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Book: Essentials of Business Communication

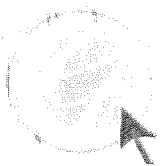
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Chapter 6 : Positive Messages (pp. 142-177)

Positive Messages: Chapter Objectives



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OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

- Understand when business letters are more appropriate than e-mails and memos, and explain how business letters should be formatted.
- Write direct messages that make requests and respond to inquiries.
- Create effective and clear step-by-step instructions.
- Compose messages that make direct claims and voice complaints.
- Prepare adjustment messages that regain the confidence of customers and promote further business.
- Write goodwill messages that convey kindness and build a positive image of the writer and his or her company.

Positive Messages: Letters, E-Mails, and Memos

In the workplace, most messages are positive or neutral and, therefore, direct. Positive messages are routine and straightforward; they help workers in organizations conduct everyday business. Such routine messages include simple requests for information or action, replies to customers, and explanations to fellow employees. Other types of positive messages are instructions as well as direct claims and complaints. They may take the form of e-mails, memos, and letters. Memos are an important channel of communication within an organization while letters are a vital paper-based external channel. E-mail is increasingly used to communicate not only within an organization, but also with outside audiences.

Chapter 5 discussed electronic messages as well as memos and focused on their format and safe, professional use. This chapter will familiarize you with the direct writing plans for positive messages whether paper-based or electronic. First, though, you will learn when to respond by letter and how to format a business letter.

The principal channel for delivering messages outside an organization is business letters.

Understanding Business Letters

Despite the advent of e-mail and other electronic communication technologies, in certain situations letters are still the preferred channel of communication for delivering messages *outside* an organization. Positive, straightforward letters help organizations perform everyday business and convey goodwill to outsiders. Such

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letters go to suppliers, government agencies, other businesses, and, most important, customers. The letters to customers receive a high priority because these messages encourage product feedback, project a favorable image of the organization, and promote future business.

Even with the electronic media available today, a letter remains one of the most powerful and effective ways to get your message across. Although e-mail is incredibly successful for both internal and external communication, many important messages still call for letters. Business letters are necessary when (a) a permanent record is required; (b) confidentiality is paramount; (c) formality and sensitivity are essential; and (d) a persuasive, well-considered presentation is important.

Producing a Permanent Record

Many business transactions require a permanent record. For example, when a company enters into an agreement with another company, business letters introduce the agreement and record decisions and points of understanding. Although telephone conversations and e-mails may be exchanged, important details are generally recorded in business letters that are kept in company files. Business letters deliver contracts, explain terms, exchange ideas, negotiate agreements, answer vendor questions, and maintain customer relations.

Business letters are important for messages requiring a permanent record, confidentiality, formality, sensitivity, and a well-considered presentation.

Providing Confidentiality

Carefree use of e-mail was once a sign of sophistication. Today, however, communicators know how dangerous it is to entrust confidential and sensitive information to digital channels. A writer in *The New York Times* recognized the unique value of letters when he said, "Despite the sneering term *snail mail*, plain old letters are the form of long-distance communication least likely to be intercepted, misdirected, forwarded, retrieved, or otherwise inspected by someone you didn't have in mind."¹

Conveying Formality and Sensitivity

Business letters presented on company stationery carry a sense of formality and importance not possible with e-mail. They look important. They carry a nonverbal message saying the writer considered the message to be so significant and the receiver so prestigious that the writer cared enough to write a real message. Business letters deliver more information than e-mail because they are written on stationery that usually is printed with company information such as logos, addresses, titles, and contact details.

Delivering Persuasive, Well-Considered Messages

When a business communicator must be persuasive and can't do it in person, a business letter is more effective than other communication channels. Letters can persuade people to change their actions, adopt new beliefs, make donations, contribute their time, and try new products. Direct-mail letters remain a powerful tool to promote services and products, boost online and retail traffic, and solicit contributions. Business letters represent deliberate communication. They give you a chance to think through what you want to say, organize your thoughts, and write a well-considered argument. You will learn more about writing persuasive and marketing messages in Chapter 8.



