

TECHNOLOGY IN BRIEF

Tables Help Writers Organize Data for Easy Reading

Setting up tables within a document is an easy task thanks to tools in today's word-processing programs. This feature allows writers to create tables as well as import spreadsheet and database files. In both instances, information can be arranged in columns and rows with detail in the cells. Headings can be formatted, and formulas can be entered in the cells. The table you see here

could be one the writer created for use in a favorable response to an inquiry about possible locations for a meeting in Chicago.

Organizing information with tables makes it easier for both the writer and the reader. A careful writer will include column and row labels as needed, helping the reader extract information both quickly and accurately.

Hotel Name	Address	Convention Room Rate for Standard Rooms	Guest Rating
Chicago Marriott Downtown	540 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611-3869	\$409	4.2
Drake Hotel	140 East Walton Street, Chicago, IL 60611-1545	\$309	4.3
Palmer House Hilton	17 East Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60603-5605	\$252	4.4

that company. To maintain this goodwill for repeat customers, you will want to revise your form acknowledgments regularly.

Directness and Goodwill Building in Order Acknowledgments

Like the preceding direct message types, the acknowledgment message appropriately begins with its good news—that the goods are being shipped—and it ends on a goodwill note. Except when some of the goods ordered must be delayed, the remainder of the message is devoted to goodwill building. This goodwill building can begin in the opening by emphasizing receipt of the goods rather than merely the shipment of the goods:

The Protect-O paints and supplies you ordered April 4 should reach you by Wednesday. They are leaving our Walden warehouse today by Arrow Freight.

It can also include a warm expression of thanks for the order, especially when a first order is involved. Anything else you can say that will be helpful to the reader is appropriate—information about new products, services, or opportunities for the reader. A forward look to continued business relations is logical gesture in the close.

Tact in Order Acknowledgments

Sometimes the task of acknowledging is complicated by your inability to send the goods requested right away. You could be out of them, or perhaps the reader did not give you all the information you need to send them. In either case, a delay is involved. In some cases, delays are routine and expected and do not pose a serious problem. In these situations, you can use the direct approach. However, you will still want to minimize any negative news so that your routine message does not become a negative-news message. You can do this by using positive language that focuses on what *can* or *will* happen rather than what didn't or won't happen.

In the case of a vague order, for example, you should request the information you need without appearing to accuse the reader of giving insufficient information. To illustrate, you risk offending the reader by writing "You failed to specify the color of phones you want." But you gain goodwill by writing "So that we can send you precisely the phones you want, please check your choice of colors on the space below." This sentence handles the matter positively and makes the action easy to take. It also shows a courteous attitude.

Similarly, you can handle back-order information tactfully by emphasizing the positive part of the message. For example, instead of writing "We can't ship the ink jet cartridges until the 9th," you can write "We will rush the ink jet cartridges to you as soon as our stock is replenished by a shipment due May 9." If the back-order period is longer than the customer expects or longer than the 30 days allowed by law, you may choose to give your customer an alternative, such as a substitute product or service. Giving the customer a choice builds goodwill.

In some cases delays will lead to major disappointments, which means you will have to write a bad-news message. A more complete discussion of how to handle such negative news is provided in Chapter 8.

Strategies for Other Thank-You Messages

One of the first **thank-you messages** you write will be the one for a job interview, which is discussed in Chapter 10. Once you are employed, you may send thank-you messages after a meeting or when someone does a favor for you or gives you a gift, when you want to acknowledge others' efforts that have somehow benefited you, when you want to thank customers for their business, or perhaps when someone has donated time or money to your organization or a cause it supports. The possibilities for situations when you might send thank-you notes are many, and sending a message of sincere thanks is a great way to promote goodwill and build your and your company's professional image.

Thank-you messages are often brief, and because they are positive messages, they are written directly. You can begin with a specific statement of thanks:

Thank you for attending the American Cancer Society fundraiser lunch for Relay for Life last week and for donating money to the cause.

Follow with a personalized comment relevant to the reader:

With your support, the 2013 Relay for Life will be our most successful yet ... [details follow].

Conclude with a forward-looking statement:

I look forward to joining you on June 12 for this worthy cause.

Your tone should be informal and friendly. If you are on a first-name basis with the reader, you may omit a salutation or use the reader's first name, but if your relationship with the reader is a formal one, do not use the reader's first name to create a contrived sense of closeness.

Whether you hand write the thank-you, send an email, or use company stationery depends on the audience. If you have poor handwriting or believe your handwriting does not convey a professional image, you may choose to type your message. Though you should always check your own spelling, grammar, and punctuation before sending any message, doing so is especially important in handwritten notes when you have no computer software to alert you to possible errors.

Summarizing the Structure of Order Acknowledgments and Other Thank-You Messages

To write an order acknowledgment or thank-you message,

- Use the direct order: Begin by thanking the reader for something specific (e.g., an order).
- Continue with your thanks or with further information.
- Use positive, tactful language to address vague or delayed orders.

