

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# Getting to the Point in Good-News and Neutral Messages

### Learning Objectives

Upon completing this chapter, you will be able to write good-news and neutral messages effectively. To reach this goal, you should be able to

- 1 Properly assess the reader's likely reaction to your message.
- 2 Describe the general plan for direct-order messages.
- 3 Write clear, well-structured routine inquiries.
- 4 Write direct, orderly, and favorable answers to inquiries.
- 5 Write order acknowledgments and other thank-you messages that build goodwill.
- 6 Write direct claims in situations where an adjustment will likely be granted.
- 7 Compose adjustment grants that regain any lost confidence.
- 8 Write clear and effective internal-operational communications.

## THE PREVALENCE OF GOOD-NEWS AND NEUTRAL MESSAGES IN BUSINESS

Most business messages are those that solve everyday business problems—requesting information, providing information, announcing good news, or communicating about matters that are a routine part of a company's culture and work. As a result, audiences receive these messages as good-news or neutral communication. Chapter 1 explains why most messages are about routine matters: Communication is central to organized human activity. Especially in business, people need to know what to do, why, and how. They undertake any job knowing they have a certain function to perform, and they need information to be able to perform it well. When external audiences interact with companies, they also expect and need information presented as clearly and concisely as possible.

For this reason, many **good-news** and **neutral messages** are written in what is called the **direct order**. There are, of course, unlimited kinds of good-news and neutral messages. Each business is unique and will have developed its preferred style for communicating these messages based on its audiences and communication goals. However, regardless of the type of message, the direct order is usually best because it gets your reader to your main point immediately.

This chapter first describes a general plan for writing good-news and neutral messages in a direct order. Then we adapt this general plan to some of the more common business situations where it is appropriate. We show why each of these situations requires somewhat special treatment. We believe that this review of common direct plans will enable you to adapt them to any related situation.

**LO1** Properly assess the reader's likely reaction to your message.

### PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

As discussed in Chapter 6, writing any messages other than those for the most mechanical, routine circumstances requires careful thinking about the situation, your readers, and your goals. When determining your message's basic plan, a good beginning is to assess your reader's probable reaction to what you have to say. If the reaction is likely to be positive or even neutral, your best approach is likely to be a direct one—that is, one that gets to the objective right away without delay. If your reader's reaction is likely to be negative, you may need to use the indirect plan, discussed in Chapter 8. The general plan for the direct approach in positive and neutral situations follows.

**LO2** Describe the general plan for direct-order messages.

## THE GENERAL DIRECT PLAN

### Beginning with the Objective

Begin with your **objective**. If you are seeking information, start by asking for it. If you are giving information, start giving it. Whatever your key point is, lead with it.

In some cases, you might need to open with a brief orienting phrase, clause, or even sentence. Especially if your reader is not expecting to hear from you or is not familiar with you or your company, you may need to preface your main point with a few words of background, but keep any prefatory remarks brief and get to the real message. Then stop the first paragraph. Let the rest of the message fill in the details.

### Covering the Remaining Part of the Objective

Whatever else must be covered to complete your objective makes up the bulk of the remainder of the message. If you cover all of your objective in the beginning (as in an inquiry in which a single question is asked), nothing else is needed. If you have to ask or answer additional questions or provide information, do so in the body of your message. Cover your information systematically—perhaps listing the details or arranging them by paragraphs. If these parts have their own explanations or commentary, include them.

## Ending with Goodwill

End the message with some appropriate friendly comment as you would end a face-to-face communication with the reader.

Include a closing that is relevant to the topic of your message. General closings such as "Thank you" or "If you need further information, please don't hesitate to ask" are polite, but they are clichés. You will build more goodwill with a closing that is tailored to your message—for example: "If you will answer these questions about Ms. Hill right away, we can fill the accounting position before our busy tax season."

Be aware, though, that phrases such as "as soon as possible" or "at your convenience" may have very different meanings for you and your reader. If you need your response by a specific date or time, give your reader that information as well as a reason for the deadline so that your reader understands the importance of a timely response. You may say, for example, "Your answers to these questions by July 1 will help Ms. Hill and us as we meet our deadline for filling the accounting position."

Now let us see how you can adapt this general plan to fit the more common direct message situations.

## ROUTINE INQUIRIES

### Searching for New Regional Headquarters

Introduce yourself to routine inquiries by assuming you are the assistant to the vice president for administration of White Label Industries (WLI). WLI is the manufacturer and distributor of an assortment of high-quality products.

