo; headings and subheadings act as signposts for the reader. Specific numbered points make the memo easy to read and understand.

MEMOS ABOUT THE UNPLEASANT

Good-news memos or memos addressed to an audience receptive to our ideas are relatively easy to write. Such memos can be written deductively in a fairly straightforward manner. However, memos that convey bad news need to be written inductively, with a positive tone. But bear in mind that being inductive is not synonymous with being ambiguous.

The writer has to convey the bad news inductively and clearly.

The memo in Figure 15.15 was written by the personnel director to all employees to communicate a change in their insurance premiums.

Figure 15.15: Poor Example of a Bad-News Memorandum

TO:	All Employees
FROM:	Jay R Mankodi, Human Resources Director
DATE:	October 15, 2000
SUBJECT:	CHANGE IN HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS

[1] Effective August 1, payroll deductions for your Valley HMO Group health-insurance premiums will be increased between Rs 300 and Rs 450 per month. [2] This increase, although regrettable, is unavoidable.

[3] Premiums for our group policy have risen drastically in the last 24 months. [4] Consolidated Enterprises was able to absorb the smaller increases of previous years, but this is no longer possible. [5] We considered reducing other fringe benefits as an alternative to raising premium deductions, but the final conclusion was that such action would be unfair. [6] We had to raise premiums.

[7] To more precisely estimate the amount of your monthly deductions, we have attached a booklet. [8] On page 3, you will find a table from which your deduction can be determined.

[9] I trust you will understand this situation and assure you of our continued efforts to provide the best in health-care insurance.

---

1 Begins with the bad news. 2 Uses negative language. 3 Begins the explanation. 4 Uses negative language and a pronoun (this) that has an indefinite antecedent (the noun for which “this” stands is not used). 5,6 Begins with “We” and thus emphasizes the writer. As the final word in a long sentence, “unfair” is emphasized. 6 Emphasizes the negative idea - simple, short sentence; first person; active voice. 7 Uses third consecutive sentence with “we” as the subject. 7, 8 Could be combined and stated more concisely - “we have attached” and “you will find” could be left to implication. 9 Introduces some doubt about whether the message will be clear. Unnecessary shift from use of “we” to “I.” Commendably, includes a positive idea.

This memo has many obvious drawbacks. The deductive style and negative tone and word choice would antagonize the employees. Now read the revised version in Figure 15.16.

Figure 15.16: Good Example of a Bad-News Memo

TO:	All Employees
FROM:	Jay R Mankodi, Human Resources Director
DATE:	October, 15, 2000
SUBJECT:	CHANGE IN HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS

[1] For six years, Consolidated has been able to point with pride to its employee-benefits package, especially its group health insurance.

[2] Overall, feedback from health-care institutions, physicians, and employees has been very favorable. [3] They like the speed and fairness with which claims are processed by Valley HMO. [4] To remain competitive and continue its high standards, Valley had to charge higher premiums last year; Consolidated Enterprises was able to absorb the cost.

[5] This year, Valley (like most other HMOs) has had to increase premiums again, but this time Consolidated must ask employees to share the cost. [6] The amount of your monthly deduction (which begins on December 1) can be determined from the table on page 3 of the attached booklet. [7] The booklet also summarizes other important features of Consolidated's complete employee-benefits package.

Attachment

---

1. Introduces the topic (health insurance). Uses positive language - "pride" and "benefits."

2, 3. Before the bad news (increased premium deductions) is presented, the paragraph reminds employees that experiences with their group policy have been very favorable. 4. Uses "high standards" (from which employees benefit) in the same sentence that uses "higher premiums" (for which employees have to pay). In the same sentence with a positive, the negative is subordinated. 5. Subordinates bad news (”share the cost") in a compound sentence. 6. Refers directly to the attached booklet without such unnecessary words as "attached is a booklet" and "you will find a table." 7. Assists in subordinating the premium increase by closing on another idea that is positive.

This improved version is written inductively. It shows consideration for the audience's feelings by beginning with the explanation and leading in to the bad news. The language is also more concise and positive.

Very often supervisors have to give written feedback to their employees regarding the quality of their work. If the employee's work is not up to the mark, the supervisor has to tactfully inform and guide the employee, not demoralize him.

In the memo in Figure 15.17 a supervisor informs an employee that he (the employee) has done a poor job.

Such a negative, deductively written memo would devastate and demotivate the employee. The revised version in Figure 15.18 would be more effective. This memo is not only inductive, it is also positive: it compliments the reader and identifies ways in which the presentation could be improved.

As discussed in Chapter 11, bad news need not always be written inductively. The writer has to assess his relationship with the reader before deciding which organizational approach to follow. Needless to say, whatever approach the writer follows, the memo (or letter) should always be worded tactfully.

Figure 15.17: Poor Example of a Memorandum about Poor Job Performance

June 12, 2000

Amar Patnaik

[1] SUBSTANDARD PERFORMANCE

[2] Your presentation to Josh Company representatives this morning was below our standards. [3] The following weaknesses were apparent:

1. Too technical
2. Participants had no chance for hands-on experience.
3. Failure to get participants to respond to questions for fear that they would look foolish.

[4] I insist that the presentation be revised before the same firm sends another group of representatives to visit us next week. [5] You might check to see whether our training consultant can be helpful.

Anjali Joshi

Marketing Manager

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1 As a subject line, these words immediately put the reader on the defensive. 2 Emphasizes a negative thought by placing it in the first sentence and using negative language. 3 Emphasizes negatives with negative words (*weakness and failure*). Emphasizes unpleasant points by using tabulation and enumeration. 4 Seems unnecessarily demanding ("I insist"). 5 Unnecessarily weak in referring to action (”You might check”).

Figure 15.18 Good Example of a Memorandum about Poor Job Performance

June 12, 2000

Amar Patnaik

[1] NEXT WEEK'S SALES PRESENTATION TO JOSH COMPANY

[2] Your presentation to Josh Company representatives this morning was thorough and clear to me.

[3] Because you were so well informed and organized, participants who were already somewhat familiar with our system were able to benefit greatly. [4] Most of them, though, would have gained more from a less technical discussion that involved hands-on experience and encouraged spontaneous questions.

[5] Before next week's presentation, ask our training consultant (Padma Kapoor) for suggestions. [6] She has excellent ideas and access to the latest in audio-visual equipment.

Anjali Joshi

Marketing Manager

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1 As a subject line, these words assist in achieving a positive tone. A discussion of qualities desired in next week's presentation can have a much more positive tone than a discussion about the weaknesses of this morning's presentation. 2. Uses positive language to introduce the topic. 3. Lets compliment precede criticism. By recognizing positive qualities, the supervisor establishes objectivity and reduces the sting of comments about negatives. 4. Identifies ways in which improvement can be made. 5,6. Closes with a helpful recommendation.

PERSUASIVE MEMOS

It is fairly simple to write an “ideas and suggestions” memo when the audience is receptive to our ideas. But it is quite another story when attempting to convince an uninterested or even potentially antagonistic audience. Such a situation poses a communication challenge. (Exhibit 15.2 describes one such situation).

Exhibit 15.2

Dealing With a Sensitive Audience

Let’s say you’re preparing a memo to your supervisor; you’re hoping for his approval of a cost-saving project you want to spearhead. Something fairly similar to it had been tried years ago; it failed miserably, embarrassing your supervisor and his supervisor. You know that seeking approval is an uphill battle, but you believe in yourself and the project. What tone should this sensitive memo take?

The temptation may be to position your project point-for-point in contrast to the old one, pounding on the relative merits of yours in an effort to convey its superiority.

Resist this temptation as you would a term paper over the mid-term holidays. Never directly mention the other project in your memo; memories of its failure may be keen, and direct comparisons will be counter productive to the objectivity you want to elicit in your readers. Rather, emphasize the strength of your plan by stressing features of it which are designed to avoid known pitfalls.

Your supervisor and his supervisor will get the message, and you will get your project. The moral to take away from all of this: don’t stand on the grave of a bad idea to sell a new one.

James F. Hurley

Senior Vice President

CalFed Inc.

Consider the context of the memo in Figure 15.19. A few months back the president of the company had indicated his opposition to any changes in work schedules. But the production manager feels that parking congestion at peak hours can be reduced only by altering work schedules. To achieve his objective, the production manager constructs a persuasive, inductive memo to win over the audience.

Figure 15.19: Good Example of a Persuasive Memorandum

TO: H B Suman, President
FROM: Raj Ganesh, Production Manager
DATE: March 1, 2000
SUBJECT: Proposal to Reduce Parking Congestion at Peak Hours

Although employee morale is already high, we can do something to make it still higher.

Almost 1,000 of our employees come to work and leave at the same time. With more than 600 cars in our parking lot, about 30 minutes are required to clear it each evening. Having worked hard for eight hours without wasting any <u>company</u> time, employees experience a challenge to their morale when a half-hour of <u>their</u> time is wasted.

Many employees, especially production workers, begin their day with a negative pull on their morale: They must arrive at the parking lot a half-hour early so they can begin work on schedule.

The following schedule changes would go a long way toward solving the problem (without cost to Kapoor Industries):

<u>Production and Plant Staff</u>

Change work hours of production and plant staff. Instead of beginning at 8 a.m. and leaving at 4:30 p.m., begin at 7:30 a.m. and leave at 4:00 p.m. This change would affect about 700 employees. It has support from the Employee Council.

<u>Office and Management Staffs</u>

Make no change in work hours for office and management staffs. By the time they arrive at the parking lot, production and plant workers would be already settled in their parking spaces. By the time they leave, traffic lanes should be clear for fast departure.

By making these changes, Kapoor Industries would again demonstrate its concern for employee’s problems. They would be appreciative, and we should detect a positive influence on their morale.

After you have considered this change, I would be pleased to survey production and plant personnel about their willingness to begin and leave work a half-hour early.

Note that the subject line does not reveal how reduction in congestion is to be achieved. If the president reads "change in work schedules" in the subject line, the memo is off to a bad start. Knowing the president's concern about morale, and recognizing the problem's impact on morale, the production manager uses morale as an appeal. In fact, the word morale is repeated often throughout the memo.

For effective communication, business people must write clear, logically developed memos. In general, memos that contain good news or neutral information should be written deductively, whereas memos that contain bad news or are intended to persuade should be written inductively.

E-MAILS: FEATURES AND PROBLEMS

E-mails can be used for transmitting messages via the Internet or the intranet. One can send e-mails to anyone in any part of the globe if the other person too has access to the Internet. The recipient need not be confined to one location to receive his or her mail. He or she can read his mail from any computer. Likewise, the sender can also use any computer that has the Internet facility to send emails.

A letter or memo sent by courier or post may take days to reach the recipient but e-mails take just a few seconds or minutes to reach another person. This form of communication is a reliable, inexpensive and fast mode of communication that offers tremendous flexibility too. Besides this, e-mails allow an organization to adopt a paperless office. Hence, in recent times, this has become the preferred mode of communication for most companies and individuals. Like memos, e-mails too can be formal or informal, concise or detailed, subjective or factual, depending upon the situation.

E-mails are primarily text messages that can be sent online or as attachments. Of course, it is possible to send data, pictures, diagrams, music, games, software programs and photographs too as attachments these days. Till recently, e-mails could be sent using computers only but with advancements in technology, it is now possible to send e-mail messages by using cell phones too.

There is not much difference between a normal memo and an e-mail except that the medium used to write as well as the mode of transmission of message differ. A memo is written or typed on paper and sent through a person whereas an e-mail is sent through computer networks and delivered electronically to the recipient's computer or mobile phone. Otherwise, the format used in an e-mail is similar to that used in a memo.

An e-mail too has a header wherein the sender of the mail must mention the e-mail address of the intended recipient, the e-mail address of the persons to whom copies are being marked, and the subject matter of the message being sent. E-mails allow tremendous flexibility and one can address the same message to several individuals and likewise mark copies to many individuals simultaneously.

After the header, there is space to type the body of the message to be sent. The sender's mail id and the date and time of sending the message is automatically revealed to the recipient of the e-mail by modern e-mail programs. All the rules followed to make a memo effective are also applicable to making an e-mail effective. Proper organization and clarity of expression are as relevant to e-mails as they are to memos.

There are several other possible problems related to e-mails that are unique to this mode of sending messages. These are discussed below.

Problems Unique to E-mails

In the case of a memo, a message may get delivered even if there are minor errors in the spelling of the name or address of the person to whom the message is intended. However, a message does not get delivered at all if there is a spelling mistake in the mail id of the recipient of the message. The e-mail sent simply bounces back as undelivered mail.

A memo sent in a sealed cover by a person to a recipient normally reaches him or her without being read by any other person. However, e-mails do not reach the recipient directly. They pass through several computers and there is a danger that somebody else could also be reading it without the knowledge of the sender or the recipient of the e-mail. Therefore, one should never assume that e-mails are absolutely private forms of correspondence.

A message sent by a sender passes through the internet service provider's mail server, which then checks the recipient's address and decides the method to be used to send the message. This is called routing of the message in technical parlance. The mail is then sent through the Internet to the electronic mailbox of the recipient's internet service provider. All the new mails of the recipient that could be coming from various sources are kept in this electronic mailbox till the recipient retrieves the messages.

Since the message passes through intermediaries it is possible that people at these sources may read the messages. To overcome this problem, a message can be encrypted so that it may be read only by the recipient whose computer must have the relevant software to decode the message.

Moreover, it is possible that a message deleted by a recipient may not have been actually destroyed. Some internet service providers store all messages for some time. Such storing of old messages is called archiving. This again means that messages can be read by unauthorized persons. Similarly, it is possible that in a networked office, a person may have deleted a message but it still lingers on in the company system.

There is yet another problem with the sending of e-mails. The recipient of the mail may forward the message to one or several individuals which may sometimes not be in the interest of the sender of the message. In addition, the ease with which mails can be sent and forwarded has created a new kind of burden for the reader. These days the sheer volume of e-mails is so much that a recipient may receive a lot of junk mail. This means that considerable time could be wasted in sorting the important mails from the unimportant ones.

Another burden on the reader is that with e-mail messages being delivered in just a few moments the expectations of the senders of the message have also skyrocketed. A reminder may come in immediately because people are no longer willing to give some time to the recipient to reply. Earlier, they knew that the message sent will take some time to reach and therefore the sender was prepared to wait for a few days before expecting a reply.

Further, problems like viruses could also pose problems while sending or receiving e-mails. Attachments sent through e-mails could be a potential source of virus and could harm the recipient's system if it is not protected with proper anti-virus software.

Besides this, the ability to compose, store, send or receive e-mails also depends upon the proficiency of the sender. Hence, a new dimension – computer skills – could also be a problem for some people while using this modern tool of sending messages.

E-MAIL ETIQUETTE

Just as there are certain rules governing business interactions, there are certain etiquettes that one should follow while using the e-mail facility. These will help a person convey a professional image about himself and avoid awkward situations as an individual and/or member of an organization. Some of these e-mail etiquettes are listed below.

1. Respect the other person's time and avoid extraneous information.
2. Use proper structure to convey your point.
3. Though you may use capitals at the start of a sentence, avoid using capital letters for an entire word or a group of words as this is considered the e-mail equivalent of shouting.
4. Avoid the e-mail to discuss confidential matters.
5. Do not use language that is offensive in any manner to any individual or group.
6. Avoid sending unnecessary attachments.
7. Do not copy any part or the whole of a message or attachment without obtaining the sender's consent.
8. When replying to an e-mail, answer all the questions asked. It may be a good idea to anticipate future questions and answer them.
9. Avoid using technical jargon that the reader may find difficult to understand.
10. Proof read before you send an e-mail to someone. Check grammar, punctuation and tone of the message.
11. Use HTML and formatting only if you are sure that the recipient's system also supports it.
12. Reply to e-mails soon.
13. Use active voice to make your writing appealing to the reader.
14. To avoid possible miscommunication, develop the ability to view messages from the recipient's perspective.
15. Use the cc and bcc options[1] very carefully and double-check before you send your message to ensure that you are sending the message or marking copies to the right person only. Likewise, use the "reply all " option appropriately.
16. Avoid using 'chat language' or non-standard abbreviations in business communications.
17. When sending mails to international clients, take care to specify the date and time properly. For example, remember many Americans would read a date like 8-10-2006 as August 10, 2006 while you may have meant October 8, 2006. Also, specifically mention the time zone properly like 5.30 pm IST.
18. Avoid using rare or fancy fonts as the reader may face difficulties in reading your mail.
19. Always maintain a courteous tone in your emails.
20. Avoid unnecessary usage of words like Important, Urgent, etc.

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[1] cc stands for carbon copy and bcc for blind carbon copy. In the case of recipients listed in the cc list, all the recipients (in the To list, cc list and bcc list) know that a copy has been marked to these cc list recipients. In the case of recipients listed in the bcc list, except for the sender and the bcc recipient, no other person knows that a copy has been marked to the bcc recipient.

THINK ABOUT IT

Memos and e-mails are written messages designed to provide a quick, convenient way for personnel to communicate with each other. They should be well organized and clear. If the message contains financial or quantitative data, it is sometimes helpful to use graphs and charts.

As with business letters, it is important to consider the writing situation. The purpose of the memo and the audience's potential reaction to it should be understood and the memo organized accordingly.

And before putting pen to paper, bear in mind the words of a senior executive: *"Ask yourself if the information in the memo you are about to write can be communicated just as effectively with a phone call or a brief meeting. Too many memos is a signal to others that you are overreaching and underachieving."*

Chapter 16

Structure and Layout of Letters

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Punctuation Styles and Letter Formats
- Formats
- Standard Letter Parts
- Special Letter Parts
- Memorandum Formats

Imagine you are an HR manager in a medium sized firm, which recently put out an advertisement for sales representatives. The company needs three people. You get nearly 500 application letters. As you begin sifting through them, you get one that is written on dirty, yellowing paper. Another one has such a cluttered look that you know reading it will take quite some effort. How would you react to such letters? In all probability, you'd put them aside, and go back to them, only if you didn't find enough interesting letters from the ones that have a better appearance. After all, it's the appearance that makes the first impression. So it's well worth taking that extra effort to see that your letter – any letter – has an attractive appearance. Let us look at some of the factors that help you to do that.

Paper Use good quality Bond paper that does not yellow very fast. Business letters are most often written on white paper, but some businesses use pastel or grey stationery.

Personalization Business letters are often personalized through the use of letterhead stationery. The letterhead contains the company's name, address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address, and the name of the department that is sending the correspondence. The letterhead is usually centered at the top of the page, but it may also be placed to the left or right. In some cases the letterhead appears at the bottom of the page. Letterheads should be distinctive without being too outlandish.

Appearance To ensure the letter has a neat appearance use proper spacing and punctuation. People's initials should have a period after each letter, but organizational abbreviations such as IBM should not. Letters should be balanced on the page with approximately equal margins. A letter that is very short, should have wider side margins than long letters.

Figure 16.1: Punctuation Styles

Mixed Punctuation	*Open Punctuation*	
January 24, 19—	January 24, 19—	
Mr. Ajit M. Suri 1938 Andher Nagari Avenue Andheri, Bombay 6543219	Mr. Ajit M. Suri 1938 Andher Nagari Avenue Andheri, Bombay 6543219	
Dear Mr. Suri:	Dear Mr. Suri	Salutation
Sincerely,	Sincerely	Complimentary Close
Lalita Popat Assistant Manager	Lalita Popat Assistant Manager	

PUNCTUATION STYLES AND LETTER FORMATS

Two punctuation styles are customarily used in business letters: open and mixed. Standard, or mixed punctuation, the traditional style, uses a colon after the salutation and a comma after the complimentary close. Open punctuation uses no punctuation after either the salutation or the complimentary close. Figure 16.1 shows you examples of each type of punctuation.

FORMATS

The three letter formats that are usually used are the block, the modified block and the simplified block.

Figure 16.2: Block Format with Open Punctuation

	The Society of Bird Watchers Juhu Chapter, Bird Watchers' Lane, Juhu
DATE LINE	**February 24, 2001**
INSIDE ADDRESS	Mr. Ajit M. Suri 1938 Andher Nagari Avenue Andheri, Bombay 6543219
SALUTATION	Dear Mr. Suri
BODY	Your recent article, "Are Bird Watchers Becoming an Endangered Species?" has attracted the attention of all bird lovers in the city. As you must be aware, there are at least thirteen bird lovers' associations in various parts of this city. Many members of these different associations now feel that there should be greater coordination among these bodies. As a step in this direction, we have made arrangements for an informal get-together. About 200 members will attend this dinner meeting. They would be glad to meet you and interested in hearing you discuss "Threats to Bird Watching in a Metropolis". By accepting this invitation, you'll be able to meet other bird lovers in the city. We are sure you will find many who share your concerns about the problems faced by bird watchers in this city. The meeting will be at the Hum Panchchi Ek Dal Ke Hotel on March 6, at 5 p.m. We promise you a pleasant evening and an attentive audience. We would appreciate having, with your acceptance, a photograph to be printed in the program.
COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE	Sincerely
SIGNATURE BLOCK	Lalita Popat
REFERENCE INITIALS	tw Assistant Manager

Block

In this format all lines begin at the left margin. Figure 16.2 shows a letter in block format with open punctuation.