- If appropriate, achieve a secondary goal (e.g., reselling or confirming a mutual understanding).
- Close with a goodwill-building comment, adapted to the topic of the message.

Contrasting Acknowledgments

The following two messages show bad and good ways to acknowledge Mr. Lee's order. As you would expect, the good version follows the plan described in the preceding paragraphs.

Slow Route to a Favorable Message. The bad example begins indirectly, emphasizing receipt of the order. Although intended to produce goodwill, the second sentence further delays what the reader wants most to hear. Moreover, the letter is written from the writer's point of view (note the we-emphasis).



This one delays the important news.

Dear Mr. Lee:

Your April 4 order for \$1,743.30 worth of Protect-O paints and supplies has been received. We are pleased to have this nice order and hope that it marks the beginning of a long relationship.

As you instructed, we will bill you for this amount. We are shipping the goods today by Blue Darter Motor Freight.

We look forward to your future orders.

Sincerely,

Fast-Moving Presentation of the Good News. The better message begins directly, telling Mr. Lee that he is getting what he wants. The remainder of the message is a customer welcome and subtle selling. Notice the good use of reader emphasis and positive language. The message closes with a note of appreciation and a friendly, forward look.



This direct message is better.

Dear Mr. Lee:

Your selection of Protect-O paints and supplies was shipped today by Blue Darter Freight and should reach you by Wednesday. As you requested, we are sending you an invoice for \$1,743.30, including sales tax.

Welcome to the Protect-O circle of dealers. Our representative, Ms. Cindy Wooley, will call from time to time to offer whatever assistance she can. She is a highly competent technical adviser on paint and painting.

Here in the home plant we also will do what we can to help you profit from Protect-O products. We'll do our best to give you the most efficient service. And we'll continue to develop the best possible paints—like our new Chem-Treat line. As you will see from the enclosed brochure, Chem-Treat is a real breakthrough in mildew protection.

We genuinely appreciate your order, Mr. Lee. We are determined to serve you well in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Online Order Acknowledgment (Order Confirmation with a Second Purpose). This email message thanks the reader for her order and invites her to participate in this company's online product review.

From: Gardener's Supply [mailto:gardeners@e-news.gardeners.com]
Sent: Thursday, January 08, 2013 9:08 AM
To: KATHRYN.RENTZ@UC.EDU
Subject: Tell Us What You Think About Our Products



New Feature: Customer Reviews

Dear Kathryn,

Thanks the reader and indicates a shared interest

Thank you for your purchase from Gardener's Supply. We hope you are enjoying your items and that this year's garden will be your best ever!

Your satisfaction with our products is important to us, and we want to hear what you have to say about them. We recently added customer reviews to our website, which helps us improve our product selection and helps other gardeners find the best products to suit their needs.

Moves to another goal of the message

Adds a reader benefit and incentive

We're hoping you'll take a moment to rate and review some or all of the items you have purchased from us. Other gardeners will appreciate your opinions and advice, and you may also enjoy reading what fellow gardeners have to say!

Each time you submit a product review to our website, your name will be entered in a monthly drawing for a \$1,000 prize (see information below).

Here are the item(s) you recently purchased. Just click on an item to write a review.



Men's Waterproof Gloves

★ [Rate and review it](#)



Glove Set, 3 Pairs

★ [Rate and review it](#)

Pictures provide a quick visual confirmation of the order

Forward-looking ending builds goodwill

Thank you again for shopping with us.

The Employee-Owners at Gardener's Supply

Links make participation easy

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Order Acknowledgment (Acknowledgment with a Problem). This email letter concerns an order that cannot be handled exactly as the customer would like. Some items are being sent, but one must be placed on back order and another cannot be shipped because the customer did not give the information needed. The message skillfully handles the negative points.

The screenshot shows an email interface with the following details:

- To:** Fred. Fletcher@FMW.com
- Subject:** Confirmation of Your May 7 Order
- Attachments:** Description of 317 T-Clamps, Handcart of 317 T-Clamps

Dear Mr. Fletcher:

Thank you for your May 7 order. Your receipt is attached.

By noon tomorrow, your three new Baskin motors and one Dawson 110 compressor should reach your Meadowbrook shops. As you requested, we marked them for your west side loading dock and sent them by Warren Motor Express.

So that we can be certain of sending you the one handcart for your special uses, will you please review the attached description of the two models available? As you will see, the Model M is our heavy-duty design, but its extra weight is not justified for all jobs. When you have made your choice, please let us know by email, phone, or fax. We'll send your choice right away.

Your three dozen 317 T-clamps should reach you by the 13th. As you may know, these very popular clamps have been in short supply for some time now, but we have been promised a limited order by the 11th. We are marking three dozen for rush shipment to you.

We are always pleased to do business with Fletcher Machine Works and will continue to serve you with quality industrial equipment.