You and your boss were recently chatting about WLI's plans to relocate its regional headquarters. Your boss tells you that she and other top management have chosen the city but have not been able to find the perfect office space. She says that they have not been happy with what realtors have found for them or with what they have found in their own searches of classified ads and realty agencies' websites. When you suggest that they expand their search to something a little less traditional such as

craigslist, your boss says, "Great idea! I don't think any of us have used craigslist, though. Could you find some locations and show them to us at our Friday meeting?"

You're a bit intimidated by the prospect, but you know that this is a great chance to demonstrate your professional skills. You visit craigslist and find what you believe would be the perfect office headquarters. You know you could just show the executives the ad at the meeting, but having read the ad and having analyzed your audience, you know the executives will need more information. To present your best professional image at Friday's meeting, you need to write a routine inquiry seeking additional details about the office space.

### Choosing from Two Types of Beginnings

The opening of the **routine inquiry** should focus on the main objective. Routine inquiries usually open in one of two ways: (1) with a direct question or request or (2) with a brief statement to orient the reader, followed by the request or question.

If you begin with a direct question or request, you can ask one broad question that sets up other questions you'll ask in the body of the message. For example, if your objective is to get more information about the office space described in the Introductory Challenge, you might begin with a general question:

Could you please send me additional information about the Riverdale office space you advertised on craigslist on May 24?

**LO3** Write clear, well-structured routine inquiries.

Answering inquiries that do not include adequate explanation can be frustrating.



The body of your message would then present a list of the specific information you are seeking.

On the other hand, if you have only one piece of information you are seeking, you could begin with your specific question:

Could you please send me the dimensions of the first- and second-floor corner offices of the Riverdale office space you advertised on craigslist on May 24?

You might then offer some explanation of what you're looking for, or you might conclude your message.

If you think your reader would need or appreciate some background information or an orienting statement, provide one. This information helps reduce any startling effect that a direct opening question might have and can help soften the tone if the direct opening question sounds demanding or blunt.

The 3200-square-foot Riverdale office space you advertised on May 24 on craigslist seems like a great fit for our regional headquarters. To help us decide on a new office space, could you please answer a few questions about the Riverdale offices?

Regardless of how you begin, be sure your reader has a clear sense of your message's purpose.

## Informing and Explaining Adequately

To help your reader answer your questions, you may need to include explanation or information. If you do not explain enough or if you misjudge the reader's knowledge, you make the reader's task difficult. For example, answers to your questions about office space for WLI may depend on characteristics or specific needs of the company. Without knowing how WLI will use the space, even the best realtor or property manager may not know how to answer your questions or perhaps direct you to other office space that better meets your needs.

Where and how you include the necessary explanatory information depend on the nature of your message. Usually, a good place for general explanatory material is before or after the direct request in the opening paragraph. In messages that ask more than one question, include any necessary explanatory material with the questions. Such messages may alternate questions and explanations in the body of the message.

## Structuring the Questions

After you ask your initial question and provide any relevant background information, your message will take one of two directions. If your inquiry involves only one question, you have achieved your objective, and you may move to a goodwill ending to finish your message. If you have to ask several questions, develop an organized, logical list in the body of your message.

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First, if you have two or more questions, make them stand out. Combining two or more questions in a sentence de-emphasizes each and invites the reader to overlook some. You can call attention to your questions in a number of ways. First, you can make each question a separate sentence with a **bullet** (for example, ●, ○, ■) to call attention to it.

Second, you can give each question a separate paragraph whenever your explanation and other comments about each question justify a paragraph.

Third, you can order or rank your questions with numbers. By using words (*first, second, third*, etc.), numerals (*1, 2, 3*, etc.), or letters (*a, b, c*, etc.), you make the questions stand out. Also, you provide the reader with a convenient checklist for answering.

Fourth, you can structure your questions in **true question form**. Sentences that merely hint at a need for information do not attract much attention. The statements "It would be nice if you would tell me . . ." and "I would like to know . . ." are really not questions. They do not ask—they merely suggest. The questions that stand out are those written in question form: "Will you please tell me . . .?" "How much would one be able to save . . .?" "How many contract problems have you had . . .?"

Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple *yes* or *no* unless you really want a simple *yes* or *no* answer. For example, the question "Is the chair available in blue?" may not be what you really want to know. Better wording might be "In what colors is the chair available?" Often, combining a *yes/no* question with its explanation yields a better, more concise question. To illustrate, the wording "Would your software let us deliver our training modules in any format? We need to deliver them in HTML5" could be improved by asking "Would your software let us deliver our training modules in HTML5?"

## Ending with Goodwill

The goodwill ending described in the general plan is appropriate here, just as it is in most business messages. Remember that the closing does the most toward creating goodwill when it fits the topic of the message and includes important deadlines and reasons for them.

## Reviewing the Order

In summary, the plan recommended for the routine inquiry message is as follows:

- Focus directly on the objective, with either a specific question that sets up the entire message or a general request for information.
- Include any necessary explanation, wherever it best fits.
- If two or more questions are involved, make them stand out with bullets, numbering, paragraphing, and/or question form.
- End with goodwill words adapted to the topic of the message.

## Contrasting Examples

The following two routine inquiry messages illustrate bad and good approaches to requesting information about office space for a new WLI regional headquarters (recall the Introductory Challenge). The first example follows the indirect pattern. The second is direct and more appropriate for this neutral message. You can also study the Case Illustrations on pages 148 and 149. The margin comments help you see how these sample inquiries follow the advice in this chapter.

As you read the first example, note that it is marked by a "🔍" icon in the side panel. We use this icon throughout the book wherever we show bad examples. The good examples will be indicated by a "🎯" icon.

**The Indirect Message.** The less effective message begins slowly and gives obvious information. Even if the writer thinks that this information needs to be communicated, it does not deserve the emphasis of the opening sentence. The writer gets to the point of the message in the second paragraph. There are no questions here—just hints for information. The items of information the writer wants do not stand out but are listed in rapid succession in one sentence. The close is selfish and stiff.

## Choosing the Right Font

Of all the issues a writer considers when writing an effective business message, the type of font to use may be at the bottom of the list (if it is on the list at all). However, choosing the right font can make your documents look as professional as they sound.

- **What are my choices?** The main choice is either a serif or sans serif font. Letters in serif fonts such as Book Antiqua (shown in the box) have "tails" (serifs). Letters in sans serif fonts such as Verdana (also shown in the box) do not. You can see that the "T" in Times New Roman has the "tails" that the "T" in Tahoma does not. What do serifs do? Serifs connect letters, which makes the space between words more distinguishable and the text therefore more readable—at least in printed documents. In electronic documents, the serifs may actually hinder readability depending on the font size and monitor resolution. Sans serif fonts, however, allow for more white space, which makes letters and words stand out. A possible choice, then, is to use a sans serif font for headings and a serif font for body text.
- **How many fonts can I use?** Limit yourself to not more than two fonts. It's fine to use only one font. However, if you use more than two, you will have a document that looks cluttered and visually confusing. If you do choose two fonts, be sure that one is a serif font and one is a sans serif font. This way the fonts complement rather than compete with each other. Remember that excessive formatting of your fonts (bold, italics, underlining) will also undermine the professional look of your document.

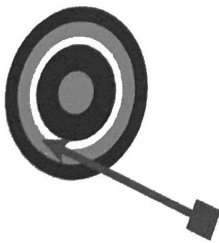
- **How big should my fonts be?** This depends on the font. Start with the body text at 9–12 points. Make your headings two points larger than your body text. Whatever size you choose, be sure the text is readable and looks professional. Fonts that are too small are hard to read. Fonts that are too big look amateurish and visually attack the reader.
- **What style should I choose?** That will depend on what kind of document you're writing and to whom. Look at the sample fonts below. Which would be more appropriate in a print ad for party supplies? In an annual report to investors? In an invitation to a formal event? As you can see, each typeface has its own personality. Choose yours carefully to match your situation.

This font is 12-point Verdana.

*This typeface is 12-point Script MT Bold.*

This typeface is 12-point Book Antiqua.

**THIS TYPEFACE IS  
12-POINT GOUDY  
STOUT.**



This message's indirect and vague beginning slows reading.

Dear Mr. Piper:

We saw the advertisement for 3,200 square feet of Riverdale office space that you posted a couple of weeks ago on craigslist. As we are interested, we would like additional information.

Specifically, we would like to know the interior layout, annual cost, availability of transportation, length of lease agreement, escalation provisions, and any other information you think pertinent.

If the information you give us is favorable, we will inspect the property. Please send your reply as soon as possible.