“Correspondence on business letterhead is decreasing, but there are times when only professionally typed correspondence on business letterhead can convey the desired message and tone.”

—Margaret H. Caddell, College of Veterinary Medicine, Tuskegee University

Formatting Business Letters

A business letter conveys silent messages beyond that of its printed words. The letter's appearance and format reflect the writer's carefulness and experience. A short letter bunched at the top of a sheet of paper, for example, looks as though it were prepared in a hurry or by an amateur.

The block style is a popular business letter format.

For your letters to make a good impression, you need to select an appropriate format. The block style shown in Figure 6.1 is a popular format. In this style the parts of a letter—dateline, inside address, body, and so on—are set flush left on the page. The letter is arranged on the page so that it is centered and framed by white space. Most letters have margins of 1 to 1.5 inches.

In preparing business letters, be sure to use ragged-right margins; that is, don't allow your computer to justify the right margin and make all lines end evenly.

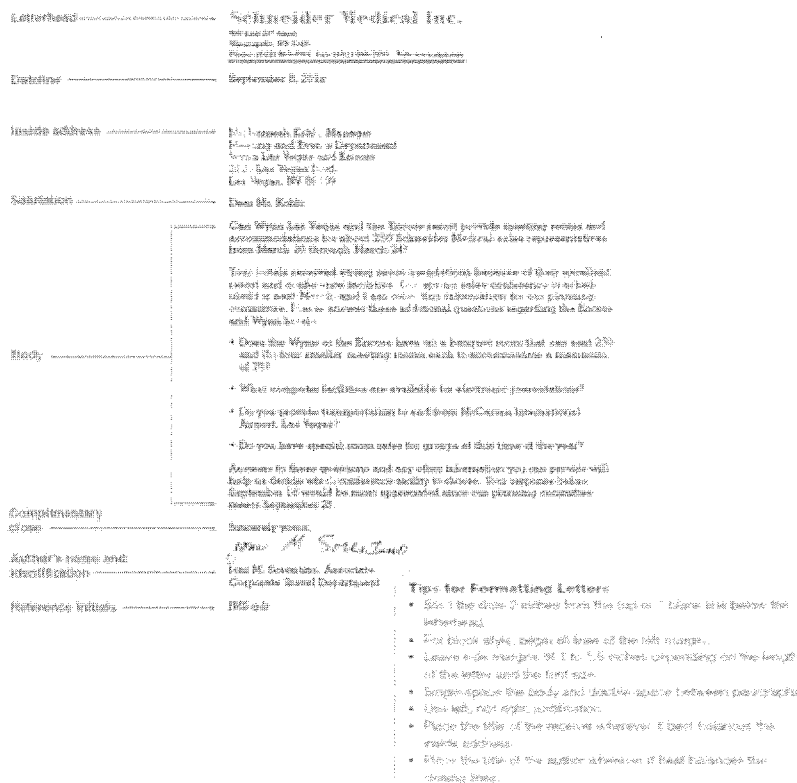


FIGURE 6.1 Formatting a Direct Request

Business Letter in Block Style © Cengage Learning 2013

Unjustified margins improve readability, say experts, by providing visual stops and by making it easier to tell where the next line begins. Although book publishers use justified right margins, as you see on this page, your letters should be ragged right. Study Figure 6.1 for more tips on making your letters look professional. If you have questions about letter formats, see Appendix A.

Direct Requests and Response Messages

Most of your business messages will involve routine requests and responses to requests that are organized directly. Requests and replies may take the form of e-mails, memos, or letters. You might, for example, need to request information

Routine requests and replies follow a similar pattern, the direct strategy.

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from a hotel as you plan a company conference. You might be answering an inquiry from a customer about your services or products. These kinds of routine requests and replies follow a similar pattern, as shown in the following writing plan:

WRITING PLAN FOR DIRECT REQUEST AND RESPONSE MESSAGES



- Opening:** Ask the most important question first or express a polite command.