Modified Block

The modified block is the traditional letter format and is still used in many companies. The date line, complimentary close, and signature block begin at, or near the horizontal center of the page. All other lines begin at the left margin. Look at the letter in modified block format and mixed punctuation shown in Figure 16.3**.**

Figure 16.3: Modified Block Format with Mixed Punctuation

	DATTE'S Malkauns Road Small Engines New Bombay 7702678
DATE LINE	February 4, 2001
INSIDE ADDRESS	Mr. Asim Banerjee 4513 Cotton Town Stree Calcutta, 6282288
SALUTATION	Dear Mr.Banerjee:
BODY	Vinayak motors are among the most dependable small electric motors manufactured in India today. Here at Datte's Small Engines, we believe that the right size Vinayak engine for the particular job is critical. The three-month warranty with the Vinayak motors applies only if the motor is used under normal operating conditions. Your pipe size (3/15 inch), the large distance between your pool and the filtering system (100 feet), and the size of your pool (50 by 60 feet) placed undue stress on the 2.5 horse-power motor. Your sales receipt indicates that a 3.5 horse power motor was recommended based on our evaluation of your needs. Our sales forces will be happy to show you the 3.5 horse power Vinayak motor. This powerful motor should provide clear, sparkling water for the enjoyment of your family.
COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE	Sincerely,
SIGNATURE BLOCK	Abdul Karim Manager
REFERENCE INITIALS	ms

Simplified Block

This is an efficient letter format. Like the block format, all lines begin at the left margin, but the salutation and complimentary close are omitted and a subject line is required. The subject line is placed a double space below the inside address and a double space above the body. Figure 16.4 shows a letter in simplified block format.

STANDARD LETTER PARTS

1. Heading and Date
2. Inside Address
3. Salutation
4. Body
5. Complimentary Close

Figure 16.4: Simplified Block Format

	Moonside Cable Television Telephone 824586
DATE LINE	February 15, 2001
INSIDE ADDRESS	Mr. Raja Achanta 267 Ajanata Apartments Riverside Avenue - Bandra
SUBJECT LINE	Changes in Cable Service
BODY	Some important changes in your cable television service will begin March 1, 2001. We will rearrange our channel line-up and institute a rate change. These changes are necessary to maintain programming selection. Our new monthly rates are as follows: Basic Service... Rs 150 Extended Service ....Rs 180 Premium Service ....Rs 250 With these changes, the cost of our extended package (all channels except premium for pay) is still only Rs 6 per day, less than the cost of a cup of coffee and a samosa. Our employees are committed to providing you with the best quality and variety of cable television, including education, sports, religion, and public affairs programming. Please call us if we can be of additional service to you.
SIGNATURE BLOCK	Ashok Gehlot
REFERERENCE INITIALS OMITTED	Systems Manager

6. Signature Block
7. Reference Initials

Heading and Date

The heading contains the writer's address. Many businesses incorporate this information in the letterhead. The date is typed two to six lines below the last line of the letterhead and can be placed at the left-hand margin, in the center or ending with the right-hand margin. The month should be spelled out, not abbreviated, followed by the day and year. It is better to avoid putting the date in numerals: 12.9.2000. In international correspondence, this creates confusion about whether the month is mentioned first or the day.

If the letter is written on blank paper, the writer's address must come immediately above the date. The writer's name is omitted because it appears in the signature block.

Inside Address

The inside address usually begins four spaces below the dateline. It includes a personal or professional title, the name of the person and the company to whom the letter is being sent, and the complete address. Figure 16.5 shows you how the heading and inside address are arranged on a page with a letterhead and on a blank page.

Figure 16.5: A Letterhead Heading and a Plain Paper Heading

Letterhead Heading	*Heading on Plain Paper*
Graphic Design	
Advertising	
East Hill, Kolkata	
August 12, 2001	East Hill, Calcutta
	August 12, 2001
Ms. Dhanno Jaiswal	Ms. Dhanno Jaiswal
Jaiswal & Associates	Jaiswal & Associates
2988 Rayees Marg	2988 Rayees Marg
Ahmedabad 784657	Ahmedabad 784 657
Dear Ms. Dhanno:	Dear Ms. Dhanno:

Salutation

The salutation is a greeting that precedes the body of the letter. It is placed a double space below the inside address. There are a number of acceptable salutations. If the letter is being sent to a specific person, the individual's name should be used: *Dear Mr. Kulshreshtha.* If the writer is on a first-name basis with the recipient, and it is appropriate to use it, an informal salutation is acceptable: *Dear Rina.* It is a little more difficult to decide how to word a salutation in a letter addressed to a group, to an unknown person, or to an unnamed person in a particular position. E.g. if you do not know whether the recipient is a male or a female, use the whole name or omit the salutation to avoid offending the person. Sometimes, the recipient's official title is used: *Dear Accounts Officer.* In the case of sales letters or announcements that are sent out to many people, a general salutation may be used: *Dear Customer; Dear Policyholder.*

Some writers now use a salutopening on the salutation line. This is an opening line that omits "Dear," begins with the first few words from the body of the message, and incorporates the reader's name. After this, there is a double space and the body of the letter continues. Here is an example:

Thank you, Mr. Brown, (Salutopening)

For your prompt payment of your bill (Body)

Body

The body of the letter contains the message. It begins a double space below the salutation. The text is usually single spaced, with double spacing between the paragraphs. It is best to keep the first and last paragraphs to five lines or less so that reader interest is maintained. Other paragraphs can have 8 to 10 lines each. Tables, numbered items, long quotations and other such material should be set up in such a way that they are easy to read. Two ways of doing this are underlining key words or phrases and leaving extra space around such material to set it off.

Figure 16.6: A Signature Block:
With Title on the Same Line, With Title on the Next Line

e.g.	
A) Mr. Aditya Bajaj, President Birlaj Communications	A) Mr. Aditya Bajaj, President Birlaj Communications
B) Amar Kashyap, Manager Quality Control Division	B) Amar Kashyap, Manager Manager, Quality Control Division
<u>Title on the Same Line</u>	<u>Title on the Next Line</u>

Complimentary Close

This is a phrase that closes the letter – much like saying goodbye at the end of a conversation. When you choose a complimentary close, make sure that it reflects the formality of your relationship with the reader. The most commonly used close, "*Sincerely*" is considered neutral, and is thus suited to most business correspondence. "*Yours truly*," "*Cordially," "Cordially yours*," and *"Sincerely Yours"* are the other commonly used closes. Capitalize only the first word of the complimentary close and position it a double space below the body. The complimentary close and the salutation, as mentioned earlier, are omitted in the simplified block style.

Signature Block

The writer's name usually comes four spaces below the complimentary close (or body in the simplified block letter). The writer's signature goes into the space provided. If the writer is speaking legally for the company, the firm's name is typed in capital letters three spaces below the complimentary close and the writer's name is typed four spaces below that, with the person's title on the next line. Sometimes the title is put in the same line as the name. Figure 16.6 gives an example of a signature block with title on the same line and with title on the next line.

Reference Initials

The initials of the person who has keyed in or typed the letter appears in lowercase a double space below the signature block. Reference initials are omitted when the letter is keyed in by the writer himself. However, certain companies insist that the initials of all people involved in writing a letter be included in the reference initials line, so that the writers can be identified in case of litigation.

SPECIAL LETTER PARTS

So far, we have looked at the standard features of business letters. However, a letter may have several other parts like (1) mailing notation, (2) attention line, (3) reference line, (4) subject line (5) second-page heading, (6) enclosure notation, (7) copy notation, and (8) postscript

Mailing Notation

A mailing notation is used to indicate either how the letter was sent – registered, certified – or how the letter is to be handled – confidential, personal. The notation may be typed in capital letters or underlined and can be placed at the top or bottom of the letter. If it is put at the top, it should be either above the inside address on the left hand side or just below the date on the right-hand side (in the modified block format). If placed at the bottom, it should be either below the copy notation or below whatever is the last notation.

Attention Line

The attention line directs a letter to a particular person – "Attention Ms Kamalakshi" –or a position in the company – "Attention Personnel Manager" – or a department –"Attention Personnel Department." Figure 16.7 shows you the position of the attention line.

Reference Line

A reference line – "Re: contract 248-2983"–directs the reader to previous files or documents. It is usually put a double space below the inside address.

Subject Line

The subject line tells the reader what the letter is about. It is generally used in the simplified block letter. In other formats it is optional. The subject line is keyed in a double space below the salutation. If the modified block style is used then the subject line may be centered. In the example shown in figure 16.6 the word 'subject' is omitted. This is often done because its position above the body clearly identifies its function.

Figure 16.7: Special Letter Parts - Page 1

	Spencer &Taylor Ltd. **37 Chowrangee Lane, Kolkata** **(033) 5567824**
MAILING NOTATION	January 19, 2001 FACSIMILE
ATTENTION LINE	Attention Ms. Janaki Menon Communications Systems, Inc. Model Building, Room 250 Hyderabad AP 500 082
REFERENCE LINE	RE: Engagement No.39-29-3773
	Ladies and Gentlemen:
SUBJECT LINE	ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT
	Spencer Taylor is pleased to confirm our arrangements to audit the financial statements of Communication Systems, Inc. for the year ended June 30, 2001

Second-page Heading

The second and successive pages of multi-page letters and memoranda are keyed in on plain paper. A heading on the second and successive pages identifies them as a continuation of the first page. The heading includes the name of the person or company to whom the message is sent, the page number and the date.

The heading is usually put six lines from the top edge of the paper. The body of the letter starts a double space after the heading.

Enclosure Notation

An enclosure notation is used when papers or documents like brochures, price lists or résumés accompany the letter. This notation is keyed in a double space below the reference initials. Use the plural form (Enclosures) if more than one document is enclosed. Figure 16.8 shows an enclosure notation that specifies the item enclosed.

Figure 16.8: Special Letter Parts - Page 2

SECOND-PAGE HEADING	Communications Systems, Inc. Page 2 January 19, 2001
	Anita Shrivastav has been assigned as the audit manager in charge of your audit examination. Please review the enclosed preliminary time schedule she has developed and direct your questions to her at 5567824, extension 25.
	We at Spencer & Taylor look forward to providing these and other quality professional services to you.
	Sincerely,
	Azhagappa Veerappan Audit Partner,
REFERENCE INITIALS	cf
ENCLOSURE NOTATION	Enclosure: Audit Agreement
COPY NOTATION	C Mr. Atul Dadiwala
POSTSCRIPT	Our annual tax update has been scheduled for March 5-6, 2-. You will receive an agenda from the tax department, just as soon as all details have been finalized.

Copy Notation

A copy notation is used when people other than the addressee are sent copies of the correspondence. The notation is placed two lines below the reference initials or enclosure notation. The different copy notations are: c (copy), xc (xerox copy), cc (carbon copy) or pc (photocopy). The copy notation is omitted when a copy of a letter is sent to someone without the recipient's knowledge. A blind copy notation (bc) is keyed in on all file copies.

Figure 16.9: Example of an Inter Office Memo

Inter Office Correspondence

Pdi
inc.

Date:

To:

From:

Subject: ______________________________

____

Postscript

The last item that appears on the letter, the postscript, was earlier used to include information that was omitted from the letter. However, with word-processing software making retrieving and editing letters a simple task, the postscript no longer serves this purpose. Today postscripts are largely used to emphasize something. For instance, a sales letter may use a postscript to underline the central selling point. The postscript is keyed in a double space below the last notation or the signature block if no notations are used. Some writers feel that as its position clearly identifies its functions, you need not begin with PS. But others prefer to use the notation PS: before the postscript.

MEMORANDUM FORMATS

Memos, as you have seen in Chapter 15, are messages sent to offices or individuals within an organization. Memos may be printed on memorandum forms, plain paper or on a letterhead. A memo has four standard parts: heading, body, authentication and page identification.

Heading The heading lists the date, the name of the sender, and the subject of the memo. Figure 16.9 gives an illustration.

Body. The body of the memo has no opening or closing. It begin with a communication of facts. Figure 16.10 gives an example. The body is usually single spaced with a blank line between paragraphs. If the message is rather long, key words or phrases should be underlined so that the reader can quickly get the main ideas.

Authentication. A memo is authenticated when it is signed or initialed by the writer. The writer's initials or signature can come at the top left, next to the person's name, in the upper right-hand corner, or after the last sentence of the memo. If the sender and receiver know each other well, the writer may sign with only his first name. If it is a formal or a significant memo, the sender uses his full signature. Otherwise, memos are merely initialed as is shown in the example in figure 16.10

Page identification If the message runs into two or more pages, the second and subsequent pages should be numbered. When there is more than one page, the subject and date of the memo should be typed in the upper left-hand margin of each accompanying page.

Figure 16.10: Memorandum Format

TO:	Mark R.Sloan, Vice President
FROM:	Lora A.Glaze, Marketing Director
DATE:	March 31, 2001
SUBJECT:	Marketing Activity Report for March

The marketing division reports the following activities for March.

Advertising

Three meetings were held with representatives at the Bart and Dome agency to complete plans for the fall campaign for Fluffy Buns. The campaign will concentrate on the use of discount coupons published in the Thursday food section of sixty daily newspapers in the Pacific states. Coupons will be released on the second and fourth Thursdays in June and July.

Estimated cost of the program is $645,000. That amount includes 2.2 million redeemed coupons at 20 cents each ($440,000).

A point-of-sale advertising display, shown on the attached sheet, was developed for retail grocery outlets. Sales reps are pushing these in their regular and new calls. The display may be used to feature a different product from our line on a weekly basis.

Sales Staff

We have dropped one sales rep from the northern California section and divided the area between the southern Oregon and Sacramento reps.

Attachment

THINK ABOUT IT

In this chapter we took a look at some of the broad conventions about the structure and layout of business letters. Of course, you must bear in mind that minor variations do occur from organization to organization and from time to time. Whatever the prevailing convention, it is important to ensure that your letter is neatly structured so that it facilitates easy reading, has a neat appearance, and is free of spelling, grammar and typographical errors.

Chapter 17

The Framework of a Report

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- The Elements of a Report
- The Text of the Report

When businesspeople speak of reports, they are, in general, thinking of written, factual accounts that objectively communicate information about some aspect of the business. In a sense, reports constitute a managerial tool. Even the most capable managers must rely on other people to observe events or collect information and "report" to them. Managers are often too far away to oversee everything themselves, or they don't have the time. In addition, they lack the specialized background required to research and evaluate certain subjects.

The goal when developing a report for such an audience is to make the information as clear and convenient as possible. To achieve clarity and readability, the elements/components of the report must be carefully crafted and demarcated and the body (or text) of the report must be developed in a logical and focused manner.

In this chapter we will discuss the elements of a report and survey the design of its central portion (i.e. the text of the report). The development of the text of the report will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. To avoid unnecessary repetition, the examples illustrating the elements of a report are not given here. The readers are advised to turn to the sample reports in Chapter 18 for visual examples of these elements.

THE ELEMENTS OF A REPORT

The "elements" of a report refer to those components that are usually included in a formal business report. Many different types of reports are written in business (See figure 17.1), and they may or may not contain all the elements discussed here. The order in which these elements are organized may also differ. In addition, most organizations have their own format preferences. You should therefore study the style guide used in your organization. If there is no style guide, study a few of the reports in your organization's files. Successful reports are the best guides. As always, when you make decisions about your written document, your reader's needs are your main concern.

The following elements will be discussed here:

1. Letter of transmittal
2. Title page and title fly
3. Abstract
4. Table of contents
5. List of illustrations
6. Executive summary
7. Glossary and list of symbols
8. Appendix

The Letter of Transmittal

The letter of transmittal introduces the purpose and content of the report to the principal reader, usually (but not always) the person who requested the report. The letter is attached to the report or simply placed on top of it. Some organizations prefer a memo format if the report is intra-organizational.

The letter of transmittal (or memo) gives you an opportunity to emphasize whatever you feel your reader will find particularly important or interesting in the attached materials. It also enables you to point out any errors or omissions in the material. For example, you might want to include some information that was gathered after the report was typed or printed.

Figure 17.1: The Six Most Common Uses of Reports

PURPOSE OF REPORT	COMMON EXAMPLES	PREPARATION AND DISTRIBUTION	FEATURES
To monitor control operations	Plans, operating reports, personal activity reports	Internal reports move upward on a recurring basis; external reports go to selected audiences	**Format:** Standard memo or preprinted form **Style:** Telegraphic **Organization:** Topical **Order:** Direct
To implement policies and procedures	Lasting guidelines, position papers	Internal reports move downward on a nonrecurring basis	**Format:** Matches policies and procedures manual **Style:** Fully developed text **Organization:** Topical **Order:** Direct
To comply with regulatory requirements	Reports for the Income Tax Department, government Environmental Agencies, and other industry regulators	External reports are sent on a recurring basis	**Format:** Standardized, perhaps preprinted form **Style:** Skeletal **Organization:** To follow reader's instructions **Order:** Direct
To obtain new business or funding	Sales proposals	External reports are sent on a nonrecurring basis	**Format:** Letter or manuscript **Style:** Fully developed text **Organization:** Problem – solution **Order:** Commonly direct
To document client work	Interim progress reports, final reports	External reports are sent on a nonrecurring basis	**Format:** Letter or manuscript **Style:** Fully developed text **Organization:** Around sequential steps or key findings **Order:** Usually direct
To guide decisions	Research reports, justification reports, troubleshooting reports	Internal reports move upward on a nonrecurring basis	**Format:** Memo or manuscript **Style:** Fully developed text **Organization:** Around conclusions or logical arguments **Order:** Direct or indirect

Transmittal letters generally contain most of the following elements:

1. A statement of the title, and, if necessary, the purpose of the report;
2. A statement of who authorized or commissioned the project, and when;
3. A statement of the methods used in the project (if they are noteworthy) or of the principal results, conclusions and recommendations;
4. An acknowledgment of any assistance you received in preparing the material;
5. A gracious offer to assist in interpreting the material or in carrying out further projects.

The transmittal letter/memo is informal and conversational (uses personal pronouns) in style.

The Title Page

The only difficulty in creating the title page is to think of a good title. The other blocks of information - the date of submission, the names and positions of the writer (or organization) and the principal reader (or organization) - are simply identifying information.

A good title is sufficiently informative without being unwieldy. It answers two basic questions: what is the subject of the report?; and what type of report is it? Take a look at the following effective titles:

For the Armada Corporation: A Self Insurance Fund to Effectively Deal With Our Outside Director Liability-Insurance Situation.

For the Wash and Shop Corporation: A Facility and Service Improvement Program to Effectively Deal With the Chain Laundromat Competition Situation.

An Efficient Layout of Maintenance Facilities in the North Block of the Raipur State Forest.

These descriptive titles identify the subject, and by stating the recommendation they indicate that it is a “recommendation” report. A convenient way to define the type of report is to use a generic term such as *analysis, recommendation, summary, review, guide, or instruction*s. For example,

Open Sea Pollution-Control Devices: A Summary

An Analysis of the Tata 1013 Packager

Where possible, however, use a descriptive title.

Examine the sample title pages in Chapter 18, but bear in mind that each organization has its own format for title pages. In some organizations, a title page is preceded by a title fly. The title fly is a plain sheet of paper with only the title on it. It is not really necessary, but it adds a touch of formality to the report.

The Abstract

An abstract is a brief technical summary - usually no more than 200 words - of the report. The abstract of a report is directed primarily to readers who are familiar with the technical subject and need to know whether to read the full report. So, when writing an abstract you can use technical terminology freely and refer to advanced concepts in your field. (Many reports that contain abstracts also contain executive summaries. This will be discussed later).

Because abstracts can be useful before and after a report is read - and can even be read in place of the report - they are duplicated and kept on file in many divisions of the organization. And, of course, a copy of the abstract is attached to or placed within the report.

The two basic types of abstracts are generally called descriptive and informative abstracts. The descriptive abstract is rapidly losing popularity, whereas the informative abstract is becoming the accepted standard.

The *descriptive abstract*, sometimes called the topical or table of contents abstract, does only what its name implies. It simply describes the topics covered in the table of contents, giving equal coverage to each. So in this type of abstract the research methods, for example, would be mentioned even if they were not the focus of the report.

The *informative abstract* presents the major information that the report conveys. Instead of merely conveying all the topics in a superficial manner, it states the problem, the scope and methods (if appropriate), and the major results, conclusions, or recommendations.

The basic structure of the informative abstract includes three elements:

1. The identifying information. The name of the report, the writer, and perhaps the writer's department.

2. The problem statement. One or two sentences that define the problem or need that led to the project. Without an adequate problem statement to guide them, many readers will be unable to understand the abstract.

3. The important findings. The final three or four sentences - the biggest portion of the abstract - state the crucial information the report contains. Generally, this means some combination of results, conclusions, recommendations, and implications for other projects. Sometimes, however, the abstract presents other information. For instance, many technical projects focus on new or unusual methods for achieving results that have already been obtained through other means. In such a case, the abstract will focus on the methods, not the results.

The Table of Contents

This element is crucial to the report because it enables different readers to turn to specific pages to find the information they want. No matter how well organized the report itself may be, a table of contents that does not make the structure clear will be ineffective.