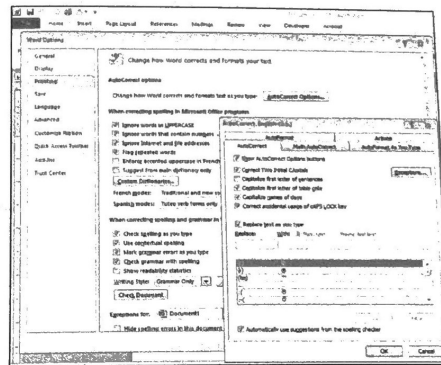
Sincerely,

**The Direct and Effective Message.** The second example begins directly by asking for information. The explanation is brief but complete. The questions are made to stand out; thus, they help make answering easy. The message closes with a courteous and appropriate request for quick action.

## Shortcut Tools Help Writers Improve Productivity and Quality

Shortcuts help writers save time and improve quality. One of the easiest to use is the AutoCorrect tool in Word (shown here). This tool will automatically replace a word you enter with another word you enter to replace that particular word. The default setting is generally set to correct common misspellings and typos. However, it also can be used to expand acronyms or phrases used repeatedly.

If you worked frequently with the Association for Business Communication, you might set up the AutoCorrect tool to replace the acronym ABC with the full name. Not only will this shortcut enable you to save time, but it also will improve the quality of your work by inserting a correctly spelled and typed replacement every time.



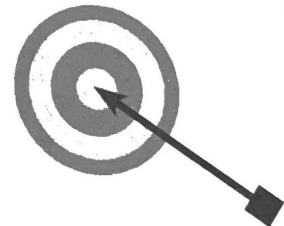
Dear Mr. Piper:

Will you please answer the following questions about the 3,200-square-foot Riverdale office suite advertised May 24 on craigslist? This space may be suitable for the new regional headquarters we are opening in your city in August.

- Is the layout of these offices suitable for a work force of two administrators, a receptionist, and seven office employees? (If possible, please send us a diagram of the space.)
- What are the dimensions of the corner offices on the first and second floors?
- What is the annual rental charge?
- Are housekeeping, maintenance, and utilities included?
- What type of flooring and walls does the office space have?
- Does the location provide easy access to mass transportation and the airport?
- What is the length of the lease agreement?
- What escalation provisions are included in the lease agreement?

We look forward to learning more about your property. We hope to secure a space that meets our needs by July 21.

