

CASES

WRITING PERSUASIVE BUSINESS MESSAGES

MICROBLOGGING SKILLS

1. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages [LO-3] You've been trying for months to convince your boss, company CEO Will Florence, to start using Twitter. You've told him that top executives in numerous industries now use Twitter as a way to connect with customers and other stakeholders without going through the filters and barriers of formal corporate communications, but he doesn't see the value.

Your task You come up with the brilliant plan to demonstrate Twitter's usefulness using Twitter itself. First, find three executives from three different companies who are on Twitter (choose any companies and executives you find interesting). Second, study their tweets to get a feel for the type of information they share. Third, if you don't already have a Twitter account set up for this class, set one up for the purposes of this exercise (you can deactivate later). Fourth, write four tweets to demonstrate the value of executive microblogging: one that summarizes the value of having a company CEO use Twitter and three support tweets, each one summarizing how your three real-life executive role models use Twitter.

EMAIL SKILLS

2. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages [LO-3] As someone who came of age in the "post email" world of blogs, wikis, social networks, and other Web 2.0 technologies, you were rather disappointed to find your new employer solidly stuck in the age of email. You use email, of course, but it is only one of the tools in your communication toolbox. From your college years, you have hands-on experience with a wide range of social media tools, having used them to collaborate on school projects, to become involved in your local community, to learn more about various industries and professions, and to research potential employers during your job search. (In fact, without social media, you might never have heard about your current employer in the first place.) Moreover, your use of social media on the job has already paid several important dividends, including finding potential sales contacts at several large companies, connecting with peers in other companies to share ideas for working more efficiently, and learning about some upcoming legislative matters in your state that could profoundly hamper your company's current way of doing business.

You hoped that by setting an example through your own use of social media at work, your new colleagues and company management would quickly adopt these tools as well. However, just the opposite has happened. Waiting in your email in-box this morning was a message from the CEO, announcing that the company is now cutting off access to social networking websites and banning the use of any social media at work. The message

says using company time and company computers for socializing is highly inappropriate and might be considered grounds for dismissal in the future if the problem gets out of hand.

Your task You are stunned by the message. You fight the urge to fire off a hotly worded reply to straighten out the CEO's misperceptions. Instead, you wisely decide to send a message to your immediate superior first, explaining why you believe the new policy should be reversed. Using your boss's favorite medium (email, of course!), write a persuasive message, explaining why Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking technologies are valid—and valuable—business tools. Bolster your argument with examples from other companies and advice from communication experts.

LETTER WRITING SKILLS

3. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages [LO-3] The coffee shop across the street from your tiny apartment is your haven away from home—great beverages, healthy snacks, an atmosphere that is convivial but not so lively that you can't focus on homework, and free wireless. It lacks only one thing: some way to print out your homework and other files when you need hard copy. Your college's libraries and computer labs provide printers, but you live three miles from campus, and it's a long walk or an inconvenient bus ride.

Your task Write a letter to the owner of the coffee shop, encouraging her to set up a printing service to complement the free wireless access. Propose that the service run at break-even prices, just enough to pay for paper, ink cartridges, and the cost of the printer itself. The benefit to the shop would be enticing patrons to spend more time—and therefore more of their coffee and tea money—in the shop. You might also mention that you had to take the bus to campus to print this letter, so you bought your afternoon latte somewhere else.

BLOGGING SKILLS / TEAM SKILLS

4. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages [LO-3] As a strong advocate for the use of social media in business, you are pleased by how quickly people in your company have taken up blogging, wiki writing, and other new-media activities. You are considerably less excited by the style and quality of what you see in the writing of your colleagues. Many seem to have interpreted "authentic and conversational" to mean "anything goes." Several Twitter users in the company seem to have abandoned any pretense of grammar and spelling. A few managers have dragged internal disagreements about company strategy out into public view, arguing with each other through comments on various industry-related forums. Production demonstration videos have been posted to the company's YouTube channel virtually unedited, making the whole firm look unpolished and unprofessional. The company CEO has written some blog posts that bash competitors with coarse and even crude language.

You pushed long and hard for greater use of these tools, so you feel a sense of responsibility for this situation. In addition, you are viewed by many in the company as the resident

expert on social media, so you have some “expertise authority” on this issue. On the other hand, you are only a first-level manager, with three levels of managers above you, so while you have some “position authority” as well, you can hardly dictate best practices to the managers above you.