- **Body:** Explain the request logically and courteously. Ask other questions if necessary.
- **Closing:** Request a specific action with an end date, if appropriate, and show appreciation.

Creating Request Messages

When you are planning a message that requests information or action and you think your request will be received positively, start with the main idea first. The most emphatic positions in most documents are the opening and closing. Readers tend to look at them first. The writer, then, should capitalize on this tendency by putting the most significant statement first. The first sentence of a direct request is usually a question or a polite command. It should not be an explanation or justification, unless resistance to the request is expected. When the direct request is likely to be forthcoming, frontload your message, which means immediately tell the reader what you want.

Readers find the openings and closings of documents most interesting and often read them first.

A letter inquiring about hotel accommodations, shown in Figure 6.1, begins immediately with the most important idea: Can the hotel provide meeting rooms and accommodations for 250 people? Instead of opening with an explanation of who the writer is or how the writer happens to be writing this message, the letter begins directly.

If several questions must be asked, you have two choices. You can ask the most important question first, as shown in Figure 6.1. An alternate opening begins with a summary statement, such as *Please answer the following questions about providing meeting rooms and accommodations for 250 people from March 20 through March 24*. Avoid statements that begin with *Will you please* Although such a statement sounds like a question, it is actually a disguised command. Because you expect an action rather than a reply, you should punctuate this polite command with a period instead of a question mark. To avoid having to choose between a period and a question mark, just omit *Will you* and start with *Please answer*.

Begin a direct request with the most important question or a summarizing statement.

Providing Details in the Body

The body of a message that requests information or action provides necessary details. Remember that the quality of the information obtained from a request depends on the clarity of the inquiry. If you analyze your needs, organize your ideas, and frame your request logically, you are likely to receive a meaningful answer that doesn't require a follow-up message. Whenever possible, focus on benefits to the reader (*To ensure that you receive the exact sweater you want, send us your color choice*). To improve readability, itemize the appropriate information in bullets or numbered lists. Notice that the questions in Figure 6.1 are bulleted, and they are parallel. That is, they use the same balanced construction.

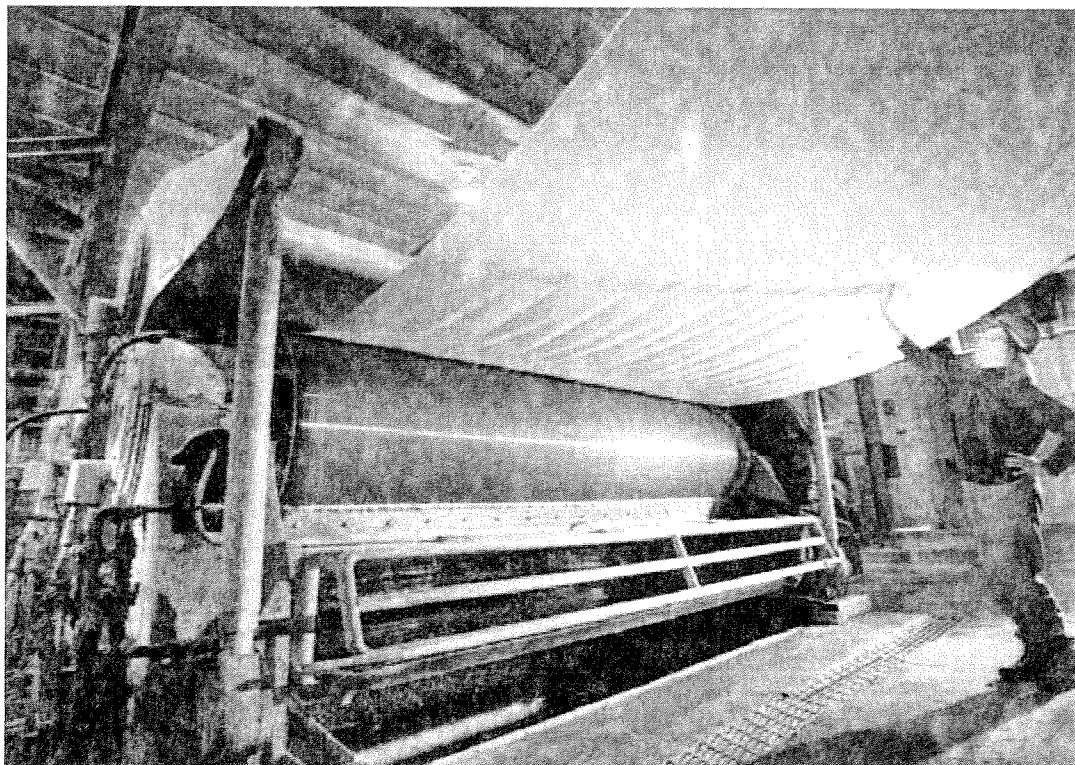
The body of a request message may contain an explanation or a list of questions.