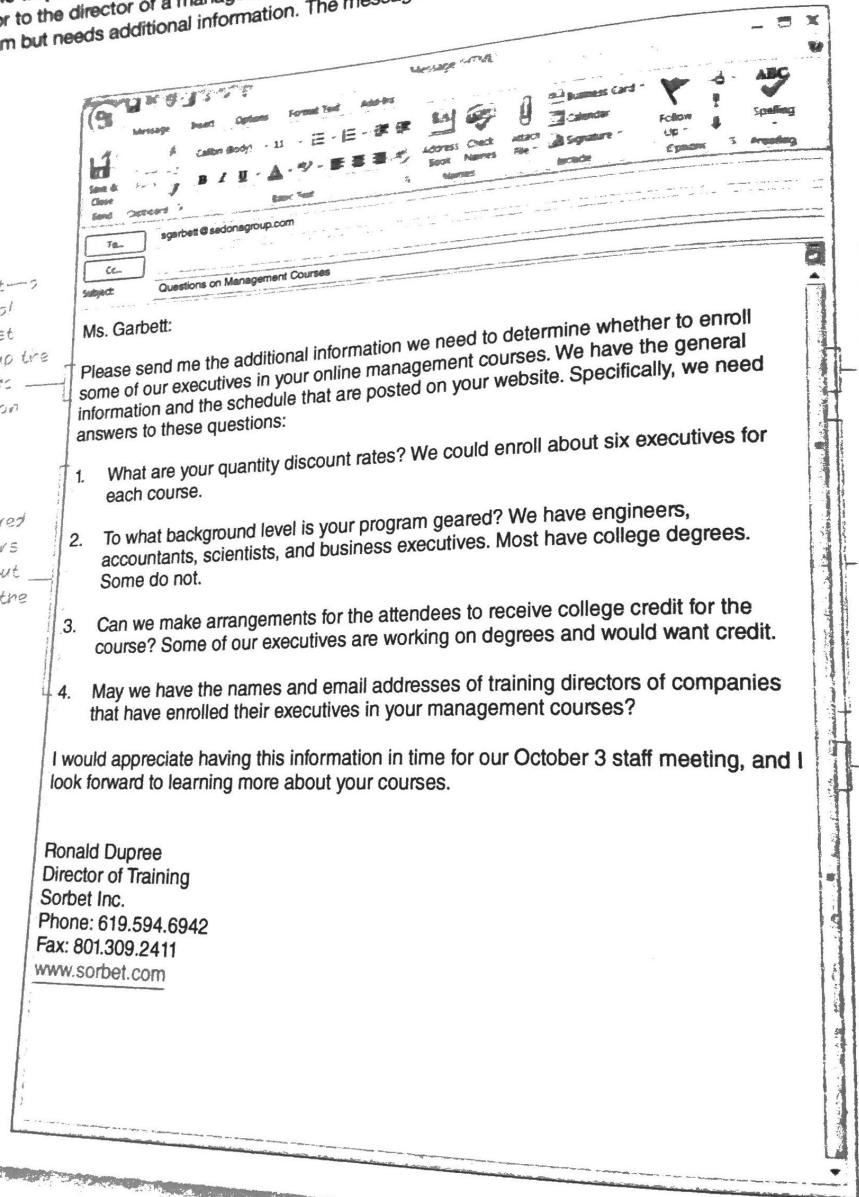
Sincerely,



This direct and orderly message is better.

# CASE ILLUSTRATION

**Routine Inquiries (Getting Information about a Training Program).** This email message is from a company training director to the director of a management-training program. The company training director has received literature on the program but needs additional information. The message seeks this information.



Direct → general request sets up the specific question

Numbered questions stand out to help the reader respond

Reference to a website tells what the writer knows and helps the reader in responding

Explanations are worked into the questions where needed

A favorable forward look creates a goodwill close

### CASE ILLUSTRATION

**Routine Inquiry (An Inquiry about Hotel Accommodations).** This letter to a hotel inquires about accommodations for a company's annual meeting. In selecting a hotel, the company's managers need answers to specific questions. The message covers these questions.



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The Best Way to Connect with Women

Visit us: [www.womensmedia.com](http://www.womensmedia.com)

July 17, 2012

Ms. Connie Briggs, Manager  
Drake Hotel  
140 East Walton Place  
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Ms. Briggs:

We have selected Chicago for our 2013 meeting on August 16, 17, and 18 and are interested in holding it at the Drake. I have found helpful information on your website but would like answers to the following questions:

Can you accommodate a group of about 600 employees on these dates?

Would you be able to set aside a block of 450 rooms? We could guarantee 400.

Do you offer discounted room rates for meetings and conferences?

If so, what are the rates and what are the eligibility requirements?

What are your charges for conference rooms? We will need eight for each of the three days, and each should have a minimum capacity of 60. On the 18th, for the half-hour business meeting, we will need a large ballroom with a capacity of at least 500.

Also, will you please send me your menu selections and prices for group dinners? On the 17th we plan to hold our presidential dinner. About 500 can be expected for this event.

As meeting plans must be announced by September, may we have your response by August 1? We look forward to the possibility of being with you in 2013.

Sincerely,

*Patti Wolff*

Patti Wolff  
Site Selection Committee Chair

Direct—  
courteous  
general  
request  
sets up the  
specific  
questions

Specific  
questions  
with  
explanations  
where  
needed

Opening  
provides  
background  
information  
and sets up  
the specific  
questions

Questions  
stand out  
in separate  
paragraphs

Individually  
tailored  
goodwill  
close

## FAVORABLE RESPONSES

## Answering a Potential Customer's Question

Continue in your role as assistant to the vice president for operations of White Label Industries (WLI). This time, your task is to respond to a customer's message.

In your email inbox this morning, you have an inquiry from a veterinarian, a Dr. Motley, who wants to know more about WLI's Chem-Treat paint. In response to an advertisement, this prospective customer asks a number of specific questions about Chem-Treat. Foremost, she wants to know whether the paint is safe to use around the animals (and their owners) who visit her clinic. Do you

have supporting evidence? Do you guarantee the results? Does the paint resist dirt and stains? How much does a gallon cost? Will one coat do the job?

You can answer all but one of the questions positively. Of course, you will report this one negative point (that two coats are needed to do most jobs), but you will take care to de-emphasize it. The response will be primarily a good-news message. Because the reader is a potential customer, you will work to create the best goodwill effect.