Your task Working with two other students, write a post for the company’s internal blog (which is not viewable outside the company), outlining your concerns about these communication practices. Use the examples mentioned above, and make up any additional details you need. Emphasize that although social media communication is often less formal and more flexible than traditional business communication, it shouldn’t be unprofessional. You are thinking of proposing a social media training program for everyone in the company, but for this message you just want to bring attention to the problem.

EMAIL SKILLS

5. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages
[LO-3] Whole Foods Market has grown into a nationwide chain by catering to consumer desires for healthier foods and environmentally sensitive farming methods. Along with selling these products, the company makes a commitment “to be active participants in our local communities.” Whole Foods not only donates 5 percent of after-tax profits to not-for-profit organizations but also financially supports employees who volunteer their time for community service projects. Many Whole Foods stores donate food and household supplies to food banks in their local communities.

You are the manager of the Whole Foods Market on Ponce de Leon Avenue in Atlanta. You developed a program for donating surplus food to local food banks. Because of the success of that program, top executives have asked you to help other Whole Foods stores coordinate this effort into a chainwide food donation program, “Whole Foods for Life.” Ideally, by streamlining the process chainwide, the company would be able to increase the number of people it helps and to get more of its employees involved.

You have a limited budget for the program, so the emphasis has to be on using resources already available to the stores and tapping into employees’ creativity to come up with locally relevant ideas.¹⁷

Your task Write a persuasive email message to all managers at Whole Foods Market, explaining the new program and requesting that they help by pooling ideas they’ve gleaned from their local experience. Even if they don’t have food-donation programs currently in place, you want to hear ideas from them and their employees for this charitable project. With their help, you’ll choose the best ideas to develop the new Whole Foods for Life program.

EMAIL SKILLS

6. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages
[LO-3] Your new company, WorldConnect Language Services, started well and is going strong. However, to expand

beyond your Memphis, Tennessee, home market, you need a one-time infusion of cash to open branch offices in other cities around the Southeast. At the Entrepreneur’s Lunch Forum you attended yesterday, you learned about several angels, as they are called in the investment community—private individuals who invest money in small companies in exchange for a share of ownership. One such angel, Melinda Sparks, told the audience she is looking for investment opportunities outside high technology, where angels often invest their money. She also indicated that she looks for entrepreneurs who know their industries and markets well, who are passionate about the value they bring to the marketplace, who are committed to growing their businesses, and who have a solid plan for how they will spend an investor’s money. Fortunately, you meet all of her criteria.

Your task Draft an email message to Sparks, introducing yourself and your business and asking for a meeting at which you can present your business plan in more detail. Explain that your Memphis office was booked to capacity within two months of opening, thanks to the growing number of international business professionals looking for translators and interpreters. You’ve researched the entire Southeast region and identified at least 10 other cities that could support language services offices such as yours. Making up whatever other information you need, draft a four-paragraph message following the AIDA model, ending with a request for a meeting within the next four weeks.

BLOGGING SKILLS / PORTFOLIO BUILDER

7. Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages
[LO-3] Like most other companies today, your firm makes extensive use of the web for internal and external communication. However, after reading about the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), you’ve become concerned that your company’s various websites haven’t been designed to accommodate people with disabilities or age-related limitations. Fortunately, as one of the company’s top managers, you have a perfect forum for letting everyone in the company know how important accessible web design is: Your internal blog is read by the vast majority of employees and managers throughout the company.

Your task Visit the WAI website at www.w3.org/wai and find the two articles “Introduction to Web Accessibility” and “Developing a Web Accessibility Business Case for Your Organization: Overview.” Using the information you learn in these articles, write a post for your blog that emphasizes how important it is for your company’s websites to become more accessible. You don’t have direct authority over the company’s web developers, so it would be inappropriate for you to request them to take any specific action. Your goal is simply to raise awareness and encourage everyone to consider the needs of the company’s online audiences. Don’t worry about the technical aspects of web accessibility; focus instead on the benefits of improving accessibility.¹⁸

WRITING MARKETING AND SALES MESSAGES

LETTER WRITING SKILLS / PORTFOLIO BUILDER

8. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages [LO-3] Water polo is an active sport that provides great opportunities for exercise and for learning the collaborative skills involved in teamwork. You can learn more at www.usawaterpolo.org.