Because a report usually has no index, the table of contents will provide the only guide to the report's structure, coverage and pagination. The headings listed in the table of contents are identical to the headings that appear in the report itself. To create an effective table of contents, therefore, you must first make sure the report has effective headings - and that it has enough of them. If the table of contents shows no entry for five or six pages, the report could probably be divided into additional subunits. In fact, some tables of contents have a listing of every page in the report.

If you use a clear system of headings within the report, you should be able to use the same system on your contents page. In other words, you can create an informative table of contents by listing your headings in the same style in which they appear in the text, using capitalization, underlining, indentation and italics.

After creating the table of contents, review the report to make sure that the headings in the table of contents are written just as they appear in the report. The wording and the format must be the same. Such correspondence between the table of contents and the body of the report helps the readers understand and remember the structure of the report.

The List of Illustrations

A list of illustrations is a table of contents for the figures and tables of a report. If the report contains figures, but not tables, the list is called a *list of figures*. If the report contains tables but not figures, the list is called a *list of tables*. If the report contains both figures and tables, figures are listed separately, before the list of tables, and the two lists together are called a *list of illustrations*.

The Executive Summary

The executive summary (sometimes called the *epitome*, the *executive overview*, the *management summary*, or the *management overview*) is a one page condensation of the report. Its audience is made up of managers who rely on executive summaries to cope with the tremendous amount of paper crossing their desk every day. Managers do not need or want a deep or detailed understanding of the various projects undertaken in their organizations; what managers do need is a broad understanding of the projects and how they fit into a coherent whole. Consequently a one-page (double spaced) maximum for the executive summary has become almost an unwritten standard.

The special needs of managers dictate a two-part structure for the executive summary:

1. Background. Because managers are not technically competent in the writer's field, the background of the project is discussed clearly and completely. The specific problem is stated explicitly.
2. Major findings and implications. Managers are not interested in the details of the project, so the methods - often the largest portion of the report - rarely receive more than one or two sentences. The conclusions and recommendations, however, are discussed in a full paragraph.

For instance, if the research and development division at an automobile manufacturer has created a composite material that can replace steel in car axles, the technical details of the report might deal with the following kinds of questions:

1. How was the composite devised?
2. What are its chemical and mechanical structures?
3. What are its properties?

The managerial implications, on the other hand, involve other kinds of questions:

1. Why is this composite better than steel?
2. How much do the raw materials cost? Are they readily available?
3. How difficult is it to make the composite? Are there physical limitations to the amount we can make?

.... And so on.

The executives don't care about chemistry; they want to know how this project can help them make a better product for less money. And since they are nonspecialists, writer's must avoid or downplay specialized vocabulary and explain the subject without referring to advanced concepts.

The placement of the executive summary highlights its importance. The current practice in business and industry is to place the executive summary before the detailed discussion. To highlight the importance of the executive summary further, it is listed in the table of contents in the same format as the major headings.

The Glossary and List of Symbols

A glossary is an alphabetical list of definitions. Such a list is particularly useful if you are addressing a multiple audience that includes readers who will not be familiar with the technical vocabulary used in your report.

Instead of slowing down the detailed discussion by defining technical terms as they appear, you can use an asterisk or some other form of notation to inform your readers that the term is defined in the glossary. A footnote at the bottom of the page on which the first asterisk appears serves to clarify the system for the readers.

Although the glossary is generally placed near the end of the report, right before the appendixes, it can also be placed right after the table of contents. This placement is appropriate if the glossary is brief (less than a page) and defines terms that are essential for managers likely to read the body of the report. Figure 17.2 provides an example of a glossary.

Figure 17.2: A Sample Glossary

GLOSSARY

byte: a binary character operated upon as a unit and, generally, shorter than a computer word.

error message: an indication that an error has been detected by the system.

hard copy: in computer graphics, a permanent copy of a display image that can be separated from a display device. For example, a display image recorded on paper.

parameter: a variable that is given a constant value for a specified application and that may denote that application.

record length: the number of words or characters forming a record.

A list of symbols is structured like a glossary, but instead of defining words and phrases, it defines the symbols used in the report (so that readers don't misinterpret them). Figure 17.3 provides an example of a list of symbols (in this case, abbreviations). Like the glossary, the list of symbols may be placed before the appendixes or after the table of contents.

Figure 17.3: A Sample List of Symbols

LIST OF SYMBOLS

CRT	cathode-ray tube
Hz	hertz
rcvr	receiver
SNR	signal-to-noise ratio
uhf	ultra high frequency
vhf	very high frequency

The Appendix

An appendix is any section that follows the body of the report and the back matter (i.e. bibliography, glossary, list of symbols). Appendixes provide a convenient way to convey information that is too bulky to be presented in the body or that will be of interest to only a small number of the report's readers. For the sake of conciseness, this information is separated from the body of the report. Maps, large technical diagrams or charts, computations, computer printouts, test data, and texts of supporting documents are usually found in appendixes.

Appendixes, which are usually lettered rather than numbered (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc), are listed in the table of contents and are referred to at the appropriate points in the body of the report. An item in an appendix is titled "Appendix." The item is not called "Figure" or "Table" even if it would have been so designated had it appeared in the body of the report.

Before moving on to the next section, read the checklist in figure 17.4. This checklist will help you make sure you have included the appropriate elements in your report and written them correctly.

THE TEXT OF THE REPORT

The text of a report follows the structure popular in oral presentations:

1. Tell them what you're going to tell them (introduction).
2. Tell them (body).
3. Tell them what you told them (summary, conclusions, recommendations).

Figure 17.4: Checklist for the Elements of a Report

1. Does the transmittal letter
    a. Clearly state the title and, if necessary, the subject and purpose of the report?
    b. State who authorized or commissioned the report?
    c. Briefly state the methods you used?
    d. Summarize your major results, conclusions, or recommendations?
    e. Acknowledge any assistance you received?
    f. Courteously offer further assistance?
2. Does the title page
    a. Include a title that both suggests the purpose of the report and identifies the type of report it is?
    b. List the names and positions of both you and your principal reader?
    c. Include the date of submission of the report and any other identifying information?
3. Does the abstract
    a. List your name, the report title, and any other identifying information?
    b. Clearly define the problem that led to the project?
    c. Briefly describe (when appropriate) the research methods?
    d. Summarize the major results, conclusions, or recommendations?
4. Does the table of contents
    a. Clearly identify the executive summary?
    b. Contain a sufficiently detailed breakdown of the major sections of the body of the report?
    c. Reproduce the headings as they appear in your report?
    d. Include page numbers?
5. Does the list of illustrations (or table or figures) include all of the graphic aids included in the body of the report?
6. Does the executive summary
    a. Clearly state the problem that led to the project?
    b. Explain the major results, conclusions, recommendations, and/or managerial implications of your report?
    c. Avoid technical vocabulary and concepts that the managerial audience is not likely to know?
7. Does the glossary include definitions of all the technical terms that your readers might not know?
8. Does your list of symbols include all the symbols and abbreviations that your readers might not know?
9. Do your appendixes include the supporting materials that are too bulky to present in the report body or that will interest only a small number of your readers?

This kind of structure enables readers to preview and review key points in the report.

Introduction

The introduction of a report

- Contextualizes the report by tying it to a problem or an assignment.
- States the purpose of the report
- Previews the report's contents and organization
- Establishes the tone of the report

The length of the introduction depends on the length of the report. As a result, the length of the introduction can vary from one or two paragraphs to several pages.

The topics that are generally covered in an introduction are listed below:

- *Authorization.* When, how, and by whom the report was authorized; who wrote it; and when it was submitted.
- *Problem/purpose.* A statement of what is to be accomplished as a result of the reports being written.
- *Scope.* What is and what isn't going to be covered in the report. The scope indicates the report's complexity.
- *Background.* The factors that have led up to the report. This information enables readers to understand how the problem developed and what has been done about it so far.
- *Limitations.* This section covers the factors affecting the quality of the report, e.g. budget and time constraints, unreliability or unavailability of data, and so on. Bear in mind, however, that limitations are no excuse for submitting a poor report.
- *Report organization.* The organization of the report along with a rationale for following this plan. This section is a road map that enables readers to anticipate each turn in the report.

Some of these items may be combined in the introduction; and some may not be included at all. You can decide what to include by figuring out what kind of information will help your readers understand and accept your report. Also consider how the introduction relates to the prefatory parts of the report. If the letter of transmittal and abstract are fairly detailed, for example, you might want the introduction to be relatively brief. However, bear in mind that some people may barely glance at the prefatory parts, so make the introduction detailed enough to provide an adequate preview of the report. If you feel that you need to include information that has already been covered in the prefatory parts, simply use different wording.

The Body of the Report

This section follows the introduction. It consists of the major sections that present, analyze, and interpret the findings gathered as part of your investigation. These sections contain the detailed information necessary to support your conclusions and recommendations.

How much detail should be included? Your decision depends on the nature of your information, the purpose of the report, and the preferences of your audience. Some situations call for detailed coverage; others can be handled briefly.

A handy rule of thumb to follow: provide only enough detail in the body to support your conclusions and recommendations and put additional details in tables, charts, and appendixes.

You also have to decide whether to put your conclusions in the body or in a separate section, or both. If the conclusions appear to flow naturally from the evidence, it would be logical to cover them in the body. However, if you want to give your conclusions added emphasis, you may include a separate section to summarize them. Having a separate section is particularly appropriate in longer reports; the reader may lose track of the conclusions if they are given only in the body.

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

In a short report this final wrap-up may be only a paragraph or two. A long report generally has separate sections called “Summary,” “Conclusions,” and “Recommendations.” These three labels differ in that they indicate different purposes:

- Summary. The key findings of the report, paraphrased from the body and stated (or listed) in the order in which they appear in the body.
- Conclusions. The writer’s analysis of what the findings mean. In other words, answers to the questions that led to the report.
- Recommendations. Opinions, based on reason and logic, about the course of action that should be taken.

If the report is organized deductively, the summary, conclusions, and recommendations are presented before the body and are only reviewed briefly at the end. If the report is organized inductively, these sections are presented only at the end and are covered in detail.

The direct (deductive) approach results in a more forceful report, saves the reader’s time, and makes the report easy to follow by giving the main idea first. The indirect (inductive) approach helps the writer overcome the reader’s resistance by withholding the main idea until later in the report. Because both the direct and indirect approaches have merit, businesspeople often combine them. They reveal their conclusions and recommendations as they go along, rather than putting them either first or last. Business reports are thus often a mix of direct and indirect approaches and cannot be neatly classified by organizational pattern.

Many report writers also combine the conclusions and recommendations under one heading because it is often difficult to present a conclusion without implying a recommendation. Whether you combine them or not, if you have a number of conclusions and recommendations you may want to list them.

In reports that demand action, the recommendation section is particularly important. Readers may fail to take any action if you are vague about what should happen next. You must therefore indicate clearly what is expected of readers. If possible, include a timetable and a specific course of action.

Notes and Bibliography

When writing the text of the report, decide how to acknowledge your sources. One approach, especially for internal reports, is simply to mention a source in the text. However, this style can be very clumsy, especially when the source requires a fairly long description. Another, more convenient approach, is to cite the source in the text and present the details in the “notes” section at the end of the text of the report. Use Arabic numerals to indicate the appropriate note.

A bibliography is a list of sources consulted when preparing the report. Follow your organization’s preferences when structuring the “notes” and “bibliography.”

THINK ABOUT IT

This chapter covered only the basic framework common to most formal reports. The organization of the text and even the selection and order of the elements of the text will vary with the purpose of the report, the needs of the readers, and also the preferences of the organization with which the writer works. Ultimately, it is the total communication context within which the report is being developed that determines the design of the front and back matter (the elements) of the report and the selection and organization of the content of the text of the report.

One of the best ways to learn effective report writing is to examine good reports. This exercise will enable you to see the application of the framework described in this chapter and also the variations that are necessary to accommodate the report writer's subject, purpose and audience. For this reason, Chapter 18 includes two sample reports. Examine these reports closely, and by exploring the rationale for the writer's decisions, think how you would write your own report on a given subject and within a specific context.

Chapter 18

Writing the Report

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Different Types of Reports
- Four Steps in Writing a Report
- Structuring the Report
- Concluding the Report

You have been working at the Azimji Corporation for the last two years. You feel the company is going to face some major problems over the next few months when the competition moves into your city. Over the last month you have gone around telling everybody who would listen to you about this impending crisis. Somehow a very senior executive at the company got to hear about your concerns. As a result, your immediate superior has been instructed to inform you to write a report regarding these potential problems and also propose a solution/approach for dealing with the crisis you have predicted.

Obviously, you are delighted but panicky. This is a wonderful opportunity to prove yourself and even get a promotion. But, how does one write a formal report? You have seen other reports and have understood the elements that make up a report. But that still doesn't address your question, "how does one write a report?"

In desperation, you turn to the department secretary. She has helped many people give concrete shape to their ideas. Based on her years of experience, she educates you about the different types of reports she has seen, and also guides you through the process of writing it.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF REPORTS

Reports, as mentioned earlier, are business tools. By conveying information objectively from one organizational area to another or from one institution to another, they assist in decision making and/or problem solving. Reports have been classified in numerous ways; the form, direction, functional use, and content of the report are used as the basis for classification. However, a single report might be included in several classifications. The following brief review of classification helps explain the scope of reporting and establishes a departure point for studying reports and reporting.

Formal or Informal Reports

Formal reports are carefully structured; they stress objectivity and organization, contain much detail, and are written in a style that tends to eliminate such elements as personal pronouns. Informal reports are usually short messages with natural, casual use of language. The internal memorandum can generally be described as an informal report.

Short or Long Reports

This is a confusing classification. A one-page memorandum is obviously short, and a twenty page report is clearly long. But where is the dividing line? Bear in mind that as a report becomes longer (or what you determine as long), it takes on more characteristics of formal reports.

Informational or Analytical Reports

Informational reports (annual reports, monthly financial reports, reports on personnel absenteeism) carry objective information from one area of an organization to another. Analytical reports (scientific research, feasibility reports, real-estate appraisals) present attempts to solve problems.

The Proposal Report

The proposal is a variation of problem-solving reports. A proposal is a document prepared to describe how one organization can meet the needs of another. Most governmental agencies advertise their needs by issuing "requests for proposal," or RFPs. The RFP specifies a need and potential suppliers prepare proposal reports telling how they can meet that need.

Vertical or Lateral Reports

This classification refers to the direction a report travels. Reports that more upward or downward the hierarchy are referred to as vertical reports; such reports contribute to management control. Lateral reports, on the other hand, assist in coordination in the organization. A report traveling between units of the same organization level (production and finance departments) is lateral.

Internal or External Reports

Internal reports travel within the organization. External reports, such as annual reports of companies, are prepared for distribution outside the organization.

Periodic Reports

Periodic reports are issued on regularly scheduled dates. They are generally upward directed and serve management control. Preprinted forms and computer-generated data contribute to uniformity of periodic reports.

Functional Reports

This classification includes accounting reports, marketing reports, financial reports, and a variety of other reports that take their designation from the ultimate use of the report.

Almost all reports could be included in most of these categories. And a single report could be included in several classifications. Although authorities have not agreed on a universal report classification, these report categories are in common use and provide a nomenclature for the study (and use) of reports.

Reports are also classified on the basis of their format. As you read the classification structure described below, bear in mind that it overlaps with the classification pattern described above.

- *Preprinted form.* Basically for "fill in the blank" reports. Most are relatively short (five or fewer pages) and deal with routine information, mainly numerical information. Use this format when it is requested by the person authorizing the report.
- *Letter.* Common for reports of five or fewer pages that are directed to outsiders. These reports include all the normal parts of a letter, but they may also have headings, footnotes, tables, and figures. Personal pronouns are used in this type of report.
- *Memo.* Common for short (fewer than ten pages) informal reports distributed within an organization. The memo format of "Date," "To," "From," and "Subject" is used. Like longer reports, they often have internal headings and sometimes have visual aids. Memos exceeding ten pages are sometimes referred to as memo reports to distinguish them from shorter ones.
- *Manuscript.* Common for reports that run from a few pages to several hundred pages and require a formal approach. As their length increases, reports in manuscript format require more elements before and after the text of the report (see previous chapter for a description of these elements).

Now that we have surveyed the different types of reports and become familiar with the nomenclature, let us move on to the actual process of writing the report.

FOUR STEPS IN WRITING A REPORT

Writing a report requires careful planning. Although there is great variety in subject matter, audience's needs, and types of reports, the following four steps lay the foundation of any report:

- Defining the problem and the purpose.
- Identifying and organizing the issues for investigation.
- Conducting research.
- Analyzing and interpreting data, drawing conclusions and developing commendations.

The relative importance of these steps varies with the type of assignment. Informational reports, which contain facts alone, may require very little in the way of conclusions and recommendations. Examples of such reports are monitor/control reports and statements of policies and procedures. On the other hand, analytical reports include conclusions and recommendations and require all steps.

Defining the Problem and the Purpose

Research studies often have both a statement of the problem and a statement of the purpose, For example, a real-estate appraiser accepts a client's request to appraise a building to determine its market value. The problem is to arrive at a fair market value for the property. The purpose of the appraisal, however, might be to establish a value for a loan to determine the feasibility of adding to the structure, or to assess the financial possibility of demolishing the structure and erecting something else. Thus, the purpose may have to do with determining what elements to consider in arriving at an answer. In other words, unless you know why something is wanted, you might have difficulty knowing what is wanted. Once you arrive at the answer to *why* and *what* questions, you'll be on your way to solving the problem.

Zeroing in on the Problem

To determine the precise nature of the problem, explore your report assignment using the following questions:

- What needs to be determined?
- Why is the issue important?
- Who is involved in the situation?
- Where is the trouble located?
- When did it start?
- How did the situation originate?

These questions are not applicable to all situations, but asking them helps you clarify the boundaries of your investigation. You can then draft a written statement of the problem being investigated, which will serve as a guide to what you are trying to solve or what question you are trying to answer in the report.

Assume, for instance, that you want to study the salaries of office support staff. Imagine the scope of a such a task. Millions of people are employed in office support jobs. And perhaps a thousand or so jobs fall into this classification. To reduce such a problem to reasonable proportions, you (administrator at a local bank) could ask the following questions:

What: A study of salaries of office support staff.

Why: To determine whether salaries in our firm are competitive and consistent.

When: Current

Where: Our municipal area.

Who: Office support staff employees in banks.

Now you can phrase the problem in this way: “Are our salaries competitive and consistent in comparison to the salaries of office support staff in local banks?” Note that this process of reducing the problem to a workable size has also established some firm limits to the research. You have limited the problem to current salaries, to the local area, and to a particular type of business. The “why” was also helpful in establishing limits on the research. Limiting the problem is “zeroing in on the problem.”

If you are writing an analytical report, the problem statement can be broadened: “Are our salaries competitive and consistent in comparison to the salaries of office support staff in local banks, and how are they affecting service delivery?” This problem statement goes beyond the problem defined earlier because in an analytical report you are expected to look at the facts and, in addition, draw conclusions about the impact of the problem.

Developing the Statement of Purpose

Once you have asked some preliminary questions and determined the problem, you are ready to write a clear statement of purpose that defines the objective of the report. In contrast to the statement of problem, which defines only what you are going to investigate, the statement of purpose defines what the report should accomplish.

In the case of an informational report, you might state your purpose by saying, “Purpose: To investigate our office support staff salaries to determine whether they are competitive and consistent with salaries of office support staff in local banks.”

However, for an analytical report, your statement of purpose might be, “Purpose: To identify the differences between the salaries of our office support staff and those of office support staff in other local banks, analyze its effect on service delivery and recommend ways for countering its negative effects.” As you would have observed, problem and purpose statements often have to be combined in one statement. That is why the terms “problem” and “purpose” are often used interchangeably. Before you proceed with the report, double-check your statement of purpose with the person who authorized/requested the report.

Identifying Issues for Investigation

Once you have defined the problem and established the purpose of the study you are ready to begin your investigation. To do so, you have to identify the areas that need to be investigated. This can be done by breaking down the “purpose” into its related aspects.

Assume that you have been asked to select a personal computer from among three alternative models - the Alpha, the Beta, and the Gamma. The purpose of your study is to select the computer that will best serve the record-keeping and word processing needs of a small office. To choose the most suitable PC, you clearly need to investigate the following areas: the needs of the office; the capabilities of each PC; and the costs involved. You may even have to try each PC personally, or get some of the office staff to try the PCs and give you their feedback. A variety of different types of research is clearly involved.

Of course, the more complex the problem and the purpose, the more the number of areas that need to be investigated. Investigating and solving the problem, however, is only one part of the task; now you have to present it persuasively and clearly to you audience.

STRUCTURING THE REPORT

After the investigation is over, or while it is underway, you have to start structuring your report. Since reports can be structured in a number of different ways, you should identify the most suitable structure on the basis of the “purpose” of your study. This is important because informational assignments are structured differently from analytical ones.