Closing With Appreciation and an Action Request

In the closing tell the reader courteously what is to be done. If a date is important, set an end date to take action and explain why. Some careless writers end request messages simply with *Thank you*, forcing the reader to review the contents to

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WORKPLACE IN FOCUS



© Courtesy Domtar

Corporation

For a group project, middle schoolers at Portland's Mt. Scott Learning Center wrote letters to the Domtar Corporation urging the sustainable paper company to save forests. One letter referenced the class's green motto: "Don't be a Domtar." Eager to address students' concerns, CEO John Williams wrote a personal response and arranged for the vice president of sustainable development to visit the school. Students learned the amazing uses of recycled paper and got an inside look at how the paper industry promotes healthy forests. *What are tips for writing direct response letters?*

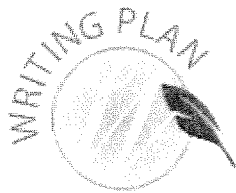
determine what is expected and when. You can save the reader time by spelling out the action to be taken. Avoid other overused endings such as *Thank you for your cooperation* (trite), *Thank you in advance for ...* (trite and presumptuous), and *If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call me* (suggests that you didn't make yourself clear).

Showing appreciation is always appropriate, but try to do so in a fresh and efficient manner. For example, you could hook your thanks to the end date (*Thanks for returning the questionnaire before May 5, when we will begin tabulation*). You might connect your appreciation to a statement developing reader benefits (*We are grateful for the information you will provide because it will help us serve you better*). You could briefly describe how the information will help you (*I appreciate this information that will enable me to ...*). When possible, make it easy for the reader to comply with your request (*Note your answers on this sheet and return it in the postage-paid envelope or Here is my e-mail address so that you can reach me quickly*).

