

MEDIUM	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Face to Face <i>(one-to-one conversation)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows personal explanation targeted to an individual • Provides for immediate feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not efficient for disseminating information to many people • Is not usually permanently documented (recorded)
Meeting <i>(several people)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminates information to many people • Provides for immediate feedback • Is documented by minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be difficult to schedule • Is time-consuming—takes employees away from other duties
Telephone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows personal explanation targeted to an individual • Allows short messages to be delivered via voice mail if individuals are not at their desks • Provides immediate feedback if the person answers the phone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is time-consuming if individual calls need to be made to several people • Is not usually permanently documented (recorded)
Text Message, Instant Message	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows quick communication • Creates a permanent record if saved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not efficient if message is long, complex, or sensitive • Does not ensure immediate feedback
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows quick communication • Disseminates information to one or many people • Creates a permanent record if saved or printed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be a private and secure medium for sending sensitive content • Does not ensure immediate feedback because not everyone checks email regularly
Memo <i>(printed hardcopy to audiences within the organization)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can accompany original documents or forms that need signatures • Can be used for employees who have no access to email • Creates a permanent record 	<p>Unless emailed as an attachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incurs costs to copy to many people • Is delivered more slowly than email • Does not provide for immediate feedback
Letter <i>(formatted on letterhead and either mailed or emailed to audiences outside the organization)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects a more “official” or formal image than email • Can accompany original documents, such as forms with signatures • Can be emailed as an attachment for fast delivery • Creates a permanent record 	<p>Unless emailed as an attachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incurs cost of letterhead and postage • Takes at least a day to deliver • Does not provide for immediate feedback
Newsletter <i>(printed hardcopy, HTML-designed email, or file attachment)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminates a lot of information to many people simultaneously • Creates a permanent record 	<p>Unless emailed as an attachment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incurs cost to copy and distribute by mail • Does not provide for immediate feedback
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes information available to anyone with access • Can be password protected to limit access • Enables combinations of text, video, and audio through podcasts, MP3 files, webcasts, webinars, and web conferencing tools • Is easy to keep up to date • May provide for feedback (by linking to feedback forms) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is not effective with audiences who have limited Internet access • Requires the audience to access the site • May not reach the audience • May reach unintended audiences • Does not provide for immediate feedback • May not provide a permanent record, unless web files are archived
Social Media: Networking Websites <i>(for example, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn) and Wikis, Blogs, and Microblogs</i> <i>(for example, Twitter)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminates information simultaneously to a community of people who have linked with you and expressed an interest • Enables combinations of text, images, and video • Allows interactive communication • Encourages discussion • Is easy to keep up to date • Provides a complete record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires the audience to access the social media application • Is not effective with audiences who have limited Internet access • May not reach the audience • May reach unintended audiences

Q2 What are effective strategies for composing bad-news messages?



The analyzing questions in Figure 6.1 will help you develop *what to say* in a bad-news message. The composing questions in this section will help you focus on *how to say it*. Should you begin with the bad news or build up to it? How should you phrase the bad news? What is the best way to soften its impact? And how can you close the message on a positive note to maintain goodwill?

Decide where to state the bad news

Although most routine messages benefit from a *direct organization*, the decision of where to introduce unwelcome news is more complex and depends on both your audience and the context.^{17,18} The direct approach may be a good idea if your audience is expecting to hear from you and the news will not come as a big surprise.¹⁹ For example, if your manager asks you to provide updated sales figures because she is concerned about the impact of an economic slump, the news of sales decline will not be a shock. You can lead with that news because she will want to hear it immediately. In other bad-news situations, you can help your audience better understand and accept the news by using an *indirect organization*, providing explanation before the main idea. For example, if the economy is good and your manager has no reason to believe sales are declining, you may want to provide some explanation about the problems leading to decreased sales before you share the exact numbers. An indirect organization allows you to prepare the audience before delivering the bad news.

Figure 6.3 outlines the differences between the direct and indirect approaches for communicating bad news and identifies the situations in which each is likely to be more effective. Note that the only difference between the two organizations is the relative order of the bad news and the explanation. Either organization may make use of a **buffer**—an introductory sentence or paragraph that softens the bad news.

IF An introductory sentence or paragraph leads up to and softens a bad message.