Figure 18.1: More Important to Less Important Pattern

Writing Situation: to convey to the client the results of the tests run on the 14-115 Engine

I. Introduction
- A. Customer's Statement of Engine Irregularities
- B. Explanation of Test Procedures

II. Problem Areas Revealed by Tests
- A. Turbine Bearing Support
  - 1. Oversized Seal Ring Housing Defective
  - 2. Compressor Shaft Rusted
- B. Intermediate Case Assembly
  - 1. LP Compressor Packed with Carbon
  - 2. Oversized LP Compressor Rear Seal Ring Defective

III. Components That Tested Satisfactorily
- A. LP Turbine
- B. HB Turbine

Source: Michael H. Markel, Technical Writing: Situations and Strategies. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

Many assignments require both information and analysis, so it is up to you to determine the overall purpose of your study. Is your general goal to provide background information that someone else will use and interpret? Then an informational outline is suitable, overall; but subsections of the study may require some analysis to discover (and emphasize) important facts. Is the purpose of your study to scrutinize the data and draw your own conclusions and make recommendations? Then use an analytical outline for the report, even though your opinions will be based on facts. For problem solving you may use a variety of structural schemes, as long as you avoid errors in logical reasoning.

Informational Assignments

Studies that lead to factual reports, offering little scope for analysis or interpretation of data, are generally structured on the basis of subtopics dealing with specific subjects.

These subtopics can be arranged in various ways:

- According to importance
- According to sequence
- According to chronology
- According to spatial orientation
- According to category

These structures are not watertight compartments: a topic organized by category can also be structured by chronology within a larger category. Choose the approach that conveys your subject most clearly, logically and forcefully (but not rudely) to the readers. Take a look at the outlines in Figure 18.1, Figure 18.2 and Figure 18.3. Studying them will give you ideas for structuring your own report.

Analytical Assignments

Analytical studies usually contain analyses, conclusions, and recommendations. These studies generally follow a problem-solving method. The two most common-structural methods are 1) Hypothesis and 2) Relative merit.

Figure 18.2: Chronological Pattern

Writing Situation: to explain to a general audience the geologic history of St. John's, United States irgin Islands

I. Introduction

II. Stage One: Submarine Volcanism

- A. Logical Evidence: The Pressure Theory
- B. Empirical Evidence: Evidence from ram Head Drillings

III. Stage Two: Above–water Volcanism

- A. Logical Evidence
  - 1. The Role of the Lowered Water Level
  - 2. The Role of Continental Drift
- B. Empirical Evidence: Modern Geological Data

IV. Stage Three: Depositing of Organic Marine Sediments

- A. The Role of the Ice Age
  - 1. Water Level
  - 2. Water Temperature
- B. The Role of "Drowned" Reefs

V. Conclusion

Source: Markel, Michael H. Technical Writing: Situations and Strategies. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

Hypothesis

When the report's purpose is to discover causes, predict results, or suggest a solution to a problem, one way to proceed is to formulate hypothetical explanations. If your problem is to determine why your company is having trouble hiring secretaries, you'd begin analyzing this problem by speculating on the reasons. Then after researching the issue, you would organize your report so that you could prove or disprove each reason. You might structure your report like this:

Problem: Why are we having trouble hiring new secretaries?

I. Salaries are too low.

- *A. What do we pay our secretaries?*
- *B. What do comparable companies pay their secretaries?*
- *C. How important is pay in influencing secretaries' job choices?*

II. Our location is poor.

- *A. Are we accessible by public transportation and major roads?*
- *B. Is the area physically attractive?*
- *C. Are housing costs affordable?*
- *D. Is crime a problem?*

III. The supply of secretaries is diminishing

- *A. How many secretaries were available five years ago as opposed to now?*
- *B. What was the demand for secretaries five years ago as opposed to now.*

Relative merit

When the assignment involves evaluating how well various alternatives meet your criteria, the natural way to structure your analysis is by focusing on the criteria. To understand this, let's go back to a problem we discussed earlier: choosing a personal computer to meet the record-keeping and word processing needs of a small office. You have to choose from three alternative models, Alpha, Beta, and Gamma. If you organize your report so that you tell the reader everything about the Alpha, then everything about the Beta, and then everything about the Gamma, the reader may have trouble making comparisons. Your report structure might look like this:

Figure 18.3: Spatial Pattern

Writing Situation: a proposal to the Mooreville Fire Department for a heating system for the firehouse

I. System for Offices, Dining Area, and Kitchen
- A. Description of Floor-mounted Fan Heater
- B. Principal Advantages
  - 1. Individual Thermostats
  - 2. Quick Recovery Time

II. System for Bathrooms
- A. Description of Baseboard Heaters
- B. Principal Advantages
  - 1. Individual Thermostats
  - 2. Small Size

III. System for Garage
- A. Description of Ceiling-mounted Fan Heater
- B. Principal Advantages
  - 1. High Power
  - 2. High Efficiency

I. Introduction

- *A. The problem*
- *B. The method used*

II. Alpha

III. Beta

IV. Gamma

V. Conclusion

In this kind of structure, the conclusion is easy to read because it has been, rightly, given a separate section. But it is hard for the readers to make comparisons between the three computers. If the readers wanted to know the differences in the storage capacities of the three models, they would have to go through the trouble of locating that information in section II, III, and IV.

This type of subject would have been presented more clearly and persuasively if it had been organized according to the criteria used for selecting the best computer. If you selected your computer based on cost, storage, service warranties and availability of software programs, these criteria (rather than the computers themselves) might serve as a means for dividing the report into different sections. Your report would then be structured in the following way:

I. Introduction

- *A. The problem*
- *B. The method used*

II. Cost favors alpha

III. Storage capacity points to Beta

IV. Service warranties of Alpha, Beta, Gamma are equal.

V. Software is plentiful for Beta

VI. Beta is the best buy

The report now has 6 major sections, with four of the major sections devoted to the findings. When the report is structured in this way, the features of each computer are compared in the same section, and the readers are thus led logically to the conclusion. (Note the headings used in sections II-VI. These are called "talking headings" because they talk about the content of the section and even indicate the conclusion that the section arrives at. A knowledgeable reader who has confidence in the research might be satisfied by reading only the headings.)

Another way of using relative merits is to identify the alternatives first and then analyze how well each alternative meets your criteria. Examine the following structure of a report written by an electrical engineer working for a company that makes portable room heaters:

Writing situation: to recommend to the technical staff the best way to increase the efficiency of the temperature controls in our heaters.

I. *The need for greater efficiency in our heaters*

- *A. Technical Aspects*
- *B. Financial Aspects*

II. The current method of temperature control: the thermostat

- *A. Principle of operation*
- *B. Advantages*
- *C. Disadvantages*

III. Alternative methods of temperature control

- *A. Rheostat*
  - *1. Principle of operation*
  - *2. Advantages*
  - *3. Disadvantages*
- *B. Zero-Voltage control*
  - *1. Principle of operation*
  - *2. Advantages*
  - *3. Disadvantages*

IV. Recommendation: Zero-voltage control

- *A. Projected developments in semiconductor technology*
- *B. Availability of components*
- *C. Preliminary design of zero voltage control system*
- *D. Schedule for test analysis.*

Notice that in this type of organization the writer has placed the discussion of the recommended alternative - zero-voltage control - after the discussion of the two other alternatives. The recommended alternative does not have to come last, but most readers will expect to see it in that position. By placing it last, the writer makes his argument appear logical, as though he has discarded the unsatisfactory alternatives until he finally hit upon the best one.

As you would have realized by now, you have to organize your report in the way that best suits your writing situation. These various report structures are only intended to guide you. Depending on your needs, you might want to blend certain patterns. Two complete reports are included at the end of this chapter. Here again, the goal is to enable you to learn how to write reports, not how to copy reports. So study these reports to understand the writer's reasons for presenting it in a particular manner.

One final word of advice regarding the structuring of reports. Structuring can take place simultaneously with the research, or before investigation has commenced, or after the investigation is over. It can also take place during all the three stages mentioned above, constantly being fine-tuned as new information is unearthed. Even after you start writing the report according to the structure you have planned, you may find you need to conduct more investigation to fill in the gaps you discovered while filling out the structure. Until the very last minute, the structure is often in flux. This doesn't mean that you shouldn't follow any game plan for writing the report. What it means is that you should have a plan to enable you to get started on your project, but you should also allow the plan to grow and change to suit the needs of your study.

CONCLUDING THE REPORT

Let us assume that you have finally settled on a suitable organizational structure. At the end of the report you will have to make conclusions and/or recommendations on the basis of the evidence you have amassed over the course of your investigation. So when you start your investigation of the problem also consider the way you plan to end your report.

A "conclusion" is a logical interpretation of what the facts in your report mean. This interpretation cannot be based on never-before mentioned information. Whatever conclusions you draw, they must be derived from the facts and information included in your report.

"Recommendations" are inappropriate in a report when you are not expected to supply them, so you must know the difference between "conclusions" and "recommendations." A "conclusion" is an interpretation of what the facts mean; a "recommendation" suggests what ought to be done about the facts.

The following is an example of the difference:

Conclusion: "I conclude that on the basis of its track record and current price, this company is an attractive buy."

Recommendation: "I recommend that we write a letter to the president offering to buy the company at a 10 percent premium over the market value of its stock."

When you have been asked to translate your conclusions into recommendations, make sure that the relationship between them is clear. Keep in mind that your recommendations must be based on logical analysis and sound conclusions. And make sure that your recommendations are detailed clearly so that your readers know exactly what to do with them.

To sum up, report writing involves identifying the problem and purpose, investigating the issue, structuring the material, and ending with conclusions and/or specific recommendations. And at all times, show consideration for the audience. As a regional managing partner at Arthur Anderson and Company says, "the proposal must be clearly written: very easy to read, free of jargon and buzz words, and to the point!"

To get a complete picture of a report look at the sample reports in Exhibit 18.1 and Exhibit 18.2.

THINK ABOUT IT

So now you have a pretty good idea about report writing. First, identify the type of report you have to write; second, identify the problem and purpose of the report; third, investigate the problem and structure the report (be flexible and keep fine-tuning your investigation and report structure). Early on in the process determine whether you will have to write conclusions or recommendations, or both. So when you conduct your investigation you can explore these aspects also.

Now write that report and get that promotion!

Exhibit 18.1
Sample Report (Appendixes not included)

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION III LIBRARY

March 5, 1979

Mr. John J.Sherman
Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA Libraries
1960 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19101

Dear Mr. Sherman:

Presented in this report is my investigation of, and recommendation for, the purchase of an electronic security system for the EPA Region III Library. The installation of such a system would greatly reduce the incidence of theft in the library.

For this investigation, I established quality criteria for the selection of a system. The “Checkpoint Mark II” security system, manufactured by Checkpoint System, Inc., ranked consistently higher in all areas than any of the other systems.

The checkpoint system will provide safe, efficient security for the EPA Region III Library. At a cost of about $, 4,400, the system will provide savings of about $3,000-$4,400 annually.

If you have any questions concerning this report, please feel free to contact me. I shall be happy to discuss them with you, at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Catherine M.Swift

Information Specialist
EPA Region III Library

RECOMMENDATION OF AN ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEM

FOR THE EPA REGION III LIBRARY

Submitted to: Mr. John J. Sherman

Regional Administrator

U.S. EPA Libraries

Submitted by: Catherine M.Swift

Information Specialist

EPA Region III Library

March 5, 1979

ABSTRACT

"Recommendation of an Electronic Security System for the EPA Region III Library," Catherine M.Swift, Information Specialist, U.S. EPA Region III Library.

During the last two years, the EPA Region III Library, a classified "Special Library," has experienced a dramatic increase in the incidence of library thefts. Currently, no formal security system is employed by the EPA Library, and recent studies by leading library journals have indicated substantial savings at libraries which have installed an electronic security system. There are eight systems available, and, of these, the "Checkpoint Mark II" system, manufactured by Checkpoint Systems, Inc., is the most adaptable to the needs of the EPA Library. This system operates on radio frequencies and electronically detects all "checked" materials which are passed through a designated detection area without proper authorization.

The implementation of the "Checkpoint Mark II" system would greatly reduce the incidence of library theft and produce substantial savings of approximately $3,000 - $4,000 annually for the EPA Library and possibly for other Special Libraries experiencing similar security problems.

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I. SUMMARY

The EPA Region III Library in 1978 suffered theft losses of $2,000 in the legal collection and $2,300 in the general collection. With an annual acquisitions budget of only $40,000, the library cannot afford such losses. The 1978 theft losses represent an increase of more than 100% over the 1977 figures.

Currently, there are eight electronically operated library security systems on the market. They average an 80-90% reduction in resource losses (2:226). In accordance with my "Proposal to Investigate Electronic Security Systems for EPA Region III Library," dated February 7, 1979, I have investigated the eight systems, using three criteria: technical, management/maintenance, and financial. Based on my analysis, the "Checkpoint Mark II" system is the best for our needs.

It can be adapted to our small checkout area, is immune to electronic interference, and poses no safety risk to library patrons or personnel. It is relatively simple to use, and has a good reliability and user satisfaction record. At $4,400, it is from $1,800 to $4,150 less expensive than the other systems. A cost-benefit analysis shows that almost three dollars of benefits are gained for every dollar expended on the system over a ten-year period and that it will pay for itself in less than a year. The "Checkpoint Mark II" system is the best solution to the theft problem at the EPA Region III Library, and perhaps at other EPA libraries.

II. CHOOSING AN ELECTRONIC SECURITY SYSTEM FOR THE EPA REGION III LIBRARY

A. Introduction

Last year the EPA Region III Library suffered $4,300 in theft losses. This report describes the project intended to determine whether any of the currently available library anti-theft systems would effectively and efficiently combat this theft problem. To carry out this analysis, I judged the available anti-theft systems according to technical, management/maintenance, financial criteria.

B. Technical Criteria

In the analysis of the prospective security systems, three aspects of their technical characteristics were emphasized: (1) personal safety standards, (2) spatial limitations, (3) electronic device interference. These three criteria placed many limitations on the available systems; however, this form of selection process eliminated systems that potentially would not comply with the EPA Library's service standards.

1. Personal Safety Standards

The most important aspect of the technical criteria used in the evaluation of the system was personal safety standards. Within the last two years, theft detection systems have increasingly come under federal regulation, primarily from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. At a public hearing sponsored by the FDA on June 25, 1975, the hazards of theft detection systems to cardiac pacemakers were discussed. The hearing concluded with the request "that the manufacturers of cardiac pacemakers and antitheft devices attempt to work out a program for determining whether or not antitheft devices can have adverse effects on cardiac pacemakers."

During investigation of the available systems adaptable to the EPA Library, it was discovered that the "Knogo Mark II" system could "possibly" interfere with the operation of cardiac pacemakers and antitheft devices attempt to work out a program for determining whether or not antitheft devices can have adverse effects on cardiac pacemakers" (3:581)

During investigation of the available systems adaptable to the EPA Library, it was discovered that the "Knogo Mark II" system could "possibly" interfere with the operation of cardiac pacemakers and hearing aids. This system was immediately eliminated from consideration because it was thought a possible danger to the personal safety of the library users and staff. (See Appendix A, page 10)

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There also has been debate recently on health hazards associated with the electromagnetic radiation utilized by most of the theft prevention systems. (The FDA does not address the issue in its electro-magnetic radiation guidelines.). The "Checkpoint Mark II" is the only system which isn't operated on a magnetic basis; it therefore eliminates potentially hazardous electromagnetic radiation exposure among library patrons and personnel.

The "Checkpoint Mark II" system operates on radio frequency transmissions in coordination with "checked" materials. In this system, all library resources are "checked" with a small printed circuit which is affixed to the protected materials. When "checked" material is carried through the designated detection area ("Check-point"), the sensing screens pick up the small circuit frequency. One of the sensing screens is a radio receiver. The receiver detects all "checked" materials which have not been "de-sensitized" and activates an audio and visual signal which then locks the exit turnstile in place, prohibiting unauthorized removal of the library material. This system poses no threat to the personal safety of library users.

2. Spatial Limitations

The area designated as the future charging area in the EPA Library measures approximately 6ft. long and 10 ft. wide. This space is very small in comparison with charging areas in larger libraries, such as public or university libraries, where standard checkout areas measure approximately 12ft. long 15ft. wide. Because of space limitations, many of the larger, bulkier systems, such as the "Gaylord/Magnavox" and "Knogo Mark II," were eliminated from consideration. The "Checkpoint Mark II" detection unit, which is small and suitable for this area, consists of two parallel screens between which patrons exit from the library. The near screen (receiver) is floor-mounted against the discharging desk; the remote screen (transmitter) stands across the exit aisle from the receiver. The overall dimensions of each screen are 66 inches high, 14 ½ inches wide, and 5 ½ inches deep. The suggested aisle width for the "Check-Point" is 36 inches (3:602).

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The "Checkpoint Mark II" system is the most compact of the available systems, in addition to being physically attractive; the sensing screens will blend with the library's decor.

3. Electronic Device Interference

The Region III Library exit is located approximately 5 ft. from an elevator. Unfortunately, some of the magnetic-based systems have reported incidences of false alarm triggering due to nearby electrical disturbances, escalators, elevators, vacuum cleaners, electrical storms, etc. The "Checkpoint Mark II," the only non-magnetic system currently available, operates on radio frequency transmissions that are not affected by the operation of any electrical systems. Therefore, in the case of the EPA Library, the implementation of the "Checkpoint" system would reduce the potential for false alarms.

C. Management/Maintenance Criteria

Because of limited manpower in the EPA Library, management/maintenance criteria were established to reflect the special needs of this library. Unlike a large university or public library where various cataloging and maintenance functions are distributed to distinct departments, the EPA Library Staff equally participate in the operation of all library functions. Although many of the available library security theft-prevention systems satisfied this category's requirements, the "Checkpoint Mark II" system consistently ranked higher in reliability and maintenance standards.

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1. Implementation Requirements

The eight available systems were studied for implementation requirements. Because of its small staff, the EPA Library cannot afford more than 20 man-hours/week implementing a Library Security System. This stipulation limited the number of systems adaptable to the EPA Library. For example, the "Tattle-Tape" and "Spartan" systems require a minimum of eight steps for the manual insertion of the magnetized sensing strips. In contrast, the "Checkpoint" system requires the use of an automatic labeling device which inserts labels neatly in less than three steps. In addition, Baker & Taylor, a security system processing company, can insert the sensitive labeling in most of our books, eliminating much of the need for manual implementation by our staff. We, however, shall process journals and other forms.

2. Maintenance and Repair

Limited staffing in the EPA Library also undercuts the effectiveness of any system which would require continual maintenance and repair. Data provided in the November 1976 issue of Library Technology Reports provided valuable information regarding user's experiences in terms of system reliability. Most of the users involved in this study had at least one year of experience with their chosen system and answered various questions dealing with the system's dependability and quality.

"Downtimes" (amount of time in which the system was inoperable) were reported by the users. "Bookmark" appeared to be the most ineffective. Libraries using the "Bookmark" system had repeatedly experienced breakdowns resulting from a variety of mechanical and operational errors. All of the remaining systems were satisfactorily effective, with the "Checkpoint," "Tattle-Tape," and "Spartan" systems having a higher degree of dependability.

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The "Checkpoint Mark II" users reported a minimum amount of downtime, and most of this time was spent making slight adjustments. All of the users relied upon Checkpoint Systems, Inc., for maintenance repairs and reported fast and efficient service for their systems. "Tattle-Tape" and "Spartan" systems, manufactured by 3M Corporation, also received favorable service and dependability reports from their users.

3. Adaptability to Different Forms

In addition to high maintenance and repair standards, the EPA Library also demanded a system which would be adaptable to the varied forms in the collection. The selected theft-prevention system was required to be equally effective in the protection of books, periodicals, microfilm, microfiche, cassettes, and phonodiscs. The "Check-point Mark II" system was easily adaptable to all of these forms because of the simplicity of the radio frequency labeling technique.

D. Financial Criteria

According to my analysis of the technical and management/maintenance criteria, the "Checkpoint Mark II" system is clearly the best solution for the theft problem at the EPA Region III Library. However, no system would be recommended unless it is cost effective. A cost/benefit analysis, using Bommer and Ford's model, was performed on the "Checkpoint Mark II" system.

1. Bommer and Ford's Cost-Benefit Analysis Model

Michael Bommer and Bernard Ford have developed a cost-benefit analysis model in studying the problem of lost and stolen items from the University of Pennsylvania Van Pelt Library.

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Bommer and Ford's model defines the total costs as the installation cost of the system and the yearly operating costs. Benefits are defined as the savings in materials that are not lost or stolen and in reduced expenses in tracking down or borrowing replacement materials. In addition, Bommer and Ford calculate the subjective benefits, both to the library and the user, of having the material accessible (e.g., users' confidence, reduced time delays, and increased potential for scholarship). The cost-benefit model can be adjusted to any "planning horizon": that is, to any length of time that the system would be in use. Also, the model can easily determine the length of time it takes for the system to pay for itself.

2. Bommer and Ford's Model Applied

To apply Bommer and Ford's Model, I gathered data from our 1978 Resource Inventory, 1978 Acquisitions Listing, and the 1978 interlibrary loan forms.

The EPA Library staff estimated that approximately 300 documents were missing. Of these, 100 documents were eliminated for reacquisition because they had become outdated or were seldom requested by users.