Responding to Requests

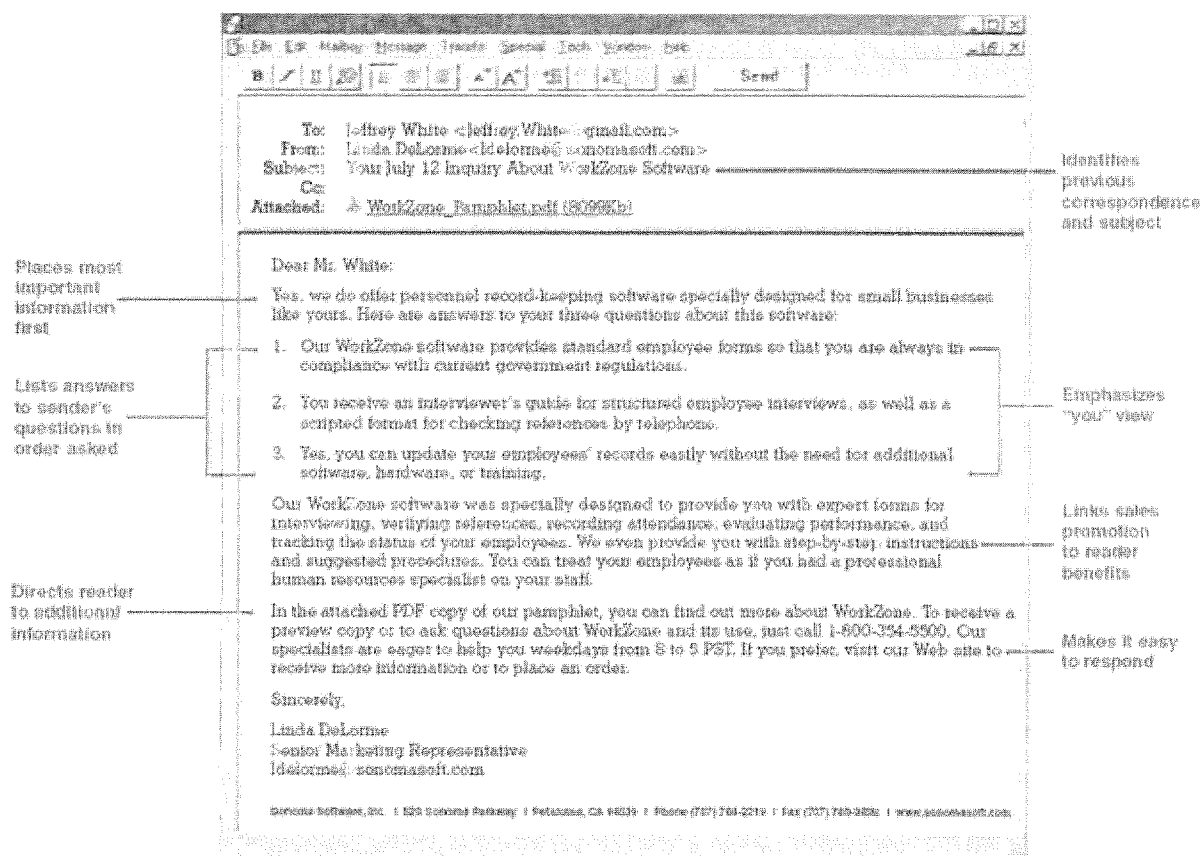
Often, your messages will respond directly and favorably to requests for information or action. A customer wants information about a product. A supplier asks to arrange a meeting. An employee inquires about a procedure, or a manager requests your input on a marketing campaign. In complying with such requests, you will want to apply the same direct pattern you used in making requests:

WRITING PLAN FOR LETTER, E-MAIL, AND MEMO REPLIES



- **Subject line:** Summarize the main information from your reply. (A subject line is optional in letters.)
- **Opening:** Start directly by responding to the request with a summary statement.
- **Body:** Provide additional information and details in a readable format.
- **Closing:** Add a concluding remark, summary, or offer of further assistance.

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FIGURE

6.2 Customer Response E-Mail © Cengage Learning 2013

A customer reply e-mail that starts with an effective subject line, as shown in Figure 6.2, helps the reader recognize the topic immediately. The subject line refers in abbreviated form to previous correspondence and/or summarizes a message (*Subject: Your July 12 Inquiry About WorkZone Software*). Knowledgeable business communicators use a subject line to refer to earlier correspondence so that in the first sentence, the most emphatic spot in a letter, they are free to emphasize the main idea.

In the first sentence of a direct reply e-mail, deliver the information the reader wants. Avoid wordy, drawn-out openings (*I am responding to your e-mail of December 1, in which you request information about ...*). More forceful and more efficient is an opener that answers the inquiry (*Here is the information you wanted about ...*). When agreeing to a request for action, announce the good news promptly (*Yes, I will be happy to speak to your business communication class on the topic of ...*).

In the body of your response, supply explanations and additional information. Because an e-mail, like any other document written for your company, is considered a legally binding contract, be sure to check facts and figures carefully. If a policy or procedure needs authorization, seek approval from a supervisor or executive before writing the letter.