**LO4** Write direct, orderly, and favorable answers to inquiries.

When you answer inquiries positive, your primary goal is to tell your readers what they want to know. Because your message will be a **favorable response**, directness is appropriate.

## Identifying the Message Being Answered

Because this message is a response to another message, you should identify the message you are answering. Such identification helps the reader recall or find the message being answered. If you are writing an email response, the original message is appended to your message. Of course, in an email message, your subject line will identify the message you are answering, but in hard copy messages, you may also use a subject line (Subject: Your April 2 Inquiry about Chem-Treat), as illustrated in Appendix B. Or you can refer to the message incidentally in the text ("as requested in your April 2 inquiry"). Preferably you should identify the message early in your message.

## Beginning with the Answer

Directness here means giving the readers what they want at the beginning. Thus you *begin by answering*. When a response involves answering a single question, you begin by answering that question. When it involves answering two or more questions, one good plan is to begin by answering one of them—preferably the most important. In the Chem-Treat case, this opening would get the response off to a fast start:

Yes, WLI's Chem-Treat acrylic latex paint is among the safest on the market.

An alternative is to begin by stating that you are giving the reader what he or she wants—that you are complying with the request. This example illustrates this type of beginning.

Here are the answers to your questions about Chem-Treat.

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### Logically Arranging the Answers

If you are answering just one question, you have little to do after handling that question in the opening. You answer it as completely as the situation requires, and you present whatever explanation or other information is needed. Then you are ready to close the message.

If, on the other hand, you are answering two or more questions, the body of your message becomes a series of answers. You should order them logically, perhaps answering the questions in the order your reader used in asking them. You may even number your answers, especially if your reader numbered the questions. Or you may decide to arrange your answers by paragraphs so that each stands out clearly.

### Skillfully Handling the Negatives

When your response will include some bad news along with the good news, you will need to handle the bad news with care. Unless you are careful, it is likely to receive more emphasis than it deserves.

In giving proper emphasis to the good- and bad-news parts, you should use the techniques discussed in Chapter 5, especially positioning. That is, you should place the good news in positions of high emphasis—at paragraph beginnings and endings and at the beginning and ending of the message as a whole. You should place the bad news in secondary positions. In addition, you should use space emphasis to your advantage. This means giving less space to bad-news parts and more space to good-news parts. You also should select words and build sentences that communicate the effect you want. Generally, this means using positive words and avoiding negative words and putting bad news in modifying phrases or clauses rather than in main clauses. Your overall goal should be to present the information in your response so that your readers feel good about you and your company.

### Considering Extras

To create goodwill, as well as future business, you should consider including extras with your answers, as recommended in Chapter 5. These are the things you say and do that are not actually required. Examples are a comment or question showing an interest in the reader's situation, some additional information that may prove valuable, and a suggestion for use of the information supplied. In fact, extras can be anything that presents more than the routine response. A business executive answering a college professor's request for information on company operations could supplement the requested information with suggestions of other sources. A technical writer could explain highly technical information in simpler language. In the Chem-Treat problem, additional information (e.g., how much surface area a gallon covers) would be helpful. Such extras encourage readers to build a business relationship with you.

### Closing Cordially

As in the other types of direct messages, your ending should be cordial, friendly words that fit the case. For example, you might close the Chem-Treat message with these words:

If I can help you further in deciding whether Chem-Treat will meet your needs, please let me know.

### Reviewing the Plan

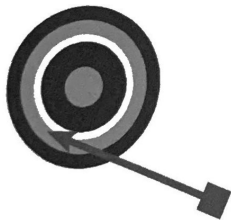
To write a favorable response message, you should use the following plan:

- Identify, either incidentally or in the subject line, the message being answered.
- Begin with the answer or state that you are complying with the request.
- Continue to respond in a way that is logical and orderly.
- De-emphasize any negative information.
- Consider including extras.
- End with a friendly comment adapted to your reader.

### Contrasting Illustrations

The following contrasting email messages in answer to the Chem-Treat inquiry illustrate two strategies for answering routine inquiries. The first message violates much of the advice in this and earlier chapters. The second meets the requirements of a good business message. It accounts for the reader's needs and the writer's business goals.

**An Indirect and Hurried Response.** The not-so-good message begins indirectly with an obvious statement referring to receipt of the inquiry. Though well intended, the second sentence continues to delay the answers. The second paragraph begins to respond to the reader's request, but it emphasizes the most negative answer by position and by wording. This answer is followed by hurried and routine answers to the other questions asked. Only the barest information is presented. There is no goodwill close.