Two hundred of the missing documents, however, did warrant reacquisition. Of these 200, the majority consisted of legal material which had "disappeared" from the library's shelves soon after its purchase. Since the legal collection would be grossly inadequate without the missing material, a high priority was placed on reordering these items.

The 1978 Resource Inventory revealed that approximately $2,000 worth of material was missing from the legal collection and approximately $2,300 of material was missing from the general collection. The actual "out of pocket" costs to the library, in terms of replacement, would be $4,300.

Another "out-of-pocket" cost is the man-hours used in the tracking down and reacquiring of missing library materials. The minimum wage of the Regional Library Staff members is $4.50/hour. If a half-hour is allocated for each missing document, and the total number of documents to be reordered is 200, the potential savings in this area amounts to $450.00.

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In addition, Interlibrary Loan costs accrue for the ordering and photocopying of materials which are requested from other libraries because they are missing or have been stolen from the EPA Library collection. According to 1978 estimates, approximately $150 was expended for this reason.

Appendix B, page 11, shows a cost-benefit analysis performed on the "Checkpoint Mark II" system for the EPA Region III Library over a projected ten-year period. According to this analysis, $2.71 worth of benefits is gained for every dollar spent on the system. The system would pay for itself in less than a year.

E. Survey of User Satisfaction

The user survey whose results were published in the 1976 Library Technology Reports included one question of particular importance: Would you purchase another system from the same manufacturer? The author of the questionnaire offers several precautions in interpreting the answers to the question (3:576). First, the questionnaire was sent to current users of the system, and therefore does not include users who have discontinued using it. Second, the names of the users were supplied by the manufacturers, who might not have provided complete lists. But despite these precautions, the survey shows (see Appendix C, page 12) that the "Checkpoint Mark II" received, by far, the highest proportion of affirmative answers.

F. Conclusion

Library theft is a problem which is not peculiar to the EPA Region III Library (2:224). Many other special libraries have experienced a sharp increase in theft within the last ten years. The advent of electronic security systems has alleviated many of the problems in the large public libraries, and recently the attention of security specialists has turned to small special libraries.

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The EPA Library has a small yet valuable environmental collection - a collection that warrants the protection and security provided by a theft prevention system. The "Checkpoint Mark II" system can easily adapt to the needs of the EPA Library and safely provide the security so desperately needed.

G. Recommendation

I recommend that we ask a Checkpoint representative to visit our library so that we can discuss the details of purchase and installation.

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1. Bommer, M., and B. Ford. 1974. A cost-benefit analysis for determining the value of an electronic security system. College and Research Libraries 35 (July): 270-79.

2. Griffith, J.W. 1978. Library theft: A problem that won't go away. American Libraries 9 (April) :224-27.

3. Knight, N.H.1976. Theft-detection systems - a survey. Library Technology Reports 12 (November): 575-690.

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Source: Michael H. Markel, Technical Writing: Situations and Strategies. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984).

Exhibit 18.2
Sample Report (Figures not included)

REDUCING TRITECH'S TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT COSTS

Prepared for
John Alexander, Vice President of Administration
TriTech Industries

Prepared by
Andrew O'Toole, Director
Cost Accounting Services
TriTech Industries

May 15, 1995

MEMORANDUM

DATE:	May 15, 1995
TO:	Jean Alexander, Vice President of Administration
FROM:	Andrew O Toole, Director of Cost Accounting Services
SUBJECT:	Reducing TriTech's Travel and Entertainment Costs

Here is the report you requested April 30 on TriTech's travel and entertainment costs.

Your suspicion was right. We are spending far too much on business travel. Our unwritten policy has been "anything goes." We have no real control over T&E expenses. Although this offhanded approach may have been understandable when TriTech's profits were high, we can no longer afford the luxury of "going first class."

The solutions to the problem are obvious. We need to put someone in charge of travel and entertainment; we need a clear statement of policy; we need an effective control system; and we need to retain a business-oriented travel service that can optimize our travel arrangements. Perhaps more important, we need to change our attitude. Instead of viewing business travel as a free vacation, we need to act as though we were paying the bills ourselves.

Getting people to economize is not going to be easy. In the course of researching this issue, I've found that our employees are deeply attached to their first-class travel privileges. I think they would almost prefer a cut in pay to a loss in travel status. We'll need a lot of top management involvement to sell people on the need for moderation. One thing is clear: People will be very bitter if we create a two-class system in which top executives get special privileges while the rest of the employees make the sacrifices.

I'm grateful to Mary Lehman and Connie MciIllvain for their help in rounding up and sorting through five year's worth of expense reports. Their efforts were truly herculean.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity to work on this assignment. It's been a real education. If you have any questions about the report, please give me a call.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report analyzes TriTech's travel and entertainment (T&E) costs and presents recommendations for reducing those costs.

Travel and Entertainment Costs Are Too High

Travel and entertainment is a large and growing expense category for TriTech Industries. The company currently spends about $10 million per year on business travel, and costs are increasing by 7 percent annually. Company employees make some 5,000 trips each year at an average cost per trip of $2,000. Air fares are the biggest expense, followed by hotels, meals, and rental cars.

The nature of TriTech's business does require extensive travel, but the company's costs appear to be excessive. Every year TriTech spends twice as much on T&E for each professional employee as its main competitors do. Although the location of the company's facilities may partly explain the discrepancy, the main reason for TriTech's high costs is the firm's philosophy and managerial style. TriTech encourages employees to go first class and pays relatively little attention to travel costs.

Cuts Are Essential

Although TriTech has traditionally been casual about travel and entertainment expenses, management now recognizes the need to gain more control over this element of costs. The company is currently entering a period of declining profits, prompting management to look for every opportunity to reduce spending. At the same time, rising air fares are making travel and entertainment expenses more important to the bottom line.

TriTech Can Save $4 Million per Year

Fortunately, TriTech has a number of excellent opportunities for reducing its travel and entertainment costs. Savings of up to $4 million per year should be achievable, judging by the experience of other companies. The first priority should be to hire a director of travel and entertainment to assume overall responsibility for T&E spending. This individual should establish a written travel and entertainment policy and create a budgeting and cost-control system. The director should also retain a nationwide travel agency to handle our reservations.

At the same time, TriTech should make employees aware of the need for moderation in travel and entertainment spending. People should be encouraged to forgo any unnecessary travel and to economize on airline tickets, hotels, meals, rental cars, and other expenses.

In addition to economizing on an individual basis, TriTech should look for ways to reduce costs by negotiating preferential rates with travel providers. Once retained, a travel agency should be able to accomplish this.

These changes, although necessary, are likely to hurt morale, at least in the short term. Management will need to make a determined effort to explain the rationale for reduced spending. By exercising moderation in their own travel arrangements, TriTech executives can set a good example and help make the changes more acceptable to other employees.

REDUCING TRITECH'S TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT COSTS

INTRODUCTION

TriTech Industries has traditionally encouraged a significant amount of business travel in the belief that it is an effective way of conducting operations. To compensate employees for the stress and inconvenience of frequent trips, management has authorized generous travel and entertainment allowances. This philosophy has undoubtedly been good for morale, but the company has paid a price. Last year TriTech spent $10 million on T&E, $5 million more than it spent on research and development.

This year the cost of travel and entertainment will have a bigger impact on profits, owing to changes in airline fares. The timing of these changes is unfortunate because the company anticipates that profits will be relatively weak for a variety of other reasons. In light of these profit pressures, Ms. Jane Alexander, Vice President of Administration, has asked the accounting department to take a closer look at the T&E budget.

Purpose, Scope, and Limitations

The purpose of this report is to analyze the travel and entertainment budget, evaluate the impact of recent changes in air fares, and suggest ways to tighten management's control over travel and entertainment expenses.

Although the report outlines a number of steps that could reduce TriTech's expenses, the precise financial impact of these measures is difficult to project. The estimates presented in the report provide a "best guess" view of what TriTech can expect to save. Until the company actually implements these steps, however, there is no way of knowing how much the travel and entertainment budget can be reduced.

Sources and Methods

In preparing this report, the accounting department analyzed internal expense reports for the past five years to determine how much TriTech spends on travel and entertainment. These figures were then compared with statistics on similar companies in the electronic equipment industry, obtained through industry association data, annual reports, and magazine articles. In addition, the accounting department screened magazine and newspaper articles to determine how other companies are coping with the high cost of business travel.

__________________________________1_____________________________________

Report Organization

This report reviews the size and composition of TriTech's travel and entertainment expenses, analyzes trends in air fare pricing, and recommends steps for reducing the travel and entertainment budget.

THE HIGH COST OF TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT

Although many companies view travel and entertainment (T&E) as an 'incidental' cost of doing business, the dollars add up. Last year U.S. Industry paid an estimated $90 billion for travel and entertainment.(1) At TriTech Industries the bill for air fares, hotels, rental cars, restaurants and entertainment totaled $10 million. The company's travel and entertainment budget has increased by 12 percent per year for the past five years. By industry standards TriTech's budget is on the high side.(2) This is largely because management has a generous policy on travel benefits.

<u>$10 Million per Year</u>

<u>Spent On Travel and Entertainment</u>

TriTech Industries annual budget for travel and entertainment is only 8 percent of sales. Because this is a relatively small expense category compared with such things as salaries and commissions, it is tempting to dismiss travel and entertainment costs as insignificant. However, T&E is TriTech's third largest controllable expense, directly behind salaries and data processing.

Last year TriTech personnel made about 5,000 trips at an average cost per trip of $2,000. The typical trip involved a round-trip flight of 3,000 miles, meals and hotel accommodations for three days, and a rental car. Roughly 80 percent of the trips were made by 20 percent of the staff. Top management and sales personnel were the most frequent travelers, averaging 18 trips per year.

Figure 1 illustrates how the travel and entertainment budget is spent. The largest categories are air fares and lodging, which together account for $7 out of every $10 that employees spend on travel and entertainment.

Figure 1 (note to the student: figures not drawn)

Air Fares and Lodging Account

for Over Two-Thirds of TriTech's

Travel and Entertainment Budget

_____________________________2_____________________________

This spending has been relatively steady for the past five years and is consistent with the distribution of expenses experienced by other companies.

Although the composition of the travel and entertainment budget has been consistent, its size has not. As Figure 2 shows, expenditures for travel and entertainment have increased by about 12 percent per year for the past five years, roughly twice the rate of the company's growth in sales. This rate of growth makes travel and entertainment TriTech's fastest growing expense item.

Figure 2

Travel and Entertainment

Expenses Have Increased as a Percentage of Sales

<u>TriTech's Budget Exceeds Competitors'</u>

There are many reasons TriTech has a high travel and entertainment budget. TriTech's main customer is the U.S. Postal Service. The company's mode of selling requires frequent face-to-face contact with the customer, yet corporate headquarters is located on the West Coast, some 2,600 miles from Washington D.C. Furthermore, TriTech's manufacturing operations are widely scattered; facilities are located in San Francisco, Detroit, Boston, and Dallas. To coordinate these operations, corporate management and division personnel must make frequent trips to and from company headquarters.

Although much of TriTech's travel budget is justified, the company spends considerably more on travel and entertainment than its competitors do, as figure 3 indicates. Data supplied by the International Association of Electronics indicates that the typical company in our industry spends approximately $1,900 per month per professional employee on travel and entertainment.(3) TriTech's per capita travel costs for professional employees are running $4,000 per month.

_____________________________3_____________________________

Figure 3

TriTech Spends Over Twice the Industry Average

on Travel and Entertainment

Source: International Association of Electronics, 1988

Spending Has Been Encouraged

Although a variety of factors may contribute to this differential, TriTech's relatively high travel and entertainment budget is at least partially attributable to the company's philosophy and management style. Because many employees do not enjoy business travel, management has tried to make the trips more pleasant by authorizing first-class air fare, luxury hotel accommodation, and full-size rental cars. The sales staff is encouraged to entertain clients at restaurants and to invite them to cultural and sporting events.

The cost of these privileges is easy to overlook, given the weakness of TriTech's system for keeping track of travel and entertainment expenses. The monthly financial records provided to management do not contain a separate category for travel and entertainment; the information is buried under Cost of Goods Sold and under Selling, General, and Administrative Expenses. Each department head is given authority to approve any expense report, regardless of how large it may be. Receipts are not required for expenditures of less than $100. Individuals are allowed to make their own travel arrangements. No one is charged with the responsibility for controlling the company's total spending on travel and entertainment.

GROWING IMPACT ON THE BOTTOM LINE

During the past three years TriTech has enjoyed healthy profits; as a result, there has been relatively little pressure to push for tighter controls over all aspects of the business. However, the situation is changing. Management is projecting flat to declining profits for the next two years, a situation that has prompted the company to search for ways to cut costs. At the same time, rising air fares have increased the impact of travel and entertainment expenses on the company's financial results.

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Lower Profits Underscore Need for Change

The next two years promise to be difficult for TriTech Industries. After several years of steady increases in spending, the U.S. Postal Service is tightening procurement policies for automated mail-handling equipment. Funding for TriTech's main product, the A-12 optical character reader, has been canceled. As a consequence, sales are expected to decline by 15 percent. Although TriTech is negotiating several promising research and development contracts with nongovernment clients, management does not foresee any major procurement for the next two to three years.

At the same time, TriTech is facing cost increases on several fronts. The new production facility now under construction In Salt Lake City, Utah, is behind schedule and over budget. Labor contracts with union workers in Boston and Dallas expire within the next six months, and management anticipates that significant salary and benefits concessions may be necessary to avoid strikes. Moreover, marketing and advertising costs are expected to increase as TriTech attempts to strengthen these activities to better cope with competitive pressures. Given the expected decline in revenues and increase in costs, management projects that profits will fall by 12 percent in the coming fiscal year.

Air Fares Are Rising

Over the next 8 to 12 months, rising air fares can be expected to inflate TriTech's travel and entertainment costs. The recent round of mergers in the airline industry has reduced competition among carriers, thereby reducing the company's incentives to cut ticket prices. Currently, 94 percent of all air traffic in the United States is controlled by just eight airlines, up from 80 percent in 1976 when the airline industry was decontrolled.(4) The decline in competition is expected to lead to higher air fares, particularly for business travelers. According to industry analysts, the airline price wars that followed deregulation are a thing of the past. Any future fare reductions will be aimed at narrow market segments, such as families taking summer vacations. Meanwhile, business travelers who pay full fare will face price increases of up to 15 percent on some routes.(5)

Several factors apart from the reduction in competition are pushing fares up. Perhaps the most significant factor is the increasing sophistication of the airlines pricing strategies. For example, airlines used to discount unfilled seats in the moments before flights departed, on the theory that low-fare passengers were better than none at all. Now, though, travelers who arrive at the gate just before departure are likely to pay full fare. The reason: Airlines discovered that most late arrivals were so desperate to get on the plane they would willingly pay almost any price.(6)

The tendency toward increasing fares also reflects the airlines increasing costs. Higher fuel costs are probably the most important short-term factor, but labor costs are also beginning to rise, as are landing fees, passenger meals, advertising expenses, and debt service costs. Furthermore, the airlines are committed to buying some $95 billion worth of new equipment within the next several years. (7)

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Given the fact that air fares account for 45 percent of TriTech's T&E budget, the trend toward higher ticket prices will have serious consequences on the company's expenses unless management takes action to control these costs.

METHODS FOR REDUCING TRAVEL AND ENTERTAINMENT COSTS

By implementing a number of reforms, management can expect to reduce TriTech's travel and entertainment budget by as much as 40 percent. However, these measures are likely to be unpopular with employees. To gain acceptance for the changes, management will need to sell employees on the need for moderation in travel and entertainment allowances.

Three Ways to Trim Expenses

By researching what other companies are doing to curb travel and entertainment expenses, the accounting department has identified three prominent opportunities that should enable TriTech to save about $4 million annually in travel-related costs.

Institute Tighter Spending Controls

A single individual should be appointed to spearhead the effort to gain control of the travel and entertainment budget. The individual should be familiar with the travel industry and should be well versed in both accounting and data processing. He or she should report to the vice president of administration and should be given the title of director of travel and entertainment. The director's first priorities should be to establish a written travel and entertainment policy and to implement a system for controlling travel and entertainment costs.

TriTech currently has no written policy on travel and entertainment, despite the fact that 73 percent of all firms have such policies.(8) Creating a policy would clarify management's position and serve as a vehicle for communicating the need for moderation. At a minimum, the policy should include the following provisions:

- ♦ All travel and entertainment should be strictly related to business and should be approved in advance.
- ♦ Instead of going first class, employees should make a reasonable effort to economize on air fares, hotels, rental cars, and meals.

The travel and entertainment policy should apply equally to employees at all levels in the organization. No special benefits should be allowed for top executives.

To implement the new policy, TriTech will need to create a system for controlling travel and entertainment expenses. Each department should prepare an annual T&E budget as part of its operating plan. These budgets should be presented in detail so that management can evaluate how travel and entertainment dollars will be spent and recommend appropriate cuts.

To help management monitor performance relative to these budgets, the director of travel should prepare monthly financial statements showing actual travel and entertainment expenditure by department. The system for capturing this information should be computerized and should be capable of identifying individuals who consistently exceed approved spending levels. The recommended average should range between $1,500 and $2,500 per month for each professional employee, depending on the individual's role in the company. Because they make frequent trips, sales and top management personnel can be expected to have relatively high travel expenses.

The director of travel should also be responsible for retaining a business oriented travel service that will schedule all employee business trips and look for the best travel deals, particularly in air fares. In addition to centralizing TriTech's reservation and ticketing activities, the agency will negotiate reduced group rates with hotels and rental car agencies. The agency selected should have offices nationwide so that all TriTech facilities can channel their reservations through the same company. By consolidating its travel planning in this way, TriTech can increase its control over costs and achieve economies of scale.

<u>Reduce Unnecessary Travel and Entertainment</u>

One of the easiest ways to reduce expenses is to reduce the amount of traveling and entertaining that occurs. An analysis of last year's expenditure suggests that as much as 30 percent of TriTech's travel and entertainment is discretionary. The professional staff spent $1.7 million attending seminars and conferences last year. Although some of these gatherings are undoubtedly beneficial, the company could save money by sending fewer representatives to each function and by eliminating some of the less valuable seminars.

Similarly, TriTech could economize on trips between headquarters and divisions by reducing the frequency of such visits and by sending fewer people on each trip. Although there is often no substitute for face-to-face meetings, management could try to resolve more internal issues through telephone contacts and written communication.

TriTech can also reduce spending by urging employees to economize. Instead of flying first class, employees can fly tourist class or take advantage of discount fares. Instead of taking clients to dinner, TriTech personnel can hold breakfast meetings, which tend to be less costly. Rather than ordering a $20 bottle of wine, employees can select a less expensive bottle or dispense with alcohol entirely. People can book rooms at moderately priced hotels and drive smaller rental cars. In general, employees should be urged to spend the company's money as though it were their own.

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Obtain Lowest Rates from Travel Providers

Apart from urging individual employees to economize, TriTech can also save money by searching for the lowest available air fares, hotel rates, and rental car fees. Currently, few TriTech employees have the time or specialized knowledge to seek out travel bargains. When they need to travel, they make the most convenient and most comfortable arrangements. However, if TriTech contracts with a professional travel service, the company will have access to professionals who can be more efficient in obtaining the lower rates from travel providers.

Judging by the experience of other companies, TriTech may be able to trim as much as 30 to 40 percent from the travel budget by looking for bargains in air fares and negotiating group rates with hotels and rental car companies.(9) By guaranteeing to provide selected hotels with a certain amount of business, Weston Computer was able to achieve a 20 percent reduction in its hotel expenses. Now, instead of choosing between 40 or 50 hotels in a city like Chicago, Weston employees stay at one of the 6 or 7 hotels where the company has negotiated a corporate rate.(10) TriTech should be able to achieve similar economies by analyzing its travel patterns, identifying frequently visited locations, and selecting a few hotels that are willing to reduce rates in exchange for guaranteed business. At the same time, the company should be able to save up to 40 percent on rental car charges by negotiating a corporate rate.

The possibilities for economizing are promising, but it's worth noting that making the best arrangements is a complicated undertaking, requiring many trade-offs. The airlines currently offer 4 million air fares, and on any given day, as many as 1 million of them might change in some way.(11) When booking a particular reservation, the travel agent might have to choose between 20 or 25 options with varying prices and provisions. The best fares might not always be the lowest. Indirect flights are often less expensive than direct flights, but they take longer and may end up costing more in lost work time. Similarly, the cheapest tickets may have to be booked 30 days in advance, often an impossibility in business travel. Also, discount tickets may be nonrefundable, which is a real negative if the trip has to be canceled at the last minute. TriTech is currently not equipped to make these and other trade-offs. However, by employing a business-oriented travel service, the company will have access to computerized systems that can optimize its choices.

8

The Impact of Reforms

By implementing tighter controls, reducing unnecessary expenses, and negotiating more favorable rates, TriTech Industries should be able to reduce its travel and entertainment budget significantly. As Table 1 illustrates, the combined savings should be in the neighborhood of $4 million, although the precise figures are somewhat difficult to project. Reductions in air fares and hotel accommodations are the most important source of savings, accounting for about $2.3 million.