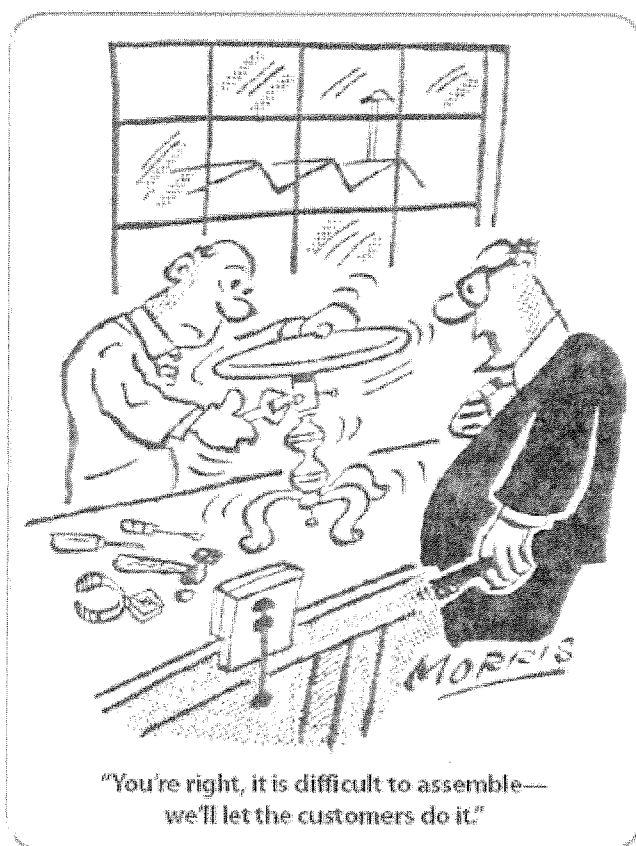
When answering a group of questions or providing considerable data, arrange the information logically and make it readable by using lists, tables, headings, boldface, italics, or other graphic devices. When customers or



People unable to express themselves clearly in writing limit their opportunities for professional and salaried employment.

—Bob Kerrey, chair of the National Commission on Writing

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prospective customers inquire about products or services, your response should do more than merely supply answers. Try to promote your organization and its products. Provide helpful information that satisfies the inquiry, but consider using the opportunity to introduce another product as well. Be sure to present the promotional material with attention to the “you” view and to reader benefits (*You can use our standardized tests to free you from time-consuming employment screening*).

In concluding a response message, make sure you are cordial and personal. Refer to the information provided or to its use (*The attached list summarizes our recommendations. We wish you all the best in redesigning your Web site.*). If further action is required, help the reader with specifics (*The Small Business Administration publishes a number of helpful booklets. Its Web address is ...*). To prevent abruptness, include a pleasant closing remark that shows your willingness to help the reader. Tailor your remarks to fit this e-mail and this reader. Avoid signing off with clichés (*If I may be of further assistance, don't hesitate to ...*). In your e-mail provide an electronic signature block with your contact information to enable the reader to contact you for follow-up.

Instruction Messages

Instruction messages describe how to complete a task. You may be asked to write instructions about how to repair a paper jam in the photocopier, order supplies, file a grievance, or hire new employees. Like requests and responses, instruction messages

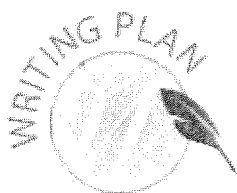
follow a straightforward, direct approach. They must use plain English and be especially clear. Instructions are different from policies and official procedures, which establish rules of conduct to be followed within an organization. We are most concerned with creating messages that clearly explain how to complete a task.

Instruction messages must clearly explain how to complete a task.

Dividing Instructions Into Steps

Before writing instructions for a process, be sure you understand the process completely. Create logical steps in the correct order. Practice completing the procedure yourself first. Here is a writing plan that will help you get started:

WRITING PLAN FOR INSTRUCTION E-MAILS AND MEMOS



- **Subject line:** Summarize the content of the message.
- **Opening:** Expand the subject line by stating the main idea concisely in a full sentence.
- **Body:** Divide the instructions into steps. List the steps in the order in which they are to be carried out. Arrange the items vertically with bullets or numbers. Begin each step with an action verb using the imperative mood (command language such as *do this, don't do that*).
- **Closing:** Request a specific action, summarize the message, or present a closing thought. If appropriate, include a deadline and a reason.