Sincerely,
Shannon E. Kurrus
 Shannon E. Kurrus
 Sales Manager
 Lowe's Home Improvement
 P. O. Box 1111
 North Wilkesboro, NC 28696-0001
 (910) 491-4000
 Fax: (910) 651-4766

Annotations:

- Polite, specific acknowledgment of the order* (points to the first paragraph)
- Missing information handled tactfully* (points to the paragraph about the handcart)
- Negative news deemphasized* (points to the paragraph about the 317 T-clamps)
- Emphasis on the positive news* (points to the paragraph about the Baskin motors and Dawson compressor)
- Helpful explanation to help the reader make a choice* (points to the paragraph about the handcart models)
- A friendly forward look* (points to the closing paragraph)

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Thank-You Message (A Follow-Up to a Meeting). This email from a representative of a telecommunications equipment company thanks a potential customer in Germany for a recent meeting.

Hello, Herman:

Meeting you and the other members of the product selection team last Friday was a pleasure. We are honored not only that you took the time to explain the current dynamics and structure at General Telekom but also that you gave us your entire day. Thank you for your generosity.

I understand that you have graciously offered to share some of United Plorcon's key product qualities with other executives in your company. We are extremely appreciative that you have offered to help in this way. Based on our discussions at the meeting, we will summarize the main points of interest and send them to you.

To make the cost-benefit charts more self-explanatory, I will slightly condense the material and add some notes. They will not be confidential, so please share them if you wish. I will send those condensed charts to you before the end of the week. After we send them, I will follow up with you to make sure that you have all the material you need to explain who we are and what we offer.

Finally, thank you for your hospitality. Staying in an ideally located hotel, having coffee at a beautiful castle, viewing some of the world's best art, and sharing an exquisite meal made my first visit to Stuttgart a most memorable one. I hope that between our two companies, we can create many opportunities for our United Plorcon team to return to your beautiful city.

I look forward to talking with you again soon.

Respectfully yours,

Uses the reader's first name, which indicates a close business relationship

Specifies add sincerity

Politely thanks the reader for something specific (while also reminding him of his promise)

Prepares for future communications between the two parties

Ends on a positive note, looks to the future

COMMUNICATION MATTERS

A Workplace without Email? One Company's Strategy

French tech company Atos discovered that its 80,000 employees were spending 15–20 hours per week on email but finding only 15 percent of the email actually necessary. The company's solution to making communication more productive is to phase out email as an internal communication tool, with the goal of eliminating it altogether by 2014. Instead, employees will use social media, instant messaging, and collaboration tools such as Microsoft's Live Meeting for their internal communication. In addition to eliminating unnecessary communication in the office, the company says moving to communication technologies such as instant messaging means that people will better balance their work and personal lives, as they

cannot check for messages outside the office as easily as they could if they were using email.

Comments on the article range from enthusiasm and support for the idea to skepticism, the latter belief being that people will just substitute time spent on instant messaging and social media for the time they would have spent on email. Many note (rightly so) that email, like instant messaging and social media, is just the technology—ultimately the users control how productively it is used.

SOURCE: "IT Firm Phasing Out Email to Boost Productivity," *CBC News Technology and Science*, CBS News, 16 Dec. 2011, Web, 15 May 2012.

DIRECT CLAIMS

Requesting a Correct Shipment and Revised Invoice

Continue in your role with White Label Industries (WLI). As the assistant to the vice president of operations, you manage the supervisors on the paint production line. Today, one of the team leaders came to you for some feedback on his writing. Last week, he ordered some safety equipment (goggles and face masks) for employees on the production line; however, he received gloves instead of goggles and only half the masks he ordered, as well as an invoice for \$100 more than his order should have cost. He is fairly certain he received someone else's order. He

just wants the correct order shipped and his bill adjusted accordingly.

He called his sales representative but got her voice mail. He left her a quick message to call him about the order, but he also wants to send her an email explaining the situation. He asks for your feedback on the email, and you are surprised at the indirect language and unnecessarily negative and harsh tone. You need to use what you know about writing a direct claim to help him write a message that not only resolves the issue but also builds goodwill.

LO6 Write direct claims in situations where an adjustment will likely be granted.

Occasionally things go wrong between a business and its customers (e.g., merchandise is lost or broken during shipment, customers are inaccurately billed for goods or services). Such situations are not routine for a business; for most businesses, the routine practice is to fulfill their customers' expectations. Because claim messages are not about routine circumstances and because they involve unhappy news, many are written in the indirect approach discussed in Chapter 8. Nevertheless, there are some instances where

directness in writing a claim is appropriate, and for this reason we discuss the direct claim in this chapter.

Using Directness for Claims

Most businesses want to know when something is wrong with their products or services so they can correct the matter and satisfy their customers. Many times the easiest and quickest way for you to address these claims is simply to call the company directly to settle the matter. Sometimes, though, you may want to write a claim if you need a written record of the request. Or, depending on a company's phone options for accessing customer service, a written claim sent via email or the company website may be more efficient than a phone call.