This email is indirect and ineffective.

Subject: Your Inquiry of April 3

Dr. Motley,

I have received your April 3 message, in which you inquire about our Chem-Treat paint. I want you to know that we appreciate your interest and will welcome your business.

In response to your question about how many coats are needed to cover new surfaces, I regret to report that two are usually required. The paint has been well tested in our laboratories and is safe to use as directed.

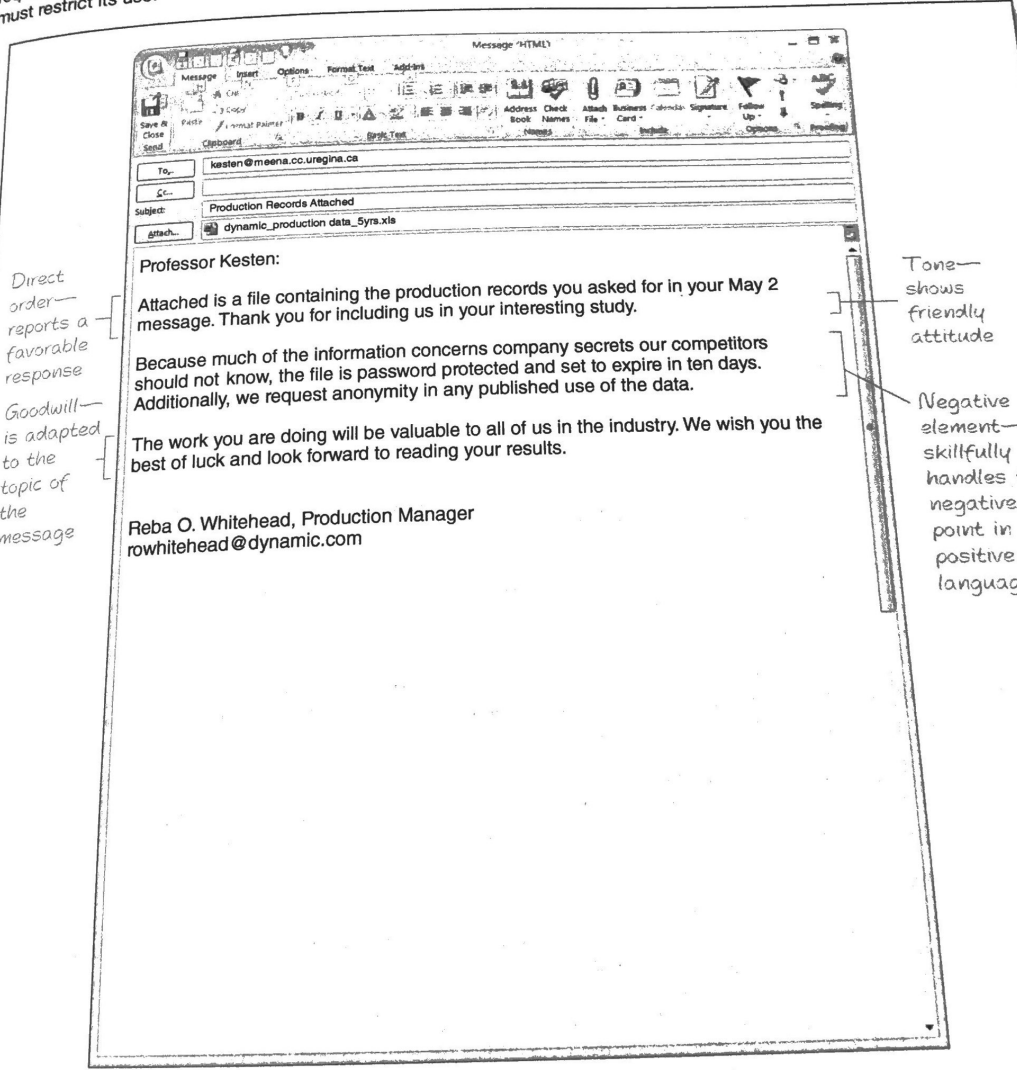
Ray Lindner

Customer Service Representative

**An Effective Direct Response.** The better message begins directly with the most favorable answer. Then it presents the other answers, giving each the emphasis and positive language it deserves. It subordinates the one negative answer by position, volume of treatment, and structure. More pleasant information follows the negative answer. The close is goodwill talk with some subtle selling strategy included.

