

## KEY TERMS

- |                         |                           |  |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| good news messages, 142 | routine inquiry, 143      | direct claim, 163                        |
| neutral messages, 142   | true question form, 145   | adjustment grant, 166                    |
| direct order, 142       | order acknowledgment, 155 | internal-operational communications, 169 |
| objective, 142          | thank-you messages, 157   |  |

## CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS

- 1 When is the direct order appropriate in inquiries? When would you use the indirect order? Give examples. **LO1**
- 2 "Explanations in inquiries merely add length and should be eliminated." Discuss. **LO3**
- 3 Discuss why just reporting truthfully may not be a sufficient strategy for handling negative information in messages answering inquiries. **LO4**
- 4 Defend a policy of doing more than asked in answering routine inquiries. Can the policy be carried too far? **LO4**
- 5 What can acknowledgment messages do to build goodwill? **LO5**
- 6 Discuss situations where the following email forms of an order acknowledgment would be preferred: form message and a special message. **LO5**
- 7 Discuss how problems (vague orders, back orders) should be handled in messages acknowledging orders. **LO5**
- 8 Why is it usually advisable to do more than just grant the claim in an adjustment-grant message? **LO7**
- 9 Discuss the use of directness in internal-operational communications. Why is it desirable? Can it be overdone? When might indirectness be appropriate? **LO8**

## SKILLS BUILDING EXERCISES

- 1 Point out the shortcomings in this email response to an inquiry about a short course in business communication that Casey Webster's company offered to its employees. The course was taught by a local college professor. Mr. Braden's initial inquiry included five questions: (1) How did the professor perform? (2) What was the course format (length, meeting structure)? (3) What was the employee evaluation of the instruction? (4) Was the course adapted to the company and its technical employees? (5) Was homework assigned? **LO1, LO2, LO4**

Subject: Course evaluation

Mr. Braden:

Your January 17 inquiry addressed to the Training Director has been referred to me for attention since we have no one with that title. I do have some training responsibilities and was the one who organized the in-house course on clear writing. You asked five questions about our course.

Concerning your question about the instructor, Professor Alonzo Britt, I can report that he did an acceptable job in the classroom.

Some of the students, including this writer, felt that the emphasis was too much on grammar and punctuation, however. He did assign homework, but it was not excessive.

We had class two hours a day from 3:00 to 5:00 PM every Thursday for eight weeks. Usually the professor lectured the first hour. He was a good lecturer but sometimes talked over the heads of the students. This was the main complaint in the evaluations the students made at the end of the course, but they had many good comments to make also. Some did not like the content, which they said was not adapted to the needs of a technical worker. Overall, the professor got a rating of B- on a scale of A to F.

We think the course was good, but it could have been better adapted to our needs and our people. I also think it was too long—about 10 hours (five meetings) would have been enough. Also, we think the professor spent too much time lecturing and not enough on application work in class.

Please be informed that the information about Professor Britt must be held in confidence.

Casey Webster

- 2 Point out the shortcomings in this message granting a claim for a fax machine received in damaged condition. Inspection of the package revealed that the damage did not occur in transit. **LO7**

Dear Ms. Orsag:

Your May 3 letter in which you claim that the Rigo FAX391 was received in damaged condition has been carefully considered. We inspect all our machines carefully before packing them, and we pack them carefully in strong boxes with Styrofoam supports that hold them snugly. Thus we cannot understand how the damage could have occurred.

Even so, we stand behind our product and will replace any that are damaged. However, we must ask that first you send us the defective one so we can inspect it. After your claim of damage has been verified, we will send you a new one.

We regret any inconvenience this situation may have caused you and assure you that problems like this rarely occur in our shipping department.

Scott Hilderbran

- 3 List your criticisms of this email message inquiring about a convenience store advertised for sale: **LO3**

Subject: Store details needed

Mr. Meeks:

This is in response to your advertisement in the May 17 *Daily Bulletin* in which you describe a convenience store in Clark City that you want to sell. I am very much interested since I would like to relocate in that area. Before I drive down to see the property, I need some preliminary information. Most important is the question of financing. I am wondering whether you would be willing to finance up to \$50,000 of the total if I could come up with the rest, and how much interest you would

charge and for how long. I also would like to have the figures for your operations for the past two or three years, including gross sales, expenses, and profits. I also need to know the condition of the building, including such information as when built, improvements made, repairs needed, and so on.

Hoping that you can get these answers to me soon so we can do business.

- 4 Criticize the following thank-you message from a college student to a professor who has sent her a job lead. **LO5**

Subject: Thanks

Dear Prof. Smith,

Thanks for the hot tip on the job! I'm interviewing there tomorrow!

Sarah

- 5 Critique the following direct claim message: **LO6**

I wonder if you would consider reducing the bill I recently received for repair work that Tom, one of your men, performed last week. I did not realize that he would charge me for the time he spent going to Home Depot to get the parts he needed. If I'd known this, I probably wouldn't have chosen your company to do the work.

Please let me know your reply as soon as possible.

Kim Keeley

- 6 Criticize the following operational message from a restaurant manager: **(LO8)**

Wait staff:

It has come to my attention that our customer service is substandard. We will therefore hold mandatory training sessions over the next three weeks. See your shift supervisor to plan your work schedule so that you can attend.

## PROBLEM-SOLVING CASES

### Routine Inquiries

1 You recently learned about a service organization on your campus, Mentors for Majors. The Mentors are alumni and other working professionals who have agreed to field student inquiries about the nature of their jobs, about strategies for career success, and so forth.

You've been thinking about a certain kind of career, and you'd like to get more information about it from an experienced professional. Checking over the list, you find

2 You are a sales manager in a company (you choose a kind), and you just attended a

that there's a mentor in this very area. Write an email to the person in which you ask your questions. Find out the main things you'd like to know about this field of employment in a way that shows consideration for the reader and demonstrates your own serious interest in that type of job. (If your instructor directs, use either someone you know or someone you've researched on the Internet and through other resources. Turn in a one-paragraph profile of this person along with your email of inquiry.)