When writing a claim in cases where you anticipate that the reader will grant an adjustment of your claim, you may use the direct approach (e.g., adjusting an incorrect charge to an invoice). Be sure that when you write the claim, you keep your tone objective and professional so that you preserve your reader's goodwill. If you use words such as *complaint* or *disappointment*, you will compromise your chances of receiving an adjustment quickly.

Organizing the Direct Claim

Because you anticipate that the reader will willingly grant your request, a direct claim begins with the claim, moves to an explanation, and ends with a goodwill closing.

Beginning a Direct Claim. The direct claim should open with just that—the direct claim. This should be a polite but direct statement of what you need. If the statement sounds too direct, you may soften it with a little bit of explanation, but the direct claim should be at the beginning of your message, as in this example:

Please adjust the invoice (# 6379) for our May 10 order to remove the \$7.50 shipping charge.

Explaining the Issue. The body of the direct claim should provide the reader with any information he or she might need to understand your claim. To continue with the same example, we might write the following brief middle paragraph:

Because our order totaled \$73.50, we were able to take advantage of your offer for free shipping on orders of \$50 or more and should not have been charged a shipping fee.

Providing a Goodwill Closing. Your close should end with an expression of goodwill. A simple ending like the following can suffice:

Please send a corrected copy of the invoice to me at jsmith@americanmortgage.com. We look forward to continued business with National Office Supplies.

Reviewing the Plan

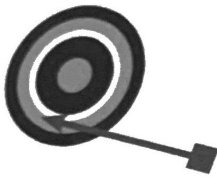
To write a direct claim message, you should use the following plan:

- Begin with a polite direct statement of your claim.
- In the body of the message, give the reader information he or she needs to adjust the claim.
- Close with an expression of goodwill.

Contrasting Examples of Claim Messages

The following two email messages show contrasting ways of handling the erroneous shipment described in the Introductory Challenge. The first is slow and harsh. The second is courteous, yet to the point and firm.

An Indirect and Harsh Message. The first message starts slowly with a long explanation of the situation. Some of the details in the beginning sentence are helpful, but they do not deserve the emphasis that this position gives them. The problem is not described until the second paragraph. The wording here is clear but much too strong. The words are angry and insulting, and the writer talks down to the reader. Such words are more likely to produce resistance than acceptance. The negative writing continues into the close, leaving a bad final impression.



This claim is insulting, too indirect, and too long.

Subject: Problem with Our Order #2478

Beth,

As you know, White Label Industries has been ordering our safety supplies from you for over 15 years. We have always depended on you for quick and accurate service, which, unfortunately, looks like it didn't happen this time. When our orders are not accurate and our safety gear is not what we ordered, you put our employees in jeopardy, and WLI loses money if employees don't have safety gear and can't work.

You can imagine how shocked I was when I opened the order expecting face masks and goggles but found gloves and half the face masks I ordered. I was also surprised to see a bill that was \$100 more than I planned.

I tried to call you, but you didn't answer, so I left a voice message. I'm guessing you want to fix this quickly, so please call me or email me and let me know what you are going to do. If my employees do not have the masks and goggles by tomorrow, employees can't work, and we will have to shut down our production line, which will cost us a lot of money. This was really disappointing service, but I'm sure it won't happen again, as you have always been accurate in the past. We would hate to think that we need to go with a different supplier. Thank you.

Ken

A Firm yet Courteous Message. The second message follows the plan suggested in the preceding paragraphs. A subject line quickly and neutrally identifies the situation. The message begins with a clear statement of the claim. Next, it uses objective language to tell what went wrong. The ending is rational and shows that the writer is interested in resolving the issue, not placing blame.



This direct claim is clear and efficient while also maintaining goodwill.

Subject: Need Correct Order Shipped (Invoice 6750)

Beth,

Please send 50 safety goggles and 100 face masks, as well as a new invoice, to replace the incorrect order that arrived this morning.

On Monday, I placed the order for the safety goggles and face masks, but today I received only 50 face masks and 15 boxes of safety gloves. The invoice indicated that this order was supposed to go to J&M Medical Supplies.

If you send the order today, we should receive it tomorrow. Our employees will need the safety equipment in order for us to keep the production line running.

Please let me know how you want to handle the return of J&M's order.

Thanks,

Ken

ADJUSTMENT GRANTS

INTRODUCTORY CHALLENGE

Dealing with the Unexpected

Continuing in your role with White Label Industries (WLI), this time you find on your computer an email message from an unhappy customer. It seems that Ms. Bernice Watson, owner of Tri-Cities Hardware, is upset because some of the 30 Old London lampposts she ordered from WLI arrived in damaged condition. "The glass is broken in 17 of the units," she writes, "obviously because of poor packing." She had ordered the lights for a special sale. In fact, she had even featured them in