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The most effective way to list directions is to use command language called the imperative mood. Think recipes, owner manuals, and assembly instructions. The imperative mood differs from the indicative mood in that it requests an action, whereas the indicative mood describes a statement as shown here:

Indicative Mood	Imperative (Command) Mood
The contract should be sent immediately.	Send the contract immediately.
The first step involves loading the software.	Load the software first.
A survey of employees is necessary to learn what options they prefer.	Survey employees to learn the options they prefer.

If you are asked to prepare a list of instructions that is not part of a message, include a title such as “How to Clear Paper Jams.” Include an opening paragraph explaining why the instructions are needed.

Revising a Message Delivering Instructions

Figure 6.3 shows the first draft of an interoffice memo written by Troy Bell. His memo was meant to announce a new method for employees to follow in advertising open positions. However, the tone was negative, the explanation of the problem rambled, and the new method was unclear. Notice, too, that Troy's first draft told readers what they *shouldn't* do (*Do not submit advertisements for new employees directly to an Internet job bank or a newspaper*). It is more helpful to tell readers what they *should* do. Finally, Troy's first memo closed with a threat instead of showing readers how this new practice will help them.

In the revision Troy improved the tone considerably. The subject line contains a *please*, which is always pleasant to see even if one is giving an order. The subject line also includes a verb and specifies the purpose of the memo. Instead of expressing his ideas with negative words and threats, Troy revised his message to explain objectively and concisely what went wrong.

Troy realized that his original explanation of the new procedure was vague and unclear. To clarify the instructions, he itemized and numbered the steps. Each step begins with an action verb in the imperative (command) mode (*Write, Bring, Let, and Pick up*). It is sometimes difficult to force all the steps in a list into this kind of command language. Troy struggled, but by trying different wording, he finally found verbs that worked.

Numbered steps and action verbs improve the clarity of instructions.

Why should you go to so much trouble to make lists and achieve parallelism? Because readers can comprehend what you have said much more quickly. Parallel language also makes you look professional and efficient.

In writing messages that deliver instructions, be careful of tone. Today's managers and team leaders seek employee participation and cooperation. These goals can't be achieved, though, if the writer sounds like a dictator or an autocrat. Avoid making accusations and fixing blame. Rather, explain changes, give reasons, and suggest benefits to the reader. Assume that employees want to contribute to the success of the organization and to their own achievement. Notice in the Figure 6.3 revision that Troy tells readers that they will save time and have their open positions filled more quickly if they follow the new method.

Learning More About Writing Instructions

The writing of instructions is so important that we have developed a special bonus online supplement called *How to Write Instructions*. It provides more examples and information. This online supplement at www.cengagebrain.com extends your textbook with in-depth material including links to real businesses showing you examples of well-written instructions.

Learn more about how to write instructions in the special bonus online supplement called *How to Write Instructions* at www.cengagebrain.com.

