

be delayed by two days: This manager should take a direct approach, announcing the troubling news in both the subject line and the opening sentence and then explaining the causes of the problem:

Direct approach:
Subject line
states main point

Opening
paragraph starts
with bottom line

MEMO

To: All employees

From: Meredith Rocteau, Payroll Manager

Date: May 19, 20XX

Subject: Delay in Paychecks

I regret to inform you that those employees paid by direct deposit will experience a two-day delay in receiving their paychecks.

This delay is due to a virus that infiltrated the primary computer server for our payroll system. Although we hired consultants to identify the virus and clean out the server, the process took nearly 48 hours.

We apologize for the inconvenience.

However, when you need to convey exceedingly bad news or make an unpopular request or recommendation (as in announcing a strict new policy or employee layoffs), you might consider an indirect approach; this way you can present your case and encourage readers to understand your position before announcing the unpopular bottom line. The danger of the indirect approach, though, is that you may come across as evasive.

Indirect
approach:
Subject line
is not specific
about the main
point

Offers an
explanation
before delivering
the bottom line

The bottom line

MEMO

To: All employees

From: J. Travis Southfield, Director of Human Resources

Date: September 19, 20XX

Subject: Difficult Economic Times

Each employee of the AutoWorld family is a valued member, and each of you has played an important role in our company's expansion over the past 10 years.

Yet as you all know, times are difficult right now for the automobile industry. Sales are down, financing is hard to obtain, and consumers are holding back on major purchases.

In order to keep the company solvent, we must consider all options. Therefore, I have been informed by our company president, John Creaswell, that we must downsize. We will begin with options for retirement packages, but please be prepared for the possibility that layoffs may follow.

We will have more information for you at an all-hands meeting tomorrow.

(For more on direct versus indirect organizing patterns, see "Decide on a Direct or Indirect Organizing Pattern" in this chapter.)

Consider
whether to use
email or a PDF
attachment

Finally, a memo's tone comes across not only in the words you choose but also in the way you handle its distribution. If your topic is very short, not overly formal, and needs to reach everyone quickly, consider sending the memo as the body of an email. But if your topic is more formal and more detailed, send out a brief cover email

("Please see attached memo for information about this year's raises") with the memo as a PDF attachment. Also, be careful about who receives copies. Don't copy everyone at work when the content is only appropriate for a few, and don't leave vital people off your distribution (cc) list.

Common Types of Memos

15.4 Write transmittal, summary, and routine miscellaneous memos

Memo format can also be used for distributing short, informal reports, discussed in Chapter 21. However, for the purposes of this chapter, consider the following most common types of memos.

Transmittal Memo

A transmittal memo accompanies a package of materials such as a long report, a manuscript, or a proposal. Its purpose is to signal that the information is being sent from one place to another (providing a paper trail), to introduce the material, and to describe what is enclosed. A transmittal memo may be as simple as a sentence or a paragraph with a bulleted list describing the contents of the package, as in Figure 15.3. Because this transmittal memo is part of a longer, more formal document (a report), it is written on company letterhead and sent as a PDF attachment.

Summary or Follow-up Memo

A summary or follow-up memo provides a written record of a meeting or conversation or offers a recap of a topic discussed that was not resolved at the time. In addition to providing evidence that the meeting or conversation took place, summary and follow-up memos also ensure that each recipient has the same understanding of what was decided. Figure 15.4 shows a memo sent as an email that performs both a summary and follow-up function.

Routine Miscellaneous Memo

Routine miscellaneous memos cover a virtually infinite variety of topics. Such a memo, for example, may contain some type of announcement or update, such as announcing the closure of a parking ramp over the holidays for repair or an upcoming awards ceremony. Other such memos may request information or action, reply to an inquiry, or describe a procedure. Shorter, less formal memos of this type are usually sent as email. But if the memo has a formal purpose, especially if it comes from a group such as the Human Resources department to all employees, a more formal version may be