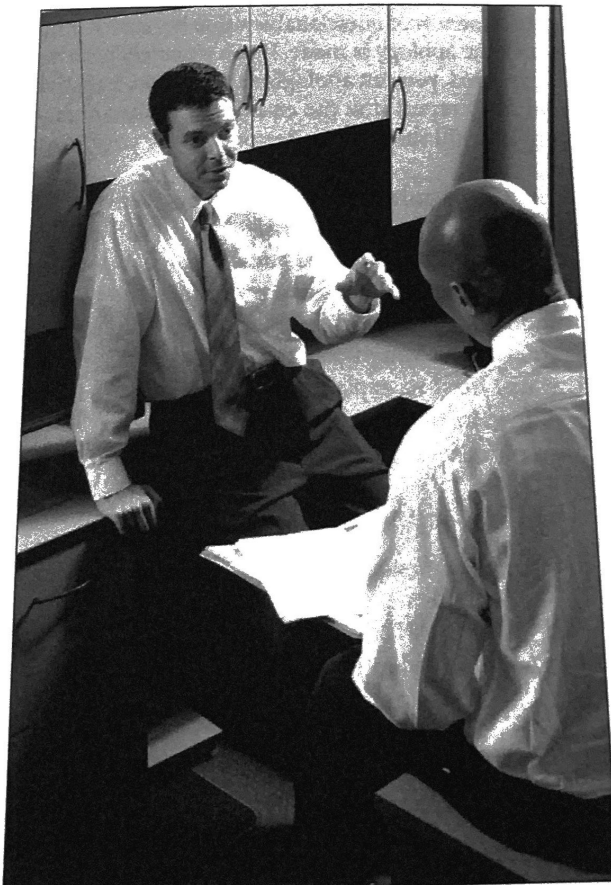
her advertising. The sale begins next Friday. She wants a fast adjustment—either the lamps by sale time or her money back.

Of course, you will grant Ms. Watson's request. You will send her an email message saying that the goods are on the way. And because you want to keep this good customer, you will try to regain any lost confidence with an honest explanation of the problem. This message is classified as an adjustment grant.

When you can grant an adjustment, the situation is a happy one for your customer. You are correcting an error. You are doing what you were asked to do. As in other positive situations, a message written in the direct order is appropriate.

LO7 Compose adjustment grants that regain any lost confidence.

In most face-to-face business relations, people communicate with courteous directness. You should write most business messages this way.



Considering Special Needs

The adjustment-grant message has much in common with the message types previously discussed. You begin directly with the most important point—here, the good news that you are granting the adjustment. You refer to the message you are answering, and you close on a friendly note. Because the situation stems from an unhappy experience, you have two special needs. One is the need to overcome any negative impressions caused by the experience. The other is the need to regain any confidence in your company, its products, or its service that the reader may have lost.

Need to Overcome Negative Impressions. To understand the first need, just place yourself in the reader's shoes. As the reader sees it, something bad has happened—goods have been damaged, equipment has failed, or sales have been lost. The experience has not been pleasant. Granting the claim will take care of much of the problem, but some negative thoughts may remain. You need to work to overcome any such thoughts. You can attempt to do this using words that produce positive effects. For example, in the opening you can do more than just give the affirmative answer. You can add goodwill, as in this example:

The enclosed check for \$89.77 is our way of showing you that your satisfaction is our top priority.

Throughout the message you should avoid words that unnecessarily recall the bad situation you are correcting. You especially want to avoid the negative words that could be used to describe what went wrong—words such as *mistake*, *trouble*, *damage*, *broken*, and *loss*. Even general words such as *problem*, *difficulty*, and *misunderstanding* can create unpleasant effects. Negative language makes the customer's complaint the focus of your message. Your goal is to move the customer beyond the problem and to the solution—that the customer is going to have his or her claim granted. You can only do this if you use positive, reader-centered language.

Also negative are the apologies often included in these messages. Even though well intended, the somewhat conventional "we sincerely regret the inconvenience ..." type of comment is of questionable value because it emphasizes the negative happenings for which the apology is made. If you sincerely believe that you owe an apology or that one is expected, you can apologize and risk the negative effect. But do it early and move on, and don't repeat it at the end. In most instances, however, your efforts to correct the problem will show adequate concern for your reader's interests.

Need to Regain Lost Confidence. Except in cases in which the cause of the difficulty is routine or incidental, you also will need to regain the reader's lost confidence. Just what you must do and how you must do it depend on the situation. If something can be done to correct a bad procedure or a product defect, you should do it. Then you should tell your reader what has been done as convincingly and positively as you can. If what went wrong was a rare, unavoidable event, you should explain this. Sometimes you will need to explain how a product should be used or cared for. Sometimes you will need to resell the product. Whatever you say should be truthful, professional, and reader focused.

Reviewing the Plan

To organize a message granting an adjustment, writers should use the following plan:

- Begin directly—with the good news.
- Incidentally identify the correspondence that you are answering.
- Avoid negatives that recall the problem.
- Regain lost confidence through explanation or corrective action.
- End with a friendly, positive comment.

Adjustment Grant
of a customer who
cause human error

Direct
good news
begins
letter

Goodwill
positive,
reader-
adapted
close

CASE ILLUSTRATION

Adjustment Grant Messages (Explaining a Human Error). This email message grants the action requested in the claim of a customer who received a leather computer case that was monogrammed incorrectly. The writer has no excuse because human error was to blame. His explanation is positive and convincing.