# CASE ILLUSTRATION

**Routine Response (Favorable Response to a Professor's Request).** This email message responds to a professor's request for production records that will be used in a research project. The writer is giving the information wanted but must restrict its use.



# CASE ILLUSTRATION

**Routine Response (A Request for Detailed Information).** Answering an inquiry about a company's experience with executive suites, this letter numbers the answers as the questions were numbered in the inquiry. The opening appropriately sets up the numbered answers with a statement that indicates a favorable response.

Merck & Co., Inc.  
One Merck Drive  
P.O. Box 100, WS1A-46  
Whitehouse Station NJ 08888



August 7, 2013

Ms. Ida Casey, Sales Manager  
Liberty Insurance Company  
1165 Second Ave.  
Des Moines, IA 50318-9631

Dear Ms. Casey:

*Direct—  
makes  
the  
purpose  
clear*

Here is the information about our use of temporary executive suites that you requested in your August 3 fax.

*Orderly  
listing of  
answers*

1. Our executives have mixed feelings about the effectiveness of the suites. At the beginning, the majority opinion was negative, but it appears now that most believe the suites meet our needs.
2. The suites option definitely has saved us money. Rental costs in the suburbs are much lower than downtown costs; annual savings are estimated at nearly 30 percent.
3. We began using executive suites at the request of several sales representatives who had read about other companies using them. We pilot tested the program in one territory for a year using volunteers before we implemented it companywide.
4. We are quite willing to share with you the list of facilities we plan to use again. Additionally, I am enclosing a copy of our corporate policy, which describes our guidelines for using executive suites.

*Complete  
yet concise  
answers*

*Friendly—  
adapted to  
the one  
case*

If after reviewing this information you have any other questions, please write me again. If you want to contact our sales representatives for firsthand information, please do so. I wish you the best of luck in using these suites in your operations.

*This extra  
builds  
goodwill*

Sincerely,

*David M. Earp*

David M. Earp  
Office Manager

Enclosure

Subject: Your April 3 Inquiry about Chem-Treat

Dr. Motley:

Yes, Chem-Treat's low-odor, low-VOC acrylic latex paint is among the safest, most environmentally friendly paints on the market. Several hospitals and clinics have used Chem-Treat successfully and have reported no reactions to it.

Chem-Treat's latex formula also makes it ideal for high-traffic areas. Cleaning usually requires nothing more than a little soap and water.

One gallon of Chem-Treat is usually enough for one-coat coverage of 500 square feet of previously painted surface. For the best results on new surfaces, you will want to apply two coats. For such surfaces, you should figure about 200 square feet per gallon for a long-lasting coating.

We appreciate your interest in Chem-Treat, Dr. Motley. You can view Chem-Treat's safety ratings and customer reviews on our website: [www.wli.com/chemtreat/features](http://www.wli.com/chemtreat/features).

Ray Lindner

Customer Service Representative



This direct mail does a better job.

## ORDER ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND OTHER THANK-YOU MESSAGES

### Building Goodwill with a "Thank-You" Message

The next work you take from your inbox is an order for paints and painting supplies. It is from Mr. Tony Lee of Central City Paint Company, a new customer whom White Label Industries (WLI) has been trying to attract for months. You usually acknowledge orders with routine messages, but this case is different. You feel the need to

welcome this new customer and to cultivate him for future sales.

After checking your current inventory and making certain that the goods will be on the way to Mr. Lee today, you are ready to write him a special acknowledgment and thank him for his business.

In the course of your professional career, you will find yourself in situations where business and social etiquette require thank-you messages. Such messages may be long or short, formal or informal. They may be also combined with other purposes such as confirming an order. In this section we focus on one specific kind of thank-you message—the **order acknowledgment**—as well as more general thank-you messages for other business occasions.

**LO5** Write order acknowledgments and other thank-you messages that build goodwill.

### Order Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments are sent to let people who order goods know the status of their orders. Most acknowledgments are routine. They simply tell when the goods are being shipped. Many companies use form or computer-generated messages for such situations. Some use printed, standard notes with check-off or write-in blanks. But individually written acknowledgments are sometimes justified, especially with new accounts or large orders.

Skillfully composed acknowledgments can do more than acknowledge orders, though this task remains their primary goal. These messages can also build goodwill through their warm, personal, human tone. They can make the reader feel good about doing business with a company that cares and want to continue doing business with