Your task Write a one-page letter to parents of 10- to 14-year-old boys and girls, promoting the health and socialization benefits of water polo and encouraging them to introduce their children to the sport through a local club. Tell them they can learn more about the sport and find a club in their area by visiting the USA Water Polo website.

WEB WRITING SKILLS

9. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages [LO-3] Natalie Sisson bills herself as the “Suitcase Entrepreneur,” and she’s living proof that one can live an adventurous life and build a thriving business—she has been traveling the world since she left her native New Zealand in 2006. She offers business and social media coaching, and she recently compiled her social media advice in a PDF e-book, *The Entrepreneur’s Social Media Workout*.

Sisson has been offering her social media e-book for free to anyone who subscribes to her email newsletter. However, as the assistant she recently hired, you convinced her the book was valuable enough on its own to warrant a small purchase price. She decided to give it a try and set the price at \$10.00, with one catch: you need to write the website copy to promote the e-book.

Your task First, visit <http://real-timeupdates.com/bce6>, click on Student Assignments and then Chapter 9, page 243, Case 9 to download the e-book. Then visit Sisson’s website at <http://womanzworld.com> to learn more about her business experiences. Now write webpage copy (at least 200 words but no more than 400) to promote the e-book and encourage people to place an order.

EMAIL SKILLS

10. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages [LO-3] The oud (rhymes with “mood”) is a popular musical instrument in many cultures from northern Africa to southwest Asia, enjoying the same status in these countries as the guitar enjoys in Europe and the Americas. The oud, which dates back to the seventh century, was also the ancestor of the European-style lute that had its heyday during the Renaissance.

Many guitar players are familiar with the lute, but probably fewer with the oud. As the marketing director for Your World Instruments (www.yourworldinstruments.com) you’d like to encourage guitar players to consider the oud. Some might want to just explore another musical heritage. Others might want to expand their sonic palettes, so to speak, giving their music a broader range of sounds.

Your task Write a brief email message that encourages guitar players to try something new. (Or something old, more precisely.) The people to whom you will be writing have heard from the company before, many are past customers, and all have opted-in to the email list. The call to action is encouraging these musicians to click through to the website to watch videos of expert oud players and to learn more about these storied instruments.¹⁹

INFORMATION SHARING SKILLS

11. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages [LO-4] At IBM, you’re one of the coordinators for the annual Employee Charitable Contributions Campaign. Since 1978, the company has helped employees contribute to more than 2,000 health and human service agencies. These groups may offer child care, treat substance abuse, provide health services, or fight illiteracy, homelessness, and hunger. Some offer disaster relief or care for the elderly. All deserve support. They’re carefully screened by IBM, one of the largest corporate contributors of cash, equipment, and people to nonprofit organizations and educational institutions, both in the United States and elsewhere around the world. As your literature states, the program “has engaged our employees more fully in the important mission of corporate citizenship.”

During the winter holidays, you target agencies that cater to the needs of displaced families, women, and children. It’s not difficult to raise enthusiasm. The prospect of helping children enjoy the holidays—children who otherwise might have nothing—usually awakens the spirit of your most distracted workers. But some of them wait until the last minute and then forget.

Employees have until Friday, December 16, to come forth with cash contributions. To make it in time for holiday deliveries, they can also bring in toys, food, and blankets through Tuesday, December 20. They shouldn’t have any trouble finding the collection bins; they’re everywhere, marked with bright red banners. But some people will want to call you with questions or (you hope) to make credit card contributions: 800-658-3899, ext. 3342.²⁰

Your task It’s December 14. Write a 75- to 100-word instant message encouraging last-minute gifts.

BLOGGING SKILLS

12. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages [LO-4] Other than possibly wrinkling their noses at that faint smell that wafts out of the plastic bags when they bring clothes home from the dry cleaner, many consumers probably don’t pay much attention to the process that goes on behind the scenes at their neighborhood cleaner. However, traditional dry cleaning is a chemically intense process—so much so that these facilities require special environmental permits and monitoring by government agencies.