To: cwbrown@aol.com
Subject: Your October 1 Inquiry Concerning Order No. A4170

Ms. Brown:
 Your leather computer case monogrammed with an Old English B should reach you within two days.

Because your satisfaction is our goal, we looked into the use of the script font on your case. It turned out to be a simple case of human oversight. Two people read and checked the order, and two people overlooked the "Old English monogram" specification. Such things do happen, despite our best efforts. When they do, we are glad to send a replacement. Like our customers, we will settle for nothing less than the highest quality.

Thank you for purchasing one of our finest products. We know that your leather computer case will give you many years of beautiful service.

Jonathan Batte, Manager
 Customer Relations
 Brandywine Leathers

Direct—good news begins letter

Goodwill—positive, reader-adapted close

Identifies claim and transaction

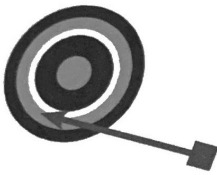
Frank and convincing explanation

Good persuasion technique to restore confidence in the company

Contrasting Adjustments

The two messages below illustrate an ineffective and effective way to write adjustment messages. The first, with its indirect order and grudging tone, is ineffective. The directness and positiveness of the second clearly make it the better message.

A Slow and Negative Approach. The ineffective message begins with an obvious comment about receiving the claim. It recalls vividly what went wrong and then painfully explains what happened. As a result, the good news is delayed for an additional paragraph. Finally, after two delaying paragraphs, the message gets to the good news. Though well intended, the close leaves the reader with a reminder of the trouble.



This email is indirect and negative.

Subject: Your Broken Old London Lights

Ms. Watson,

We have received your May 1 claim reporting that our shipment of Old London lamppost lights reached you with 17 broken units. We regret the inconvenience and can understand your unhappiness.

Following our standard practice, we investigated the situation thoroughly. Apparently the fault is the result of an inexperienced temporary employee's negligence. We have taken corrective measures to assure that future shipments will be packed more carefully.

I am pleased to report that we are sending replacements today. They should reach you before your sale begins. Our driver will pick up the broken units when he makes delivery.

Again, we regret all the trouble caused you.

Stephanie King

The Direct and Positive Technique. The better message uses the subject line to identify the transaction. The opening words tell the reader what she most wants to hear in a positive way that adds to the goodwill tone of the message. With a you-viewpoint explanation, the message then reviews what happened. Without a single negative word, it makes clear what caused the problem and what has been done to prevent its recurrence. After handling the essential matter of picking up the broken lamps, the message closes with positive talk.



This message is direct and positive.

Subject: Your May 1 Report on Invoice 1248

Ms. Watson:

Seventeen carefully packed Old London lamppost lamps should reach your sales floor in time for your Saturday promotion. Our driver left our warehouse today with instructions to special deliver them to you on Friday.

Because your satisfaction with our service and products is important, we have thoroughly checked our shipping procedures. It appears that the shipment to you was packed by a temporary employee who was filling in for a hospitalized veteran packer. We now have our veteran packer back at work and have taken measures to ensure better performance by our temporary staff.

As you know, the Old London lamppost lights have become one of the hottest products in the lighting field. We are confident they will contribute to the success of your sale.

Stephanie King

INTERNAL-OPERATIONAL MESSAGES

LABORATORY CHALLENGE

Reminding Employees of the Shipping Policy

As the administrative assistant for the vice president of operations at White Label Industries (WLI), you have been asked by your boss to send a note on her behalf to all employees reminding them of the company's shipping policy. Whether customers pay shipping charges

depends on the products they order. However, some customers who repeatedly order the same product are sometimes charged for shipping and sometimes are not, which, of course, leads to unhappy customers and is costly for WLI.

As Chapter 1 explained, **internal-operational communications** are those messages that stay within a business. They are messages to and from employees that get the work of the organization done. The memorandums discussed in Chapter 6 are one form of operational communication. Internal email messages are another, and so are the various documents posted on bulletin boards, mailed to employees, uploaded on intranets, or distributed as handouts.

LO8 Write clear and effective internal-operational communications.

The formality of such messages ranges widely. At one extreme are the casual memorandum and email exchanges between employees concerning work matters. At the other are formal documents communicating company policies, directives, and procedures. Then, of course, there are the various stages of formality in between.

Casual Operational Messages

The documents at the bottom of the formality range typically resemble casual conversation. Usually they are quick responses to work needs. Rarely is there time or need for careful construction and wording. The goal is simply to exchange the information needed to conduct the company's work.

Frankness describes the tone of these casual operational messages as well as many of the messages at more formal levels. The participants exchange information, views, and recommendations forthrightly. They write with the understanding that all participants are working for a common goal—what is best for the company—and that people working together in business situations want and need straightforward communication.

Still, remember that being frank doesn't mean being impolite. Even in quick messages, you should build goodwill with a positive, courteous tone.