Table 1

TriTech Can Trim Travel and Entertainment Costs by an Estimated $4 Million per year

Source of Savings	Amount Saved
More efficient scheduling and selection of airline reservations	$1,400,400
Preferred rates on hotels	900,000
Fewer trips to conferences	700,000
Reduction in interdivisional travel	425,000
Reduced rates on rental cars	375,000
More economical choices by individuals	200,000
TOTAL SAVINGS	$4,000,000

Source: Accounting department estimates based on internal data and experience of other companies.

To achieve the economies outlined in the table, TriTech will incur expenses associated with hiring a director of travel and implementing a travel and entertainment cost-control system. These costs are projected at $60,000: $55,000 per year in salary and benefits for the new employee and a one-time expense of $5,000 associated with the cost-control system. The cost of retaining a full service travel agency will be negligible because agencies receive a commission from travel providers rather than a fee from clients.

The measures required to achieve these savings are likely to be unpopular with employees. TriTech personnel are accustomed to generous travel and entertainment allowances, and they are likely to resent having these privileges curtailed. To alleviate their disappointment, management should make a determined effort to explain why the changes are necessary. The director of corporate communication should be asked to develop a multifaceted campaign that will communicate the importance of curtailing travel and entertainment costs. In addition, management should set a positive example by adhering strictly to the new policies. To maintain morale, the limitations should apply equally to employees at all levels in the organization.

9

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TriTech Industries is currently spending $10 million per year on travel and entertainment. Although much of this spending is justified, the company's costs appear to be high relative to competitors', mainly because TriTech has been generous with its travel benefits.

TriTech's liberal approach to travel and entertainment was understandable during years of high profitability; however, the company is facing the prospect of declining profits for the next several years. Management is therefore motivated to cut costs in all areas of the business. Reducing T&E spending is particularly important because the impact of these costs on the bottom line will increase as a result of fare increases in the airline industry.

TriTech should be able to reduce travel and entertainment costs by about 40 percent by taking three important steps:

1. Institute tighter spending controls. Management should hire a director of travel and entertainment who will assume overall responsibility for T&E activities. Within the next six months, this individual should develop a written travel policy, institute a T&E budgeting and cost-control system, and retain a professional, business- oriented travel agency that will optimize arrangements with travel providers.

2. Reduce unnecessary travel and entertainment. TriTech should encourage employees to economize on travel and entertainment spending. Management can accomplish this by authorizing fewer trips and by urging employees to be more conservative in their spending.

3. Obtain lowest rates from travel providers. TriTech should also focus on obtaining the best rates on airline tickets, hotel rooms, and rental cars. By channeling all arrangements through a professional travel agency, the company can optimize its choices and gain clout in negotiating preferred rates.

Because these measures may be unpopular with employees, management should make a concerted effort to explain the importance of reducing travel costs. The director of corporate communication should be given responsibility for developing a plan to communicate the need for employee cooperation.

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3. Analysis of Costs in the Electronics Industry (Washington, D.C. International Association of Electronics, 1990), 23.

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7. "Cutting Costs While Flying Frequently," Accountancy, June 1993, 55.

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Chapter 19

Managing Data and Using Graphics

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- When to Use Visual Aids
- Selecting a Suitable Visual Aid
- Introducing Visual Aids in the Text

You have been investigating an issue for the last two weeks. Your desk is littered with folders and stacks of paper pertaining to your report. By now you have sketched out an organizational pattern for the report, but you don't know how you are going to present the mass of data you have collected.

A report's success depends not only an how well you have accessed information through research, but also on how well you have presented it. What techniques can you use to make the data comprehensible? How can you make important points stand out and complex data easy to understand? Your computer can draw any type of graph you want, but you have to decide what type of illustration you want and where you want to place it.

WHEN TO USE VISUAL AIDS

To answer the "when," we have to explore the "why": why do business professionals use visual aids in reports and presentations?

Visual aids help communicate the subject matter clearly. Imagine reading a paragraph of text describing your company's share of sales and your competitor's share of sales per sales region. It would be unreadable and incomprehensible. If the same information were tabulated, the information would not only be crystal clear, it would also be easy for the reader to make the necessary comparisons of differences in market share. Visual aids thus clarify and simplify data.

Since visual aids tend to get the reader's attention, they also function as attention-getters. As a result, visual aids can also be used to emphasize important material and, consequently, to persuade the reader to the writer's point of view.

So when should we use visual aids? When they strengthen our material by clarifying, simplifying, or emphasizing it, and when they attract the reader's attention for a specific purpose. Figure 19.1 sums up the occasions when we should use visual aids.

As the figure indicates, visual aids can also be used to impress the audience. At the same time, bear in mind that you should not overuse visual aids. Too many visual aids

Figure 19.1: When to Use Visual Aids

PURPOSE	APPLICATION
To clarify	Support text descriptions of "graphic" topics; quantitative or numerical information; explanations of trends, descriptions of procedures, relationships, locations, or composition of an item.
To simplify	Break complicated descriptions into components that can be depicted with conceptual models, flowcharts, organization charts, or diagrams.
To emphasize	Call attention to particularly important points by illustrating them with line, bar, and pie charts.
To summarize	Review major points in the narrative by providing a chart or table that sums up the data
To reinforce	Present information in visual and written form to increase reader's retention
To attract	Make material seem more interesting by decorating the cover or title page and by breaking up the text with visual aids.
To impress	Build credibility by putting ideas in visual form to convey the impression of authenticity and precision
To unify	Depict the relationship among points - for example, with a flowchart

for impressing or attracting the audience might distract your readers and break the continuity of the main argument of your report. At all times, remember that illustrative material only supplements your text, it does not replace it. So put yourself in your reader's shoes and exercise your judgement when using visual aids.

To determine whether a visual presentation is appropriate and effective, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does the visual presentation contribute to the overall understanding of the subject? Would the visual assist the reader?
2. Can the material be covered adequately in words rather than in visual ways? Graphics should be saved for things that are difficult to communicate in words alone.
3. Will the written text add meaning to the visual display? (This point will be discussed later in the chapter).
4. Is the visual easily understood? Extreme use of color, complicated symbols, confusing art techniques, and unusual combinations of typefaces only detract from the impact of the material presented.

SELECTING A SUITABLE VISUAL AID

In reports, the most commonly used visual aids are tables, bar charts, line charts, pie charts, maps, flowcharts, diagrams, and photographs. You should choose the one that best communicates your message to your readers.

Tables

When you have to present detailed, numerical information, use a table, a systematic arrangement of data in columns and rows. Tables are ideal when the audience needs the facts - all the facts - and when the information would be either difficult or clumsy to handle in the main text.

Every table includes vertical columns and horizontal rows, with useful headings along the top and side. Figure 19.2 depicts an effective table layout.

When preparing a numerical table, be sure to identify the units you are expressing: rupees, dollars, percentages, price per kilo etc. All items in a column are expressed in the same unit.

Figure 19.2: Combined First-Year Costs for Three Sites

	Location (Figure in Rupees)		
Cost	**Main**	**Lidder**	**Palm Tree**
Lease	90,000	75,000	72,000
Property tax	14,000	22,000	22,000
Trucking	64,000	60,000	64,000
Preparation	30,000	50,000	30,000
Totals	198,000	207,000	188,000

Real Property on Main is to be reassessed in March. A 50-percent increase to about Rs. 21,000 is anticipated.

Bar Charts

The "simple bar chart" (also called single-range bar chart) is an effective graphic device for quantities. The length of the bars, whether they are horizontal or vertical, indicates quantity, as shown in Figure 19.3.

Multi-range bar chart. The "multiple-range bar chart," also called comparative or cluster bar chart, is useful for expressing data that change over time. The multiple-range bar chart is especially effective in comparing more than one quantity (set of data) at each point along the x-axis, Figure 19.4 compares the frequency of reported injuries at three plants over an entire year.

Figure 19.3: Simple Bar Chart

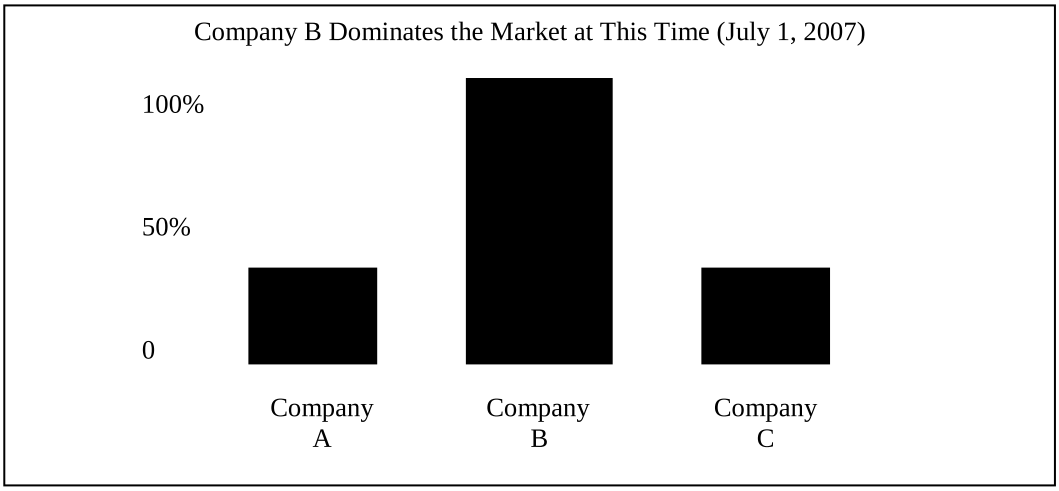
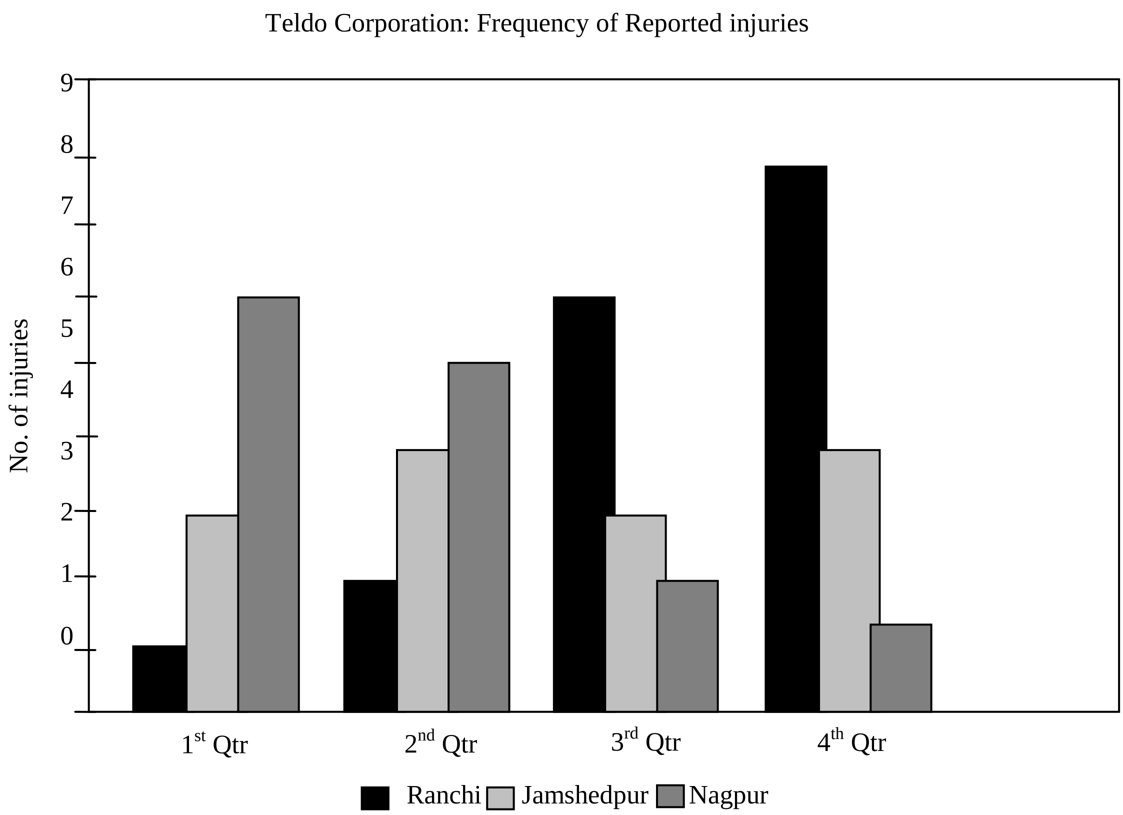


Figure 19.4: Multiple-Range Bar Chart is Useful for Comparing More than One Quantity over Time



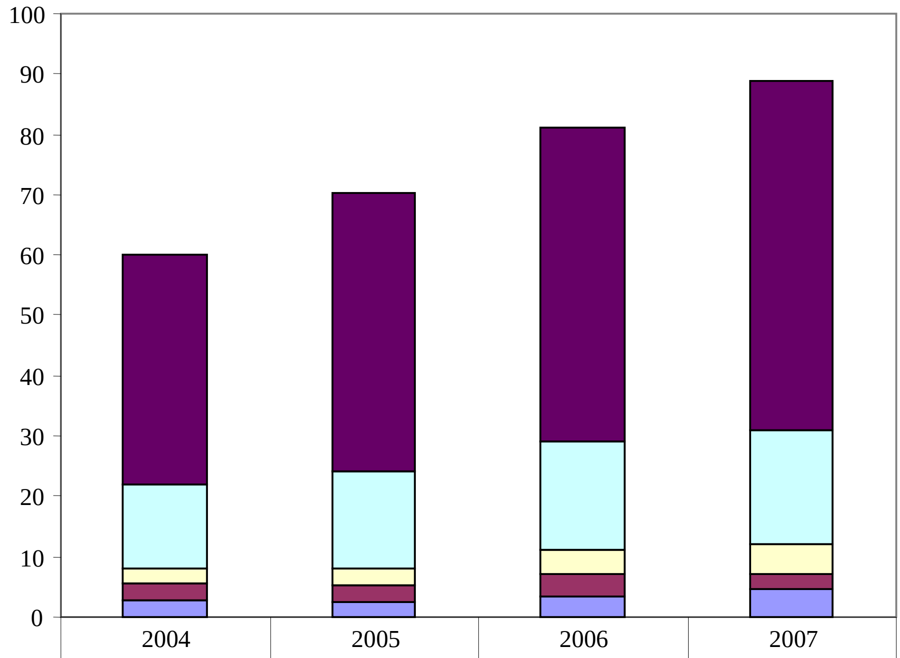
Stacked-bar chart. The “stacked-bar chart,” also called component, 100 percent, or segmented bar chart, is shown in figure 19.5. When you want to show how different facts (components) contribute to a total figure, the stacked-bar chart is desirable. This graphic is particularly useful when components for more than one time period are being compared. Figure 19.5 shows the change in the five components of the results of operations over a four-year period.

Gantt Chart

A gantt chart is a horizontal bar chart that graphically displays time relationships. Time is displayed on the horizontal axis and tasks are shown on the vertical axis. The length of the bars depicts the amount of time they represent.

Figure 19.5: Stacked-Bar Chart Shows How Proportional Relationships Change over Time

Results of Operations: Fiscal year 2004-2007



	2004	2005	2006	2007
Costs of Good Sold	38	46.2	52	58
Operating Expenses	14	16.2	18	19
Interest Expenses	2.6	2.6	4	5
Income Taxes	2.67	2.8	3.5	2.5
Net Income	2.8	2.5	3.5	4.5

Net Income Income Taxes Interest Expenses Operating Expenses Costs of Good Sold

Gantt charts provide a method for determining the sequence and particular actions that need to be taken to achieve a given objective. In complex operations, they provide managers a useful tool for planning, allocating and scheduling resources. It is particularly valuable in scheduling because any gaps in a schedule are very conspicuous. When managers face complex situations that require numerous resources over a period of time, and if the operations have more than one phase, a Gantt chart can be invaluable.

Take a look at Figure 19.6. To manage a festival that comprises five phases (pre parade, parade, game, party, post party), four units have been assigned the task of crowd control and traffic control.

Because of the time bar, the manager is able to ensure that no unit is overworked; and since the time period for each phase is clearly indicated, he can schedule more units for peak hours.

Line Charts

Line charts, such as the one shown in Figure 19.7, depict changes in quantitative data over time and illustrate trends. Unlike bar charts, which show only the total amount for a time period, line charts show variations within each time period.

When constructing line charts, keep these general guidelines in mind:

1. Use the vertical axis for amount and the horizontal axis for time.
2. Begin the vertical axis at zero.
3. Divide the vertical and horizontal scales into equal increments. The vertical or amount increments, however, need not be the same as the horizontal or time increments as long as the line or lines drawn will have reasonable slopes. (Unrealistic scales might produce startling slopes that could mislead readers).

"Area Charts," also called cumulative line charts or surface charts, are similar to component bar charts because they show how different factors contribute to the total. The area chart is especially useful when you want to illustrate changes in these components over time. For example, the area chart in Figure 19.8 illustrates the change in the components of a company's capital over a period of time.

The cumulative total of contributed capital, retained earnings, long-term debt, and short-term debt is illustrated by the top line in the chart. The amount of each component can be estimated by visual assessment; labeling the vertical axis on the left and right sides helps the reader estimate amounts. Colors/shading/patterns add visual appeal and aid the reader in distinguishing the components.

Pie Charts

Like stacked-bar charts and area charts, pie charts show how the parts of a whole are distributed. As the name indicates, the whole is represented as a pie, with the parts becoming slices of the pie. Pie charts are effective for showing percentages (parts of a whole), but they are ineffective in showing quantitative totals or comparisons. Bars are used for those purposes.

The pie chart in Figure 19.9 illustrates the information reported on a company's income statement. The pie depicts sales; the slices represent various types of expenses.

Here are some generally used guidelines for constructing pie charts:

1. Position the largest slice to be emphasized at the twelve o' clock position. Working clockwise, place the other slices in descending order of size or some other logical order of presentation. (Unfortunately, some software programs will not allow you to organize the slices in the way you want.)
2. Label each slice and include information about the quantitative size (percentage, dollars, rupees, square feet, etc.) of each slice.
3. Draw attention to one or more slices if you wish by (a) exploding the slice(s) to be emphasized, (i.e. removing it from immediate contact with the pie) or (b) displaying and printing on the slice(s) to be emphasized. When exploding a slice, place it in such a way that it doesn't intrude into the title.

