

KEY TERMS

Buffer p. 213

Goodwill p. 209

CASE STUDY

Making the Best of Bad News

This case study will help you review the chapter material by applying it to a specific scenario.

Henry Lai is having a bad week. On Monday, Henry got into a minor car accident on his way to his business communication class. It was his third accident of the year, and he was late for class. Today, he is almost late again. As Henry left his apartment, his neighbor stopped him in the hallway to ask if he read the landlord's email announcing an increase in rent. Henry does not know how he'll handle these extra expenses. On top of a rent increase, he may need to pay for a repair to his broken computer printer, which may not be covered by a manufacturer warranty. And he also needs to help pay for the anniversary party he and his brothers are throwing for their parents in May.

Henry slips into class just in time to get Professor Anderson's assignment sheet. As Henry reads it, he begins to smile. This is an assignment he can definitely handle. Professor Anderson is requiring students to pick one or two types of writing—routine, persuasive, good news, or bad news—and over the next five weeks collect samples to analyze. The goal is to evaluate these pieces according to the guidelines in the textbook and suggest revisions. A lot is going on in Henry's life, and many people are communicating with him. In fact, he could begin the assignment right after class by reading his landlord's email about the rent increase.

Softening the Impact of Bad News

After class, Henry rushed to the computer lab on campus to check his email. Would his landlord raise the rent to more than he could afford? He is not looking forward to reading the bad news. See the landlord's email message to the right.

As Henry finishes reading, he thinks, "I'd like to stay. This must be a pretty good email." Would you agree?

QUESTION 1: Evaluate this email. Would you recommend any revisions?

email

Message Insert Options Format Text Review

To...

Send

tenant-list@Wycoff-Rentals.com

Subject: Rental Increase

Dear Tenants:

When you get your lease in the next few months, you will see a 15 percent raise in rent. I want to explain to you why rent is increasing. I value each of you as tenants and neighbors, and I hope you will understand and choose to stay at 727 Seward Street.

As you probably know, both property taxes and the cost of heating fuel have increased this past year. This winter, it cost me 20 percent more to heat your apartments—and mine—than the year before. My total costs as landlord have gone up 30 percent.

The rent increase barely covers these increased costs. In addition, during this upcoming year, I will be painting the halls and buying new equipment for the laundry room. I want this building to remain a good place for us to live, and like every year in the past, this year I will make more improvements.

I know more rent is a hardship since many of you are in school as well as working. But the rent here is still the most reasonable in the neighborhood.

Please let me know if you don't plan to stay, but I hope you do.

Sincerely,
Edward Nikaza

Wycoff Rentals
62253 Main Street
Chesterfield, MO 63005
(636) 555-1926

Accompanies Question 1

Bad News in the Mail

When Henry returns home from class, he finds a letter in his box from his auto insurance company. He opens it, glances quickly, and then puts it aside. At first glance, the letter appears to be announcing a raise in premiums. He doesn't have time to read carefully. Later that evening, though, he decides to pick it up to read more carefully. See the letter on the next page.

WRITING

- Who might post negative comments and what might they comment about?
 - Provide one or two ideas for each business about how they might minimize the chance of negative comments.
- Now imagine a company that manufactures a baby seat that the Consumer Product Safety Commission has judged unsafe. The company has voluntarily recalled the seat. Assume this company wants to plan for negative comments on social media.

Find examples of negative comments posted by customers to third-party review sites, such as TripAdvisor or OpenTable. Or find negative comments posted to a company's Facebook wall. Choose posts that include replies from the businesses. Then select two examples: one that responds genuinely, and another that does not. Copy or print each negative comment and its response. Evaluate how each response is or is not polite, personal, and genuine. Summarize your findings in a message to your professor and include the examples. You may also be asked to present your findings, including your examples, to the class.

EXERCISE 20 Apologizing for a mistake [Related to the Ethics feature on page 227]

Bridgett Sherwood is the owner of Sherwood Florist, a local flower shop that specializes in customized arrangements. Last Saturday, Bridgett had floral orders for two large events: a fundraising dinner at Beaumont Community College's alumni center, and a wedding and reception at a nearby church and banquet hall. The college ordered 20 centerpieces to match the school's colors (purple and yellow) and integrate their mascot (the pirates). In addition to bouquets and boutonnières, the wedding order also includes 20 purple and yellow centerpieces but without the pirate theme. During delivery, the centerpieces for each event were mistakenly reversed. The college doesn't notice the missing pirates from its purple-and-yellow arrangements, but the bride's mother, Clarice Branson, is very upset. No one associated with the wedding noticed the pirates in the centerpieces until after the guests had arrived at the reception and Bridgett had left the flower shop. Monday morning, Clarice Branson calls Bridgett indicating that she will quickly spread the word about Sherwood Florist's ineptness. Bridgett apologizes for the error and significantly discounts the order. Compose an apology letter to the company the revised bill that will be mailed to Mrs. Branson. Use the guidelines outlined in the Ethics feature in this chapter to organize the content of the message. Submit the letter to your instructor for evaluation.

EXERCISE 21 Cancelling a keynote speaker

Your company has invited one of its biggest clients, Vince Embry, to be a keynote speaker at a company retreat. Vince has cancelled other engagements and arranged his calendar to accommodate your schedule. Vince also purchased an airline ticket at his own expense and has begun writing his speech. However, you've just learned that the company must cancel the retreat due to budget cuts. Create a message to Vince communicating the bad news that the retreat is cancelled so he will not have the opportunity to speak. Consider what you can offer that will make up for his inconvenience and expense.

EXERCISE 22 Responding to a customer's complaint

You are a manager at Home Goods, which sells a wide variety of bath, kitchen, and other household items. Several months ago, you offered a special sale on a specific FreshAir humidifier, Model 2850. A customer who purchased one of these humidifiers last week to purchase more filters for your store no longer carries the FreshAir humidifier. However, your store no longer carries the FreshAir humidifier. The store offers several replacement filters for not carry the specific model the customer letter to "The Manager" complaining about the FreshAir humidifier. Caring that he plans to tell everyone he knows about the FreshAir humidifier, you need to maintain them. Although you d