Moderately Formal Messages

Moderately formal messages tend to resemble the messages discussed earlier in this chapter. Usually they require more care in construction, and usually they follow a direct pattern. The most common arrangement begins with the most important point and works down. Thus, a typical beginning sentence is a topic (theme) statement. In messages in memorandum form, the opening repeats the subject-line information and includes the additional information needed to identify the situation. The remainder of the message consists of a logical, orderly arrangement of the information covered. When the message consists of items in sequence, the items can be numbered and presented in this sequence.

Suggestions for writing **moderately formal internal messages** are much the same as those for writing the messages covered previously. Clarity, correctness, and courtesy

should guide your efforts. The following example of a hard-copy memorandum illustrates these qualities. It is moderately formal, yet it is conversational. It is organized in the direct order, beginning with the objective and then systematically and clearly covering the vital bits of information. It is straightforward yet courteous.

DATE: April 1, 2013
 TO: Remigo Ruiz
 FROM: Becky Pharr
 SUBJECT: Request for Cost Information Concerning Meeting at Timber Creek Lodge

As we discussed in my office today, please get the necessary cost information for conducting our annual sales meeting at the Timber Creek Lodge, Timber Creek Village, Colorado. Our meeting will begin on the morning of Monday, June 5; we should arrange to arrive on the 4th. We will leave after a brief morning session on June 9.

Specifically, we'll need the following information:

- Travel costs for all 43 participants, including air travel to Denver and ground travel between the airport and the lodge. I have listed the names and home stations of the 43 participants on the attached sheet.
- Room and board costs for the five-day period, including cost with and without dinner at the lodge. As you know, we are considering the possibility of allowing participants to purchase dinners at nearby restaurants.
- Costs for recreational facilities at the lodge.
- Costs for meeting rooms and meeting equipment (e.g., laptops, projectors). We will need a room large enough to accommodate our 43 participants.

I'd like to have the information by April 15. If you need additional information, please let me know.

Formal Messages

The most **formal operational** messages are those presenting policies, directives, and procedures. Usually written by executives for their subordinates, these administrative messages are often compiled in manuals, perhaps kept in loose-leaf form and updated as new material is developed. Their official status accounts for their formal tone.

Formal operational messages usually follow a direct order, although the nature of their contents can require variations. The goal should be to arrange the information in the most logical order for quick understanding. Since the information frequently involves a sequence of information bits, numbering these bits can be helpful. And since these documents must be clearly understood and followed, the writing must be clear to all, including those with low verbal skills. The following example illustrates these qualities:

DATE: June 10, 2013
 TO: All Employees
 FROM: Terry Boedeker, President
 SUBJECT: Energy Conservation

To help keep costs low, the following conservation measures are effective immediately:

- Thermostats will be set to maintain temperatures of 72 degrees Fahrenheit throughout the air-conditioning season.
- Air conditioners will be shut off in all buildings at 4 PM Monday through Friday.
- Air conditioners will be started as late as possible each morning so as to have the buildings at the appropriate temperature within 30 minutes after the start of the workday.
- Lighting levels will be reduced to approximately 80 to 100 watts in all work areas. Corridor lighting will be reduced to 50 watts.
- Outside lighting levels will be reduced as much as possible without compromising safety and security.

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In addition, will each of you help with this conservation effort? Specifically, I ask that you do the following:

- Turn off lights not required in performing your work.
- Keep windows closed when the cooling system is operating.
- Turn off all computer monitors and printers at the end of the day.

I am confident that these measures will reduce our energy use significantly. Your efforts to follow them will be greatly appreciated.

Even though this message is straightforward, note the writer's courtesy and his use of *us* and *our*. When writing direct messages, skillful managers make use of such strategies for maintaining good relations with employees. Remembering this goal becomes especially important in situations where managers have news to convey or requests to make that employees may not be ready to accept. In fact, in these situations an indirect order will be more appropriate, as Chapters 8 and 9 will discuss. For most internal-operational communication, however, the direct order will be both expected and appreciated.

Summarizing the Structure of Internal-Operational Messages

To write an internal-operational message, writers should do the following:

- Organize in the direct order.
- Choose the appropriate tone (casual, moderately formal, or formal).
- Be clear and courteous.
- Order the information logically.
- Close in a way that builds goodwill.

Contrasting Examples of Internal-Operational Messages

The following two messages show contrasting ways in which the operational message regarding WLI's inconsistent shipping policies (see the Introductory Challenge at the beginning of this section) may be addressed.

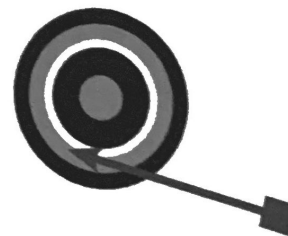
A Wordy, Confusing, and Indirect Message. The reader really has to search for the writer's purpose and intent in this message. In addition, it is wordy, long, and disorganized and lacks visual appeal.