At Kansas City’s Hangers Cleaners, the process is different—much different. The company’s innovative machines use safe liquid carbon dioxide (CO₂) and specially developed detergents to clean clothes. The process requires no heat (making it easier on

clothes) and has no need for the toxic, combustible perchloroethylene used in conventional dry cleaning (making it safer for employees and the environment). Customers can tell the difference, too. As one put it, "Since I started using Hangers, my clothes are softer, cleaner and they don't have that chemical smell."

Your task Because many consumers aren't familiar with the technical details of traditional dry cleaning, they don't immediately grasp why Hangers's method is better for clothes, employees, and the environment. Write a post for the company blog, explaining why Hangers is different. Limit yourself to 400 words. You can learn more about the company and its unique process at www.hangerskc.com.²¹

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS

13. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages; Media Skills: Social Networking [LO-4], Chapter 6 Curves is a fitness center franchise that caters to women who may not feel at home in traditional gyms. With its customer-focused and research-based approach, Curves has become a significant force in the fitness industry and one of the most successful franchise operations in history.²²

Your task Read the Overview and History sections at www.curves.com/about-curves. Imagine that you are adapting this material for the Info tab on the company's Facebook page. Write a "Company Overview" (95–100 words) and a "Mission" statement (45–50 words).

SOCIAL NETWORKING SKILLS / TEAMWORK SKILLS

14. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages; Media Skills: Social Networking [LO-4], Chapter 7 You chose your college or university based on certain expectations, and you've been enrolled long enough now to have some idea about whether those expectations have been met. In other words, you are something of an expert about the "consumer benefits" your school can offer prospective students.

Your task In a team of four students, interview six other students who are not taking this business communication course. Try to get a broad demographic and psychographic sample, including students in a variety of majors and programs. Ask these students (1) why they chose this college or university and (2) whether the experience has met their expectations so far. To ensure the privacy of your respondents, do not record their names with their answers. Each member of the team should then answer these same two questions, so that you have responses from a total of ten students.

After compiling the responses (you might use Google Docs or a similar collaboration tool so that everyone on the team has easy access to the information), analyze them as a team to look for any recurring "benefit themes." Is it the quality of the education? Research opportunities? Location? The camaraderie of school sporting events? The chance to meet and study with fascinating students from a variety of backgrounds? Identify two or three strong benefits that your college or university can promise—and deliver—to prospective students.

Now nominate one member of the team to draft a short marketing message that could be posted on the Notes tab of your school's Facebook page. The message should include a catchy title that makes it clear the message is a student's perspective on why this is a great place to get a college education. When the draft is ready, the other members of the team should review it individually. Finally, meet as a team to complete the message.

MICROBLOGGING SKILLS

15. Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages; Media Skills: Microblogging [LO-4], Chapter 7 Effective microblogging messages emphasize clarity and conciseness and so do effective sales messages.

Your task Find the website of any product that can be ordered online (any product you find interesting and that is appropriate to use for a class assignment). Adapt the information on the website, using your own words, and write four tweets to promote the product. The first should get your audience's attention (with an intriguing benefit claim, for example), the second should build audience interest by providing some support for the claim you made in the first message, the third should increase readers' desire to have the product by layering on one or two more benefits, and the fourth should motivate readers to take action and place an order. Your first three tweets can be up to 140 characters but the fourth should be limited to 120 to accommodate a URL (you don't need to include the URL in your message, however).

If your class is set up with private Twitter accounts, use your private account to send your messages. Otherwise, email your four messages to your instructor or post them on your class blog, as your instructor directs.

Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage

You can download the text of this assignment from <http://real-timeupdates.com/bce6>; click on Student Assignment and then click on Chapter 9. Improve Your Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage.

Level 1: Self-Assessment — Commas

Review Section 2.6 in the Handbook of Grammar, Mechanics, and Usage, and then complete the following 15 items. In items 1–15, insert required commas.

1. Please send us four cases of filters two cases of wing nuts and a bale of rags.
2. Your analysis however does not account for returns.
3. As a matter of fact she has seen the figures.
4. Before May 7 1999 they wouldn't have minded either.
5. After Martha has gone talk to me about promoting her.
6. Stoneridge Inc. will go public on September 9 2014.
7. We want the new copier not the old model.
8. "Talk to me" Sandra said "before you change a thing."
9. Because of a previous engagement Dr. Stoeve will not be able to attend.