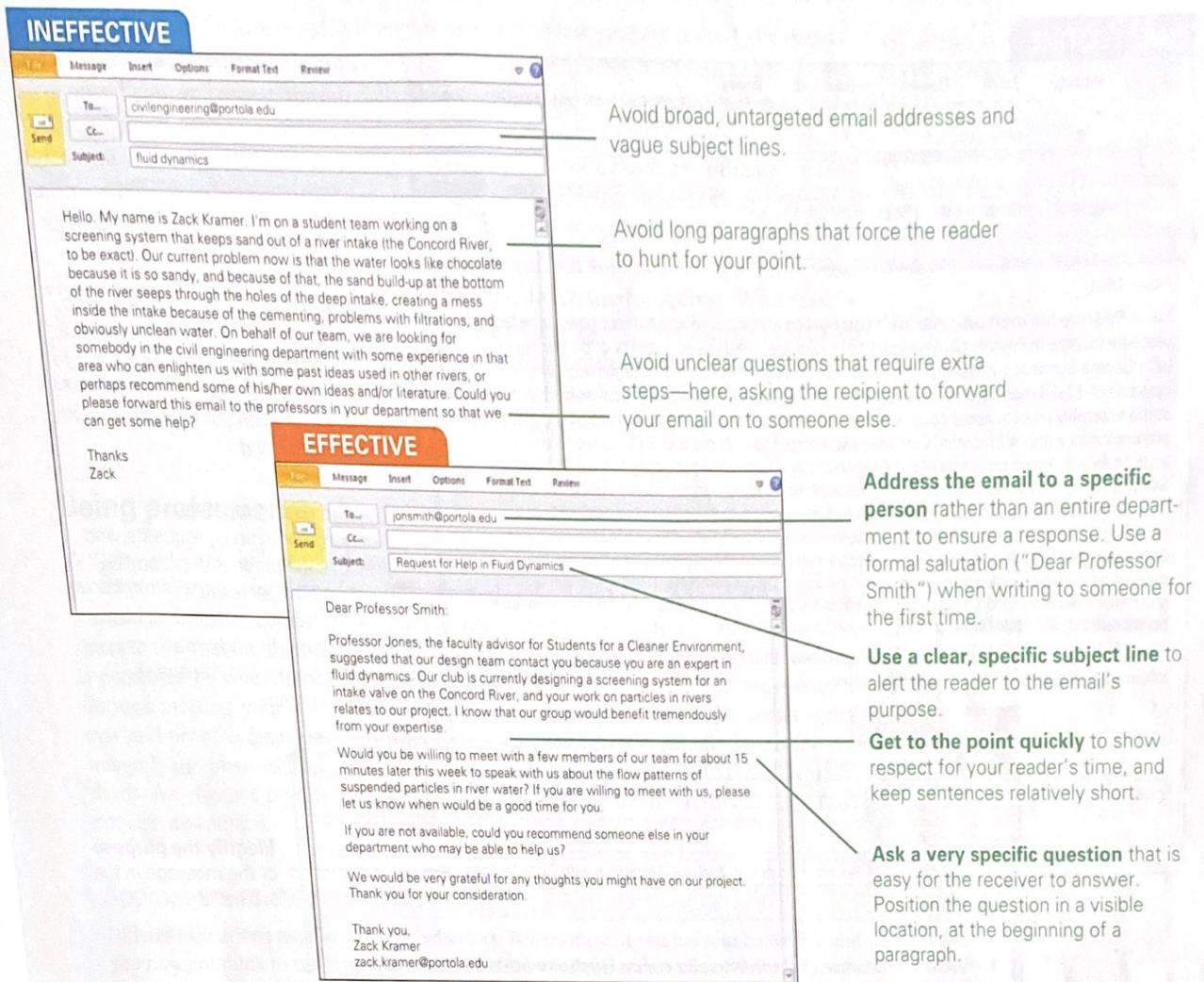
IRE 6.3 Selecting the Best Organization to Communicate Bad News

Use DIRECT ORGANIZATION if ...	DIRECT ORGANIZATION follows this pattern ...
<p>your audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is unlikely to be upset or angry, or • expects the news and will not be surprised, <p>and the news</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is easy to explain and understand, • is important for the audience to see immediately, or • is relevant to health and safety. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optional: Begin with a buffer. 2. STATE THE BAD NEWS DIRECTLY. (main idea) 3. Provide supporting explanation. 4. Conclude with goodwill.
Use INDIRECT ORGANIZATION if ...	INDIRECT ORGANIZATION follows this pattern ...
<p>your audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is likely to be upset or angry, or • does not expect the news and will be surprised, <p>or the news</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is difficult to understand without introductory explanation. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optional: Begin with a buffer. 2. Provide supporting explanation. 3. SUBORDINATE THE BAD NEWS. (main idea) 4. Conclude with goodwill.