Figure 19.6: Gantt Chart For Scheduling Activities

Schedule of Duties for New Year's Day Festivities

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="6">PREPARADE</td><td colspan="6">PARADE</td><td colspan="6">GAME</td><td colspan="3">PARTY</td><td colspan="4">POST PARTY</td></tr>
<tr><td>Time</td><td>24:00</td><td>1:00</td><td>2:00</td><td>3:00</td><td>4:00</td><td>5:00</td><td>6:00</td><td>7:00</td><td>8:00</td><td>9:00</td><td>10:00</td><td>11:00</td><td>12:00</td><td>13:00</td><td>14:00</td><td>15:00</td><td>16:00</td><td>17:00</td><td>1800</td><td>19:00</td><td>20:00</td><td>21:00</td><td>22:00</td><td>23:00</td><td>24:00</td><td>1:00</td><td>2:00</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit 1</td><td colspan="5">CROWD CONTROL</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="6">CROWD CONTROL</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit 2</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="10">CROWD CONTROL</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit 3</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="3">TRAFFIC CONTROL</td><td colspan="7">CROWD CONTROL</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Unit 4</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="4">TRAFFIC CONTROL</td><td></td><td colspan="5">CROWD CONTROL</td><td></td><td></td><td colspan="7"></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Figure 19.7: Line Chart Expresses Changes over Time

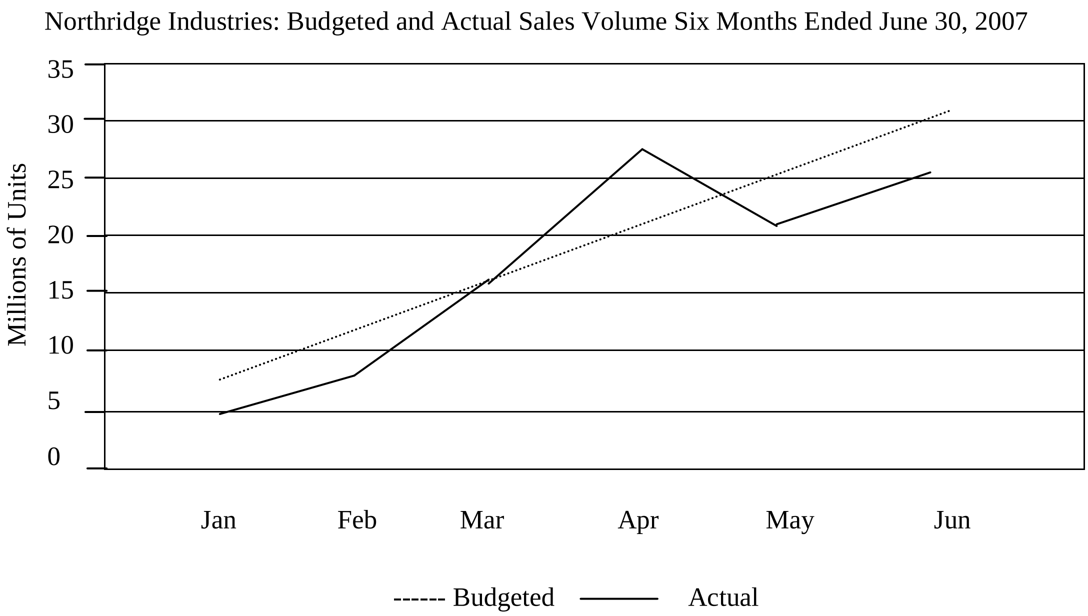


Figure 19.8: Area Chart Shows How Proportional Relationship Change over Time

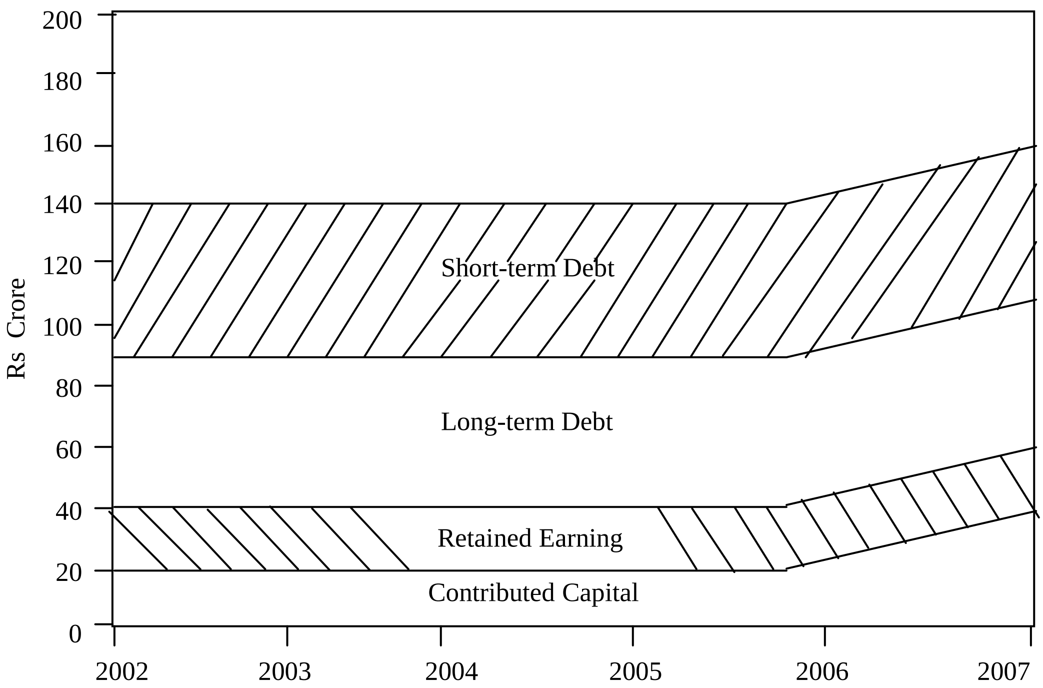
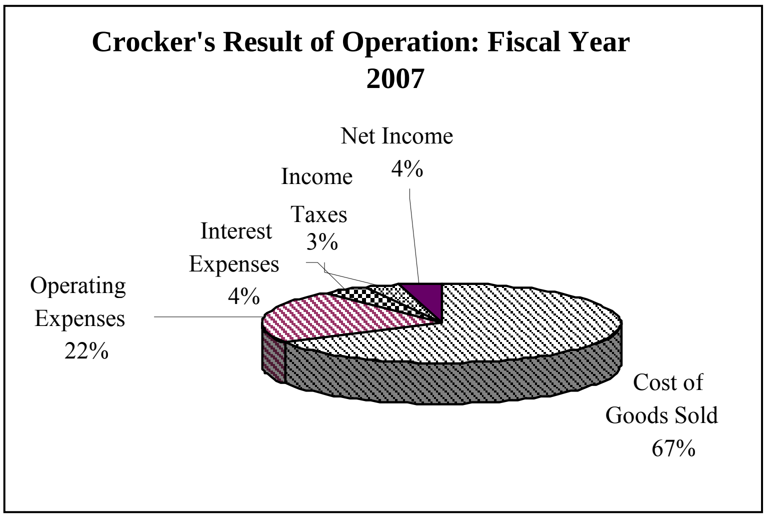


Figure 19.9: Pie Chart with Three Dimensional Effect Shows Percentages of a Whole



4. Use color or patterns to help the reader differentiate among the slices and to add to appeal.

For dramatic effect, many periodicals and reports vary from these general rules. So use your own judgment when constructing a pie chart.

Pictograms

A pictogram uses pictures to illustrate numerical relationship. For example, in place of a simple bar chart, coins can be used instead of bars to depict additions to personal savings. However, pictograms can be more dramatic than meaningful if they aren't planned properly. For example, doubling the height and width of a picture increases the total area four times. Care must be taken to ensure that all symbols are of the same size so that true relationships are not distorted.

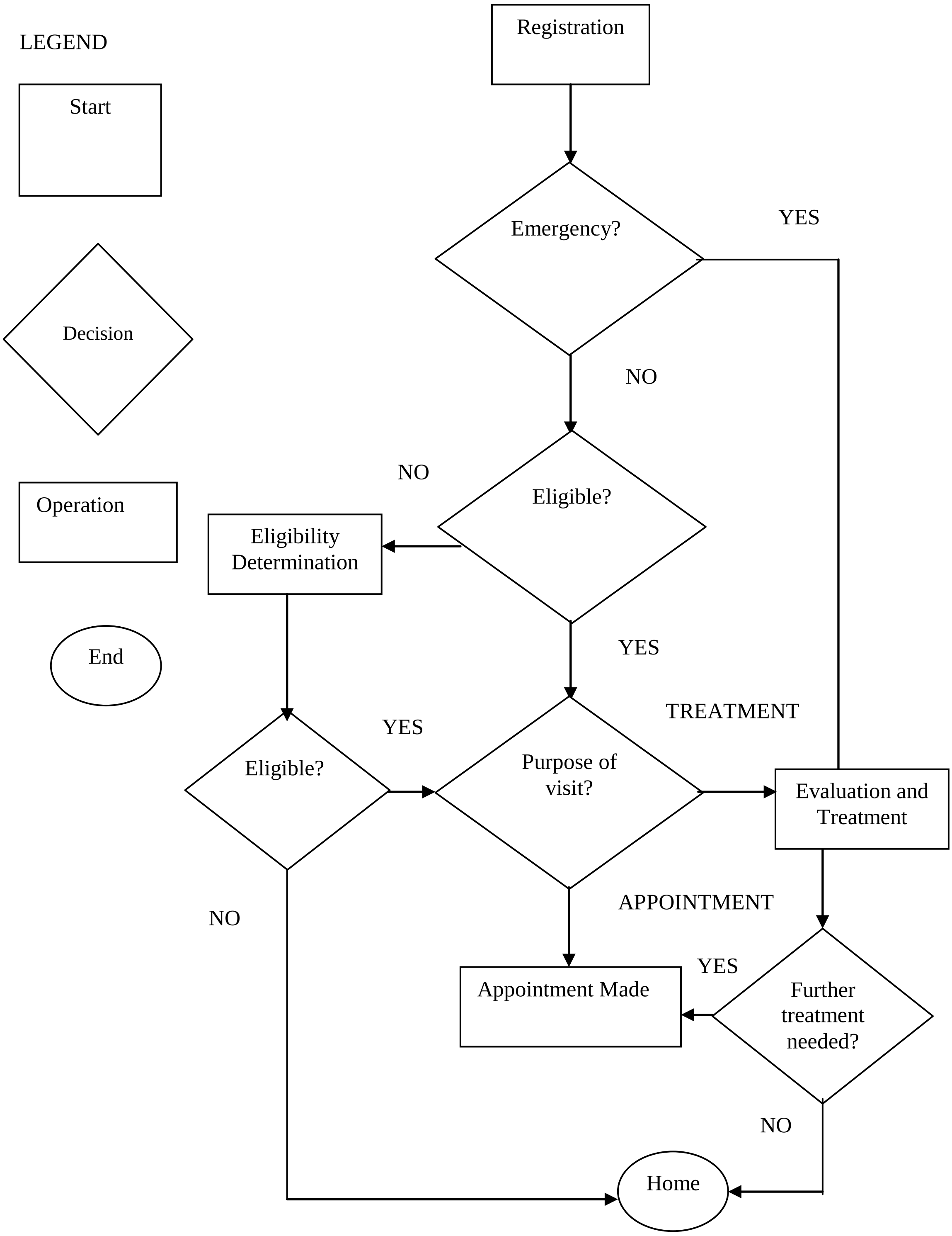
Maps

Maps help readers visualize geographic relationships and are especially useful when the reader may not be familiar with the geography discussed. A map can, for example, effectively present sales growth by state and show the location of the home office, distribution centers, and retail stores within the geographic region. By giving the information visually, a map eliminates the difficulty of explaining the information in words. In addition to being less confusing, a map is also more concise and interesting than a written message would be.

Flowcharts and Organization Charts

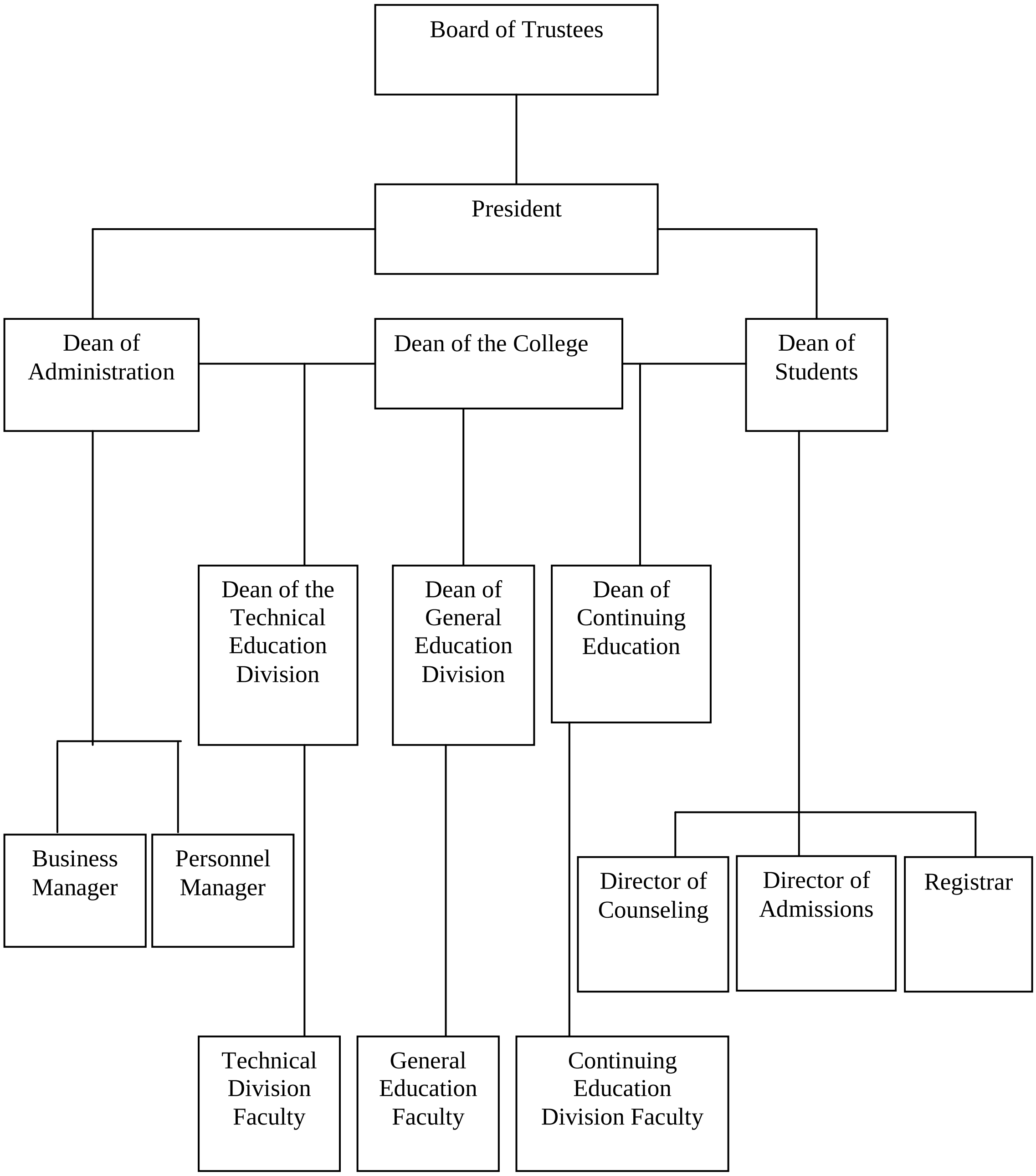
If you need to show physical or conceptual relationships rather than numerical ones, you might want to use a flowchart or an organization chart. Flowcharts are indispensable when illustrating processes, procedures, and relationships. A health center administrator can easily explain the processing of clients through the flowchart in Figure 19.10.

Figure 19.10: Flow of Clients through Health Center



An organization chart illustrates the positions, units, or functions of an organization and the way they interrelate. An organization's normal communication channels are almost impossible to describe without the help of a chart like the one in Figure 19.11.

Figure 19.11: Organization Chart
Administration of Arts College



Other Visual Aids

Floor plans, photographs, diagrams, cartoons, blueprints and lists of various sorts may be included in reports. The increased availability of graphics and sophisticated drawing software is leading to the inclusion of these more complex visuals in reports and oral presentations. Because managers can quickly prepare these visuals themselves, these sophisticated graphics are being used increasingly for internal reports.

Frequently, you will have some material that must be included in the report, but would make the discussion/argument unwieldy. In this case, the material might be placed in an appendix and only referred to in the report.

INTRODUCING VISUAL AIDS IN THE TEXT

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the visual aids supplement the text, and the text adds meaning to the visual aid. The text and the visuals are partners in the communication process. Under no conditions should a visual be included in the report without being referred to in the textual material. If readers come to illustrations in the text before they have been told about them, they will draw their own inferences and conclusions from the visual. But if they have been informed about the visual and its implications, the visual will supplement what has been said. In addition, the text can direct the reader's attention to that aspect of the illustration that the writer wishes them to take special note of. In other words, visual aids have to be introduced to and interpreted for the readers by the text. This is also referred to as "integration" of the visual within the text.

Note how the language in the following sentence introduces the visual:

About two-thirds of the consumers preferred to shop in suburban areas than in the city, as shown in Figure 1.

This sentences uses introductory phrasing: "as shown in Figure 1." It also interprets the visual by drawing the reader's attention to the point that the writer wishes to emphasize: "About two-thirds of the consumers preferred to shop in suburban areas than in the city". Introduction and interpretation can be achieved in one sentence immediately above the visual or they can be split up. For example, the figure could have simply been introduced, then followed by the graph, which would be immediately followed by the interpretation. Ideally, the "figure" should be placed as close to the text as possible. If this cannot be achieved, they do not split the introduction and interpretation portions of the text.

Although your report may include tables, graphs, maps, and even photographs, you'll find organization easier and writing about the illustrations more effective if you label all items as "Figure" followed by a number and number them consecutively. Some report writers like to label tables consecutively as "Table 1," etc., and graphs and charts consecutively in another sequence as "Graph 1" etc. When this dual numbering system is used, readers of the report may become confused if they come upon a sentence saying, "Evidence presented in Tables 3 and 4 and Graph 2 supports....." Both writers and readers appreciate the single numbering system, which makes the sentence read, "Evidence presented in Figures 3, 4 and 5 supports....."

THINK ABOUT IT

Visual aids are illustrations in tabular, graphic, schematic, or pictorial form. They are used to reduce, simplify and clarify lengthy verbal descriptions and to emphasize key points. Protecting oneself against a deluge of data through good data management and use of tables and graphs has a great deal to do with effective report preparation.

The skilled report writer knows what graphics to use and when to use them. When people read about number relationships and ratios, they understand better when they have visualized in their minds what is involved. This visualization is made easy when tables and graphs complement the written words.

Tables are commonly used to present detailed, specific information; line, bar, and pie charts are used to clarify and dramatize trends and numerical relationships; pie charts are used to indicate distribution; and flowcharts illustrate a sequence of events.

Although this discussion has emphasized the use of visuals in written reports, these visuals can also be used to support oral presentations. The writer of a report will quite likely be asked to make an oral presentation of the written report.

Chapter 20

Review of Writing Skills

In this chapter, we will discuss:

- Sentence Structure
- Punctuation
- Paragraphs
- Compositions
- Steps in Essay Writing

The umbfruds brottled the geroops.

Does this sentence make sense to you? At first read, perhaps not. But look at it again. Can we not at least infer something from it? We can infer that the *umbfruds* (whatever or whoever they are) did something to the *geroops* (they may be an exotic species of water plants or travelers from distant galaxies – we don't know what). They brottled (whatever that means) them. Thus, even though you don't understand the meaning of all the words, the sentence does convey an idea – even if it is as vague as *'Someone did something to someone else,'* in the same way as say, 'The girl pushed the boy.' Now, look at this example:

Boy never tomorrow eating fire well.

You understand the meaning of all the words in this word cluster. Visually, this cluster of words looks like a sentence. It starts with a capital letter, ends with a full-stop. But no one would call it a sentence. Why? Because this word group doesn't convey any meaning.

There is no recognizable relationship between the words of the second sentence. On the contrary, the first example does have a structure, for the words have an identifiable relationship. Thus, a sentence, which is the basic unit of writing, is primarily a group of words that are so arranged, as to convey a complete meaning or make a complete statement. Words put together randomly cannot convey a meaning. To convey meaning these words must be arranged according to certain rules of grammar. In other words, if a sentence is to make sense, it must have a proper (grammatical) structure. Let us now look at some aspects of sentence structure in greater detail.

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

You all know that a sentence can broadly be divided into two parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject part names things, while the predicate part makes an assertion about or describes an action involving the subject.

e.g.

Subject	*Predicate*
The sun	*shines.*
The fire	*destroyed the house.*

Now, each word in these sentences has its own function in contributing to the overall meaning of the sentence. Depending on these functions, a sentence has different parts of speech or word classes, that are shown in figure 20.1 As you are already familiar with these basic parts of speech, we won't deal with them at length. We will only touch on some basic points, which will help you to steer clear of common errors that creep into written language.

1. Make sure you state the subject of each sentence, unless it is an imperative sentence (e.g. *Drop that book*), where the subject (you) is understood and therefore left out. Some people write, *"Will not attend the party,"* when the subject (I) is understood. That is all very well for a telegram, but in ordinary written communication, it is much better to say, *"I will not attend the party."*

2. Keep to the normal subject-verb-complement sequence as far as possible.

We	*opposed the move*	*for three reasons.*
Subject	Verb	Complement

If you rephrase this to put the complement before the verb and the subject, you will have to say:

Figure 20.1: The Parts of Speech

The parts of speech

Nouns – name of persons, places, things, ideas, or qualities: *Roosevelt, girl, Scbuylkill River, coastline, Koran, table, strife, happiness.*

Pronouns – usually substitute for nouns and function as nouns: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they, myself, this, that, who.*

Verbs – express actions, occurrences, or states of being: *run, burn, inflate, become, be.*

Adjectives – describe or modify nouns or pronouns: *gentle, small, helpful.*

Adverbs – describe or modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, or whole groups of words: *gently, helpfully, almost, really, someday.*

Prepositions – relate nouns or pronouns to other words in a sentence: *about, at, down, for, of, with*.

Conjunctions – link words, phrases, and clauses. **Coordinating conjunctions and correlative** conjunctions link words, phrases, or clauses of equal importance: *and, but, or, nor, both.... and, not only ... but also, either... or*. **Subordinating conjunctions** introduce subordinate clauses and link them to main clauses: *because, if, whenever.*

Interjections – express feeling or command attention, either alone or in a sentence: *hey, oh, darn, wow.*

Source: H. Ramsey Fowler, Jane .E. Aaron, and Kay Limburg. The Little, Brown Handbook 5th Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1992)

There were three reasons for our opposing the move. This sentence has three drawbacks: it slows down the reading, presents a less vivid picture and employs more words than are used in the normal sequence. The word ‘there’ is called an expletive – a filler word that has no real meaning in the sentence. Look at this sentence:

It is imperative that we talk to the policeman.

Can you identify the expletive in this sentence? Remove the expletive and see if you can rephrase the sentence to make it read better.

3. Do not put unrelated ideas in the same sentence.

My dog needs a haircut and the old lady living next door wears false teeth.

These ideas have little in common and should certainly not be put together in the same sentence.

4. Pronouns, adverbs, phrases and clauses should always be placed near the words they modify. Misplaced modifiers – those that appear to modify the wrong referent – pose a common problem. Look at these examples.

A) According to police records, many dogs are killed by automobiles and trucks roaming unleashed.