Subject: Inconsistent Shipping Policies

WLI has been incurring increasing freight expenses and a decline in freight revenue over the last two years, impacting our ability to achieve our financial goals. The warehouse team has done a lot of research into the reasons behind this increase, and it has come to our attention that a very considerable number of shipments are going out of Cedar Rapids (1) as unbillable to the customer and/or (2) as overnight shipments rather than ground.

WLI has only one product for which shipping is not billed to the customer—the Chem-Treat paint. In all other cases, product shipments are supposed to be billed to the customer. **Therefore, effective immediately, except for Chem-Treat shipments, which by contract provide for free overnight (weekday delivery) shipping, WLI will bill the customer for all shipments of products. Finance will screen all orders to ensure that they indicate billable shipping terms.**

WLI's overnight shipping falls into a few categories, including shipments of products to customers and shipments of marketing materials to prospects and customers. There are no customer programs or marketing programs for which WLI offers overnight shipping (except Chem-Treat). **Therefore, effective**



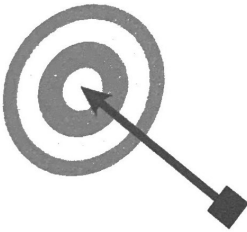
This indirect message wastes time and dwells on the negative.

immediately, except for Chem-Treat shipments, which by contract provide for overnight (weekday delivery) shipping. WLI will not ship products overnight to customers unless the overnight shipping is billed to the customer. In the past, effective immediately, shipments of sales/marketing materials are to be shipped ground, not overnight.

This policy change will impact some of your work processes, requiring you to be more planful in getting products shipped to customers in a businesslike and professional manner, and challenging you to prevent last-minute rush situations. I suspect that much of the freight performance situation, from a financial point of view, is an awareness issue for our Cedar Rapids team. I thank each of you in advance for your adherence to this policy. We are fortunate to have an excellent distribution team in Cedar Rapids. That team needs all of our help so that their high-quality shipping and inventory control performance becomes matched by strong financial shipping performance. Exceptions to the billable shipping-only and no overnight shipping policies must be brought to me for approval prior to entering the order.

Dean Young
VP Operations

A Direct, Concise, and Visually Appealing Message. This message is written directly and is more accurate because it communicates correctly the main point. This is a reminder of an existing policy, not an announcement of a new policy. The message is also more concise and gives the reader only the information he or she needs to know to comply. In addition, headings and bulleted lists make for much easier reading.



This direct message will be easy to read and reference. Its tone is straightforward but courteous.

Subject: Refresher on Our Shipping Policy

Please remember that our shipping policy is as follows:

Shipping Charges:

- *Chem-Treat paint* is the only product for which shipping is **not** billed to the customer.
- *All other product shipments* (including sales/marketing materials) are billed to the customer.

Overnight Shipping:

- Sales/marketing materials are to be shipped ground, not overnight.
- *Chem-Treat paint* may be shipped overnight at **no charge** to the customer, as provided by contract.
- *All other overnight product shipments* are **billed** to the customer.

Billing our customers accurately and consistently for shipping improves customer satisfaction with our service. In addition, the increased freight revenue will help us achieve our financial goals and control our shipping and inventory costs.

To ensure that your customers receive their products quickly, refer to the shipping and mailing timeline on WLI's intranet.

The Finance Department will be screening all shipment invoices to make sure that shipments are billed accurately. If you have questions regarding the shipping policy or require an exception, please contact me at Ext. 555.

Dean Young
VP Operations

OTHER DIRECT MESSAGE SITUATIONS

In the preceding pages, we have covered the most common direct message situations. Others occur, of course. You should be able to handle them with the techniques that have been explained and illustrated.

In handling such situations, remember that, whenever possible, you should get to the goal of the message right away. You should cover any other information needed in good logical order. You should carefully choose words that convey just the right meaning. More specifically, you should consider the value of using the you-viewpoint, and you should weigh carefully the differences in meaning conveyed by the positiveness or negativeness of your words. As in the good examples discussed in this chapter, you should end your message with appropriate and friendly goodwill words.

THERE'S MORE . . .

Would you like to learn more about the various types of direct messages, building relationships with your reader, or developing your professional writing style? Scan the QR code with your smartphone or use your Web browser to learn more at www.mhhe.com/lesikar13e. Choose Chapter 7 > Bizcom Tools & Tips.



SUMMARY BY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Properly assess the reader's likely reaction to your message.
 - If the reaction is likely to be negative, indirect order is your likely choice.
 - If it is likely to be positive or neutral, you probably want directness.
2. Describe the general plan for direct-order messages.
 - Begin with the objective.
 - Cover any necessary explanation.
 - Systematically present any remaining parts of the objective.
 - End with adapted goodwill.
3. The routine inquiry is a basic direct-order message.
 - Begin it with a request—either (1) a request for specific information wanted or (2) a general request for information.
 - Somewhere in the message, explain enough to enable the reader to answer.
 - If the inquiry involves more than one question, make each stand out—perhaps as separate points.

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

Describe the general plan for direct-order messages.

Write clear, well-structured routine inquiries.