TECHNIQUE	USE THIS TECHNIQUE WHEN...	AVOID THIS TECHNIQUE WHEN...	EXAMPLE
<p>Avoid confrontation Deny the problem exists, change the topic, screen your telephone calls, or avoid the person completely.</p>	<p>you believe you have no chance of resolving the conflict and the conflict does not interfere with productivity.</p>	<p>you have any other alternative. Problems that are not addressed tend to get worse.</p>	<p>Nadia and Brian (introduced on page 49) used this technique, and it was not effective. Because of an ego conflict, they avoided personal interaction. If they continue to avoid each other and communicate only by email, they will have no opportunity to develop shared goals; ultimately, the customers will suffer.</p>
<p>Accommodate or give in Allow the other person to have his or her own way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you decide that your position was wrong. • the conflict is trivial. • you are negotiating; sacrifice something less important to gain something you want more. • maintaining a harmonious relationship is more important than the outcome of the issue. 	<p>accommodation means sacrificing your principles and beliefs. Such accommodation can lead to loss of self-esteem or groupthink. Groupthink is a practice of achieving unanimity by eliminating all critical thinking that threatens consensus. A groupthink approach to eliminating conflict can lead a group to ignore differing opinions that may be valuable.</p>	<p>Imagine you are on a marketing team with people of diverse backgrounds. Your team's goal is to generate cutting-edge marketing ideas for a new product. During the first brainstorming session, many ideas come up. But as soon as the marketing manager endorses one idea, everyone agrees with him. You think a different idea might work better, but don't want to be the only dissenting voice. To show that you "fit with the company," you "go along to get along." This is an example of groupthink that may cause the team to settle on a solution that is wrong, or may sacrifice creativity and innovation.⁴¹</p>
<p>Compete to win Turn the conflict into a contest with a winner and loser, often determined by a third party. Use competitive tactics to win the advantage: find fault, assign blame, or reject others' point of view.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a quick resolution is needed or demanded and compromise isn't possible. • a third-party, such as a supervisor, CEO, or board of directors—is available to decide the issue. 	<p>a more collaborative strategy or compromise is possible, since competition can lead to relational conflicts.</p>	<p>Marcus and Allison of Green Earth (introduced on page 47) bring their conflict to the president of the company to decide which goal to prioritize: keeping customers happy or keeping costs down. The president decides to accommodate current customers. This decision gives Marcus and Allison a clear direction, but they still need to work out the personal anger that has developed between them.</p>
<p>Compromise Approach the problem cooperatively so that all the parties involved get something they want or can accept, but everyone also sacrifices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a quick resolution is needed or demanded. • people have differences of opinion or competing goals, and a compromise allows each to be partially satisfied. 	<p>the outcome will fail to adequately resolve the conflict or achieve the ultimate goal.</p>	<p>Valerie and Corrine of Rotel Plumbing (introduced on page 47) need to present a budget to the board of directors the next day, even though they continue to have differences of opinion: Should they invest in marketing or distribution? They reach a compromise and create budgets for two smaller projects—one on marketing and another on distribution. Neither gets everything she wants, but this solution offers several benefits: Each gets part of what she wants, they are able to project a united front at the board of directors meeting, and they will gather data from the two projects that may help them resolve their difference of opinion.</p>

TECHNIQUE	USE THIS TECHNIQUE WHEN...	AVOID THIS TECHNIQUE WHEN...	EXAMPLE
<p>Collaborate Work with all parties to determine the best possible solution.</p>	<p>collaboration is possible. This is the best approach for managing complex conflicts in the absence of pressing deadlines. Collaboration has the benefit not only of providing a solution but also ensuring buy-in from all parties and strengthening the relationships among people.</p>	<p>an immediate resolution is needed, because collaboration is a time-consuming process.</p>	<p>Marcus and Allison of Green Earth realize they will not be able to easily resolve their conflict because their supervisors gave them conflicting requirements. Although they could individually talk to their supervisors, they decide to work together to find a solution in the best interest of the company. Perhaps the company could charge more for rush jobs, give clients the option of paying a retainer to leave space on the Green Earth schedule, or develop a new procedure for calculating revenues versus overtime costs. Marcus and Allison then present these collaborative solutions in a meeting with their two supervisors.</p>

FIGURE 1.5 How to Write a Purposeful Email



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ever, hearing is not the

same as listening, which is a learned skill. **Active listening** involves focusing on the speaker, working to understand both what the speaker is saying and why he or she is saying it, and providing feedback to ensure that you understand it correctly.

An active listener will go beyond listening to words and will also perceive emotional cues and body language—and even think about what is not being said. For example, if a person's voice sounds strained, he may be nervous or concerned about the information he is communicating. Or if a person is using defensive body language, such as crossing her arms, she may feel skeptical or upset, although her words do not convey that same meaning. Most importantly, good listeners do not remain silent. They engage in a dialogue with the speaker and ask questions that prompt the speaker to think harder and gain new insights and perspectives.²⁸ If you develop good listening skills, your coworkers and customers will communicate with you more frequently and more fully. As a result, you will learn more and be able to do your job more effectively. You will also better understand your audience and be able to plan communications that meet their needs.

When you understand your audience, think about meeting their needs in two ways:

1. **Making the message easy for your audience to understand.** If you organize a message for easy comprehension, you will increase the chances that people will accurately read or listen to the message.
2. **Providing the content that the audience needs or wants.** If you address the questions on the audience's minds and anticipate their possible objections, you increase the chances that you will get the response you want.

Figure 1.6 on page 12 illustrates two versions of a business recommendation. To evaluate whether these documents are audience-oriented, try reading them in two steps. First, skim each version for about 10 seconds to see what stands out and to determine which one is easier to read. Then, read each version more carefully to identify which one more clearly provides reasons and explanations that will be compelling to the audience.

active listening A learned skill that requires you to attentively focus on the speaker's communication, interpret the meaning of the content, and respond with feedback to ensure understanding.

You will learn more about active listening in Chapter 2: Working with Others.