This sentence suggests that it is the automobiles and trucks that roam unleashed. The correct sentence should read: *According to police records, many dogs roaming unleashed are killed by automobiles and trucks.*

B) *I came to enjoy flying over time.* In the space-time framework in which we function, this sounds nonsensical, doesn’t it?

The correct version would be: *Over time I came to enjoy flying.*

Limiting modifiers like *only, almost, even, hardly, rarely, etc.* must be carefully placed, in order to convey the correct message. Changing the position of a limiting modifier completely changes the meaning of the sentence. The following example will show you how.

Figure 20.2: Major internal sentence punctuation

The use of commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, parenthesis

Sentences with two main clauses

The bus stopped, but no one got off.

The bus stopped; no one got off.

The bus stopped; however, no one got off.

The mechanic replaced the battery, the distributor cap, and the starter; but still the car would not start.

His duty was clear: he had to report the theft.

Introductory elements

Modifiers

After the argument was over, we laughed at ourselves.

Racing over the plain, the gazelle escaped the lion.

To dance in the contest, he had to tape his knee.

Suddenly, the door flew open.

With 125 passengers aboard, the plane was half full.

In 1983 he won the Nobel Prize.

Absolute phrases

Its wing broken, the bird hopped around on the ground.

Interrupting and concluding elements

Nonrestrictive modifiers

Jim’s car, which barely runs, has been impounded.

We consulted the dean, who had promised to help us.

The boy, like his sister, wants to be a pilot.

They moved across the desert, shielding their eyes from the sun.

The men do not speak to each other, although they share a car.

Nonrestrictive appositives

Bergen’s daughter, Candice, became an actress.

The residents of three counties – Suffolk, Springfield, and Morison – were urged to evacuate.

Father demanded one promise: that we not lie to him.

Restrictive modifiers

The car that hit mine was uninsured.

We consulted a teacher who had promised to help us.

The boy in the black hat is my cousin.

They were surprised to find the desert teeming with life.

The men do not speak to each other because they are feuding.

Restrictive appositives

Shaw’s play Saint Joan was performed last year.

Their sons Tony, William, and Steve all chose military careers, leaving only Joe to run the family business.

Parenthetical expressions

We suspect, however, that he will not come.

Jan is respected by many people – including me.

George Balanchine (1904-1983) was a brilliant choreographer.

Absolute phrases

The bird, its wing broken, hopped about on the ground.

The bird hopped about on the ground, its wing broken.

Phrases expressing contrast

The humidity, not just the heat, gives me headaches.

My headaches are caused by the humidity, not just the heat.

Concluding summaries and explanations

The movie opened to bad reviews: the characters were judged shallow and unrealistic.

We dined on gumbo and jambalaya – a Cajun feast.

Items in a series

Three or more items

Chimpanzees, gorillas, orangutans, and gibbons are all apes.

The cities singled out for praise were Birmingham, Alabama; Lincoln, Nebraska; Austin, Texas; and Troy, New York.

Two or more adjectives before a noun

Dingy, smelly clothes decorated their room.

The luncheon consisted of one tiny watercress sandwich..

Introductory series

Appropriateness, accuracy, and necessity – these criteria should govern your selection of words.

Concluding series

Every word should be appropriate, accurate, and necessary.

Every word should meet three criteria: appropriateness, accuracy and necessity.

Pay attention to your words – to their appropriateness, their accuracy, and their necessity.

Source: H. Ramsey Fowler, Jane .E. Aaron, and Kay Limburg The Little Brown, Handbook 5th Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1992)

Sentence	Meaning
A. I only eat fish.	*I only eat fish. I don't play basketball with it.*
B. I eat only fish.	*I eat only fish. Nothing else.*
C. Only I eat fish.	*Only I eat fish. Nobody else does.*

Make sure a modifier modifies only one element in a sentence. A modifier that seems confusingly to refer to either of two words is known as a squinting modifier.

E.g.: We decided immediately to buy the car.

Here, it is difficult for the reader to decide whether 'immediately' modifies 'decided' or the phrase 'to buy the car.' That's why it squints. You don't know where it is looking.

The correct version would be either of these two sentences, depending on what the writer intended to convey:

We immediately decided to buy the car.

We decided to buy the car immediately.

Certain sentences are burdened with modifiers that do not sensibly modify anything in the sentence. Such modifiers are called dangling modifiers. Look at this sentence:

Passing the building, the vandalism was clearly visible.

Here the modifying phrase, *passing the building,* seems to modify vandalism. But vandalism does not pass buildings. Who was passing the building? Who saw the vandalism? Obviously, the modifier has an implied or unnamed subject, which the reader assumes is the same as in the main clause that follows. When the two subjects are not the same, the modifier "dangles," unconnected to the rest of the sentence and the sentence makes little sense. Revised, the sentence would read: *As we passed the building, the vandalism was clearly visible.*

5. While expressing related ideas, use similar grammatical form or parallel construction. Look at this sentence:

The personnel manager is concerned with <u>selecting</u> the right worker, <u>appropriate</u> orientation and the worker's progress.

Here the three clauses that express the three related ideas have different constructions. The correct sentence would be:

The personnel manager is concerned with selecting the right worker, providing appropriate orientation, and determining the worker's progress.

6. Avoid platitudes. A platitude is a direct statement of an idea that almost anyone would know already:

1) Team members should cooperate with one another.

2) Employees like to be well paid.

Since the message is so elementary, a reader often feels insulted by these sentences and this hampers his receptivity to the rest of the message.

7. Always use the active voice, unless you feel that the passive voice is more appropriate. Look at these two sentences:

1) Sheila wrote the book.

2) The book was written by Sheila.

The first sentence, which uses the active voice, draws attention to Sheila. The second one, the passive sentence, draws attention to the book. Because they focus attention on the doer, active sentences are more vivid and therefore preferred in business writing. But the passive voice is used in the following situations:

a) To emphasize the object of action more than the doer:

Dinner is being served.

b) To avoid an accusing tone:

Three errors <u>have been made</u> on this page. This sounds better than *"You made three errors on this page."*

c) To avoid revealing names:

The new scheme <u>has been criticized</u>.

PUNCTUATION

Read this sentence:

Prices having risen rapidly the government debated a price freeze.

Perplexed? Anyone would be. Why? What is missing from this sentence? Appropriate punctuation? Well, let's put in a comma, and see how the same sentence reads:

Prices having risen rapidly, the government debated a price freeze.

Now the sentence makes better sense, doesn't it?

Writers use punctuation marks to help readers extract meaning from a sentence, in much the same way that readers use pauses and voice inflection. (See figure 20.2). Clarity is a primary consideration. Convention is another. Let us look at the different ways in which the most common punctuation marks are used.

1. **Apostrophe** Use an apostrophe

a) To form the possessive singular: add an apostrophe and an s:

bird *bird's*

lawyer *lawyer's*

b) To form the possessive plural: add an apostrophe after the s:

writers *writers'*

girls *girls'*

c) To form the possessive of a proper noun in which the last letter is not an s: add an apostrophe and an s:

Ashok's companion

Hema's school

d) To form the possessive singular when the last letter in a proper noun is an s. Here, the place of the apostrophe is determined by the number of syllables in the noun. If the singular form of a one-syllable noun ends in s, then the possessive is formed by adding an apostrophe and an s:

Das *Das's*

Vyas *Vyas's*

When the singular form of a proper noun has more than one syllable and ends in an s or an s sound, then the possessive is formed by adding only an apostrophe:

Haridas *Haridas'*

Gonzalvez *Gonzalvez'*

e) In expressions that indicate ownership. The apostrophe indicates that a preposition has been left out:

last year's schemes (schemes of last year)

f) When the noun presents time or distance in a possessive manner:

an hour's wait

a mile's journey

g) When a noun precedes a gerund:

Mr. Prasad's receiving the promotion caused...

h) To indicate joint or separate ownership:

To show joint ownership, add an apostrophe and an s to the last name only:

Suresh and Ajay's room overlooked the sea.

To indicate separate ownership, add an apostrophe and an s to each name:

Suresh's and Ajay's rooms overlooked the sea.

Do not use the apostrophe to form the possessive of a pronoun:

yours – not *your's*

ours – not *our's*

2. **Comma** Use a comma

a) Between coordinate clauses joined by and, but, for, and other coordinate conjunctions:

She wanted to twist her little sister's arm, but was afraid her mother would clobber her.

b) After participial phrases or dependent clauses: *Believing that his luck would continue to hold out, the trickster sought to cheat more people.*

Sentences that begin with prepositions or such words *as if,* as and *when* almost always need a comma:

If you can come to the office, please plan to be here at 11 a.m.

When I reached her house, the door was locked.

c) To separate words in a series:

She wore earrings, a nose-ring, a necklace, and anklets.

d) Between two separate adjectives that modify the same noun:

We want good-looking, well-educated, docile brides. Do not use a comma when the second adjective may be considered a part of the noun that follows:

He was a good public speaker.

e) To separate a clause that is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence, from the rest of the sentence:

Mr. Tokomaro, who is a successful Japanese businessman, is arriving tomorrow.

f) To separate parenthetical expressions from the rest of the sentence:

Asha, hiding her sense of dismay, greeted her mother-in-law cordially.

g) Before and after the year in the month-day-year format:

On August 2, 1999, Mr. Patil made the last payment.

h) After a direct address:

Manohar, I want you to listen to me.

i) After the words No and Yes when they introduce a statement:

Yes, you can come with me.

No, I can't meet you today.

j) Before a question that seeks a confirmatory answer: *It's a beautiful place, isn't it?*

k) After an adverbial conjunction:

The check was for the right amount; however, it was

not signed.

3. Colon Use a colon

a) To suggest that a list will follow a statement that appears in complete-sentence form:

We have decided to move to a new location for three reasons: (1) We need a bigger market.

(2) We need an inexpensive source of raw materials.

(3) We need a ready source of labor.

b) When the verb that completes the sentence is sufficiently understood and therefore omitted.

The team lost the game. The reasons: (1) no team spirit, (2) no practice, and (3) no determination.

c) To stress a noun that renames the preceding noun at the end of a sentence:

Her heart was set on one thing: the blue dress with white roses.

d) Between hours and minutes to express time in figures:

5:45 p.m.

11:20 a.m.

4. <u>Semicolon</u> Use a semicolon

a) When a conjunction is omitted:

This year the company hasn't declared a bonus and the workers are very unhappy about it.

This year the company hasn't declared a bonus; the workers are very unhappy about it.

b) In a compound-complex sentence:

As indicated earlier, we'd appreciate it if you reached here on Friday; but Saturday morning would also be acceptable.

c) Before an adverbial conjunction:

There is little fear of a second attack; nevertheless, it would be wise to be on one's guard.

d) In a series that contains commas:

Most of the batsmen scored well in the match: Sachin, 102; Ganguly 86; Raman 74; and Lamba 68.

e) Before illustrative words, as in the following sentence:

We have plans for expansion; for example we intend to set up a new plant at Baroda.

5. <u>Period</u> Use a period

a) After imperative and declarative sentences:

Shut the door.

We will see you tomorrow.

b) After a courteous request

May I have your answer this week.

c) After an abbreviation:

Dr.

M.D.

Mrs.

Ms.

6. <u>Quotation marks</u> Use quotation marks:

a) To enclose quoted material:

The manager said, "You are a bunch of donkeys."

b) To define terms:

As used in this report, syntax means "the branch of grammar that has to do with sentence structure."

c) To enclose slang expressions:

There's only one word to describe the attacks against our policies: "hogwash."

7. Dash Use a dash

a) To set off parenthetical elements that represent a break in the flow of thought:

The rapid spread of the disease – at least hundred new cases were reported each day – had the doctors alarmed.

b) To set off parenthetical elements that require internal commas:

The qualities Monet painted – sunlight, rich shadows, deep colors – abounded near the rivers and gardens he used as subjects.

c) Before a summarizing appositive:

Computer chips, integrated circuits, bits and bytes – these new terms baffled yet intrigued.

Figure 20.3 shows you where you should use dashes, where commas and where parenthesis.

Figure 20.3 Distinguishing Dashes, Commas, and Parentheses

Dashes, commas, and parentheses may all set off nonessential information such as nonrestrictive modifiers and parenthetical expressions.

- **Dashes** give the information the greatest emphasis:

Many students – including some employed by the college – disapprove of the new work rules.

- **Commas** are less emphatic:

Many students, including some employed by the college, disapprove of the new work rules.

- **Parentheses,** the least emphatic, signal that the information is just worth a mention:

Many students (including some employed by the college) disapprove of the new work rules.

Source: H. Ramsey Fowler, Jane .E. Aaron, and Kay Limburg The Little, Brown Handbook 5th Edition (New York: HarperCollins, 1992)

It is very important to ensure that wrong punctuation doesn't mar your writing. Remember, a wrong punctuation mark can change the meaning of what you're trying to communicate. A class of boys and girls was given this sentence to punctuate:

Woman without her man is nothing.

Most boys kept the sentence as it is without adding any punctuation marks. But the girls had other ideas. They came up with something like this:

Woman! Without her, man is nothing.

PARAGRAPHS

Now that we've taken a quick look at the way sentences are structured, let's try to figure out how sentences are grouped together to form paragraphs. Look at this group of sentences:

Anita went out for a walk in the countryside. She had a maid who was always breaking things. Her daughter needed a haircut. Anita was very fond of her aunt.

Do these sentences make a paragraph? They clearly do not. Let us see why.

1. First, the paragraph has no unity. It does not adhere to any one idea.

2. Second, it has no coherence. The sentences in the paragraph do not relate to each other.

A proper paragraph must have unity and coherence. It must be based on one central underlying idea that draws together all the sentences in the paragraph.

This sentence, called the topic sentence, may appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a paragraph. The topic sentence not only introduces the main idea, it limits the topic of the paragraph, and often suggests how the paragraph will be developed. The other sentences in the paragraph support, illustrate or lead to the main idea.

Logical Order

The paragraph must be developed in a logical manner. For instance, in a paragraph describing a process, chronological, or time order, would be important. To achieve a logical progression of ideas and to provide coherence, writers use logical connectors, or 'transition' words. These words not only help the flow of ideas, but also indicate the relationship between ideas. Words like *then, next, finally*, etc. serve this purpose.

Concluding Sentence

The concluding sentence of the paragraph usually restates the main idea in a different way. While the other sentences substantiate the main argument, the concluding statement is a summing up of sorts.

COMPOSITIONS

Now that you know what goes into the making of a reasonably well-written paragraph, we will look at the paragraph as a part of a larger whole – the essay.

The structure of an essay is much like that of a paragraph, except that an essay is made up of many paragraphs. An essay usually has three parts – the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction and the conclusion are usually a paragraph each, but the body may have several paragraphs. Each paragraph in the body will have a topic idea which expands on the essay's thesis (or main idea), using appropriate supporting material.

Like the paragraph, the essay develops one main idea or point of view. But here the idea is developed in a more elaborate manner.

Steps in Essay Writing

To help the reader understand your thoughts, your essay must have a clear organizational plan. This can be achieved by adopting a systematic approach.

Limiting a topic

Once you have selected a topic and gathered enough information about it, you must limit the topic so that you can develop it properly. If the topic is too vast, you will not be able to develop it with adequate description, example or illustrations. A topic of manageable size allows you to examine it in greater depth and detail.

Suppose you decide to write about the general topic 'India.' Now, we all know that this topic is too vast to be tackled as it is. So we have to limit it. Let us see how:

1) India

2) Andhra Pradesh

3) Hyderabad

4) Languages spoken in Hyderabad

5) The Dakhini language

Thus, you narrow your focus until you come to a topic of manageable size – the Dakhini language. This is only one of the possible ways of narrowing the focus. Starting with the general topic, 'India,' you may narrow the focus from an entirely different angle, and arrive at, perhaps the mosquito?

Clarify your purpose

Once you have a topic of manageable size, decide how you're going to deal with the topic. Think about why you are writing, whom you are writing for, and what you want to tell your readers. Answering these questions will help you to formulate your thesis statement.

Write the thesis statement

The thesis statement, like the topic sentence of a paragraph, expresses the author's main idea, around which the entire essay is built up. You must have your thesis statement clearly in your mind, before you actually put it on paper. Of course, when you actually write the essay, the thesis statement need not be expressed in a single sentence. You can slip it in two or more sentences. Sometimes the thesis statement is not openly stated – only implied. Be that as it may, you must be absolutely clear about your thesis statement, so that you know exactly where your essay should go, before you begin, and you stay on course once you've set sail.

Write the introduction

The introduction to an essay often determines whether the reader continues to read the essay or decides to slip it into the nearest trash can. How you introduce your ideas depends on the audience you're writing for and the type of essay you're writing. Broadly, an introduction should

- Capture the reader's attention.
- Present the thesis statement (main idea).
- Give the reader an idea of what material will follow.
- Hint at how the writing is organized.

Plan and write the body

To write the body of the essay, you must organize your ideas. Here, an outline can be of immense help. Put down all the ideas that come to your mind about your topic. Include even those that might seem irrelevant to your thesis. Stop only when you feel you have exhausted the possibilities. Now sift through the ideas one by one. Select the ones that seem to have a bearing on the thesis statement. See how many of them can be developed adequately as supporting ideas for the main idea. You may notice that some of the ideas are related. If so, group them together. Each of these groups can then be developed into a paragraph in the body of your essay. Now the outline of the essay's body can be structured like this:

Supporting Idea 1

detail

detail

Supporting Idea 2

detail

detail

Supporting Idea 3

detail

detail

Of course, you must ensure that one paragraph leads smoothly into the next one. In other words, the transition from one idea to the other must not be abrupt.

Write the conclusion

When you've developed all the supporting ideas to illustrate your thesis statement, all that remains is for you to write the conclusion. Your conclusion must direct the reader's attention to the essay's main points and sustain them. How you conclude depends on the type of essay you've written. You may use quotations, questions, and anecdotes, but they must all relate to material that has been presented in the body of the essay. Some of the commonly used conclusions are the following.

Result: An essay describing a process can be concluded by giving the result or the results of the process described:

After you have prepared your delicious tandoori parathas, it is now time to enjoy the wonderful dish you have prepared. Set your table attractively with a lot of napkins for messy fingers. Fill each glass with sparkling water, sit down, and begin to taste your delicious meal. You will never want to eat parathas cooked any other way.

Restatement: Here the main idea is restated in different words to reinforce the writer's main thesis:

It is clear, then, that the backward tribes in India are still faced with significant problems. Each tribe still wants to keep its own traditions and customs. However, the young people want to enter the modern world shown to them on television and in the movies. They are anxious to have an education and a good job, but they have trouble adjusting to life in the city. In addition, many tribes are still discriminated against. They have lost self-confidence and pride, which may be the largest challenge they must meet.

Prediction: If your essay expresses an opinion or point of view, you may end with a prediction of what will happen next or in the future:

The third stage of development of the "smart" highway is still many years in the future. Although the University of California at Berkely is presently studying a remote guidance system that will allow cars to follow a painted stripe on a highway, the ultimate system still faces many obstacles. All indications are, however, that we can look forward to a time when we can get into our cars and settle back with our paper and coffee, leaving the driving up to the highway and the car. The future may not be so far away.

Recommendation: If in your essay you have discussed a problem, and given its causes, you may wish to conclude by suggesting a solution:

It is obvious from what has been said that most students who study in a foreign country face some of the same difficulties, culture-shock and loneliness being the most prevalent. Therefore, I suggest that before going to a foreign country to study, each *student should be required to study not only the new language but also some of the cultural differences between the native country and the new one. Most importantly, each student should be assigned a host family to help make the transition to the new lifestyle less traumatic and lonely.*

Quotation: Overusing quotations is never a good idea. But you can always use a quotation from a recognized authority in the field to give credence to what you have already said:

Thus, despite tremendous advances in computer technology, the kind of robot found in science-fiction movies is still a long way off in the future. According to MIT electronics expert Phillip Masterson, "Someday, we will be able to go into our local discount store and buy a mechanized robot that will take our commands, do our housework, and make our lives easier." Until that time, we can only dream of such mechanical humans.

Once you've finished writing the essay, it's always worthwhile to revise what you've written. Ask yourself the following questions.

1) Is my thesis statement clearly set down?
2) Does the introduction attract interest?
3) Does each paragraph in the body develop one supporting idea?
4) Does one paragraph lead smoothly into the next one?
5) Does the conclusion bring the essay to a satisfactory close?
6) Are there any typographical, grammar or spelling mistakes?

You can think up many more questions to suit the particular essay you have in front of you. Answering these questions will help you to identify weaknesses, if any, so that you can make suitable revisions.

LAST WORD

In this chapter we've looked at some of the mechanics of writing – the actual nuts and bolts that hold up the edifice of written language. Before we close, it would be well to remind ourselves for one last time, that all communication, whether written or oral, must be clear, precise, and thoughtfully structured, if it is to be effective. However, structure and precision play a more important role in written language. The importance of precision and conciseness can never be overemphasized. As Dr. Seuss puts it:

there's so much to be read
you never can cram all those thoughts in your head.
So the writer who breeds
more words than he needs
is making a chore for the reader who reads.
That's why my belief is
the briefer the brief is
the greater the sigh of the reader's relief is.

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