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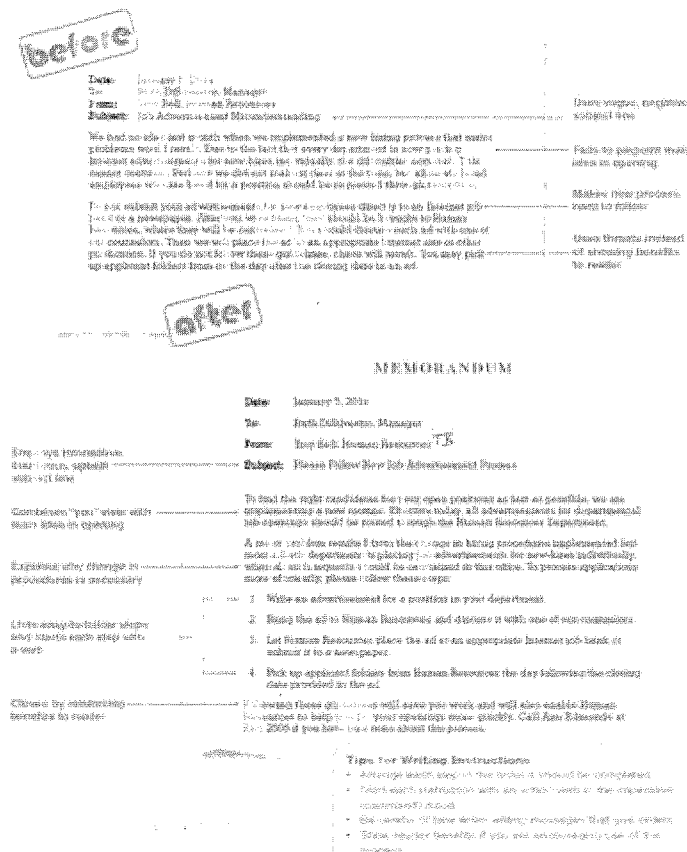


FIGURE 6.3 Memo Delivering Instructions © Cengage

Direct Claims and Complaints

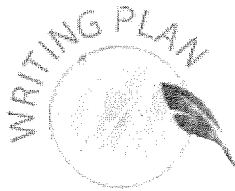
In business, many things can and do go wrong—promised shipments are late, warrantied goods fail, or service is disappointing. When you as a customer must write to identify or correct a wrong, the letter is called a *claim*. Straightforward

Claim messages register complaints and usually seek correction of a wrong.

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claims are those to which you expect the receiver to agree readily. Even these claims, however, often require a letter. Your first action may be a telephone call or an e-mail to submit your claim, but you may not be satisfied with the results. Claims written as letters are taken more seriously than telephone calls or e-mails, and they also establish a record of what happened. Straightforward claims use a direct approach. Claims that require persuasion are presented in Chapter 8.

WRITING PLAN FOR A DIRECT CLAIM



- **Opening:** Describe clearly the desired action.
- **Body:** Explain the nature of the claim, tell why the claim is justified, and provide details regarding the action requested.
- **Closing:** End pleasantly with a goodwill statement, and include an end date and action request, if appropriate.

Opening a Claim With a Clear Statement

When you, as a customer, have a legitimate claim or complaint, you can expect a positive response from a company. Smart businesses want to hear from their customers. They know that retaining a customer is far less costly than recruiting a new customer.

The direct strategy is best for simple claims that require no persuasion.

Open a claim with a clear statement of the problem or with the action you want the receiver to take. You might expect a replacement, a refund, a new order, credit to your account, correction of a billing error, free repairs, free inspection, or cancellation of an order. When the remedy is obvious, state it immediately (*Please correct an erroneous double charge of \$59 to my credit card for LapLink migration software. I accidentally clicked the Submit button twice*). When the remedy is less obvious, you might ask for a change in policy or procedure or simply for an explanation (*Because three of our employees with confirmed reservations were refused rooms September 16 in your hotel, would you please clarify your policy regarding reservations and late arrivals*).

Explaining and Justifying a Claim

In the body of a claim message, explain the problem and justify your request. Provide the necessary details so that the difficulty can be corrected without further correspondence. Avoid becoming angry or trying to fix blame. Bear in mind that the person reading your message is seldom responsible for the problem. Instead, state the facts logically, objectively, and unemotionally; let the reader decide on the causes. If sending a letter, enclose copies of all pertinent documents such as invoices, sales slips, catalog descriptions, and repair records. By the way, be sure to send copies and *not* your originals, which could be lost. When service is involved, cite the names of individuals you spoke to and the dates of calls. Assume that a company honestly wants to satisfy its customers—because most do. When an alternative remedy exists, spell it out (*If you are able to offer store credit only, please apply the second amount of \$59 to your TurboSpeed software and a LapLink USB cable that I would like to buy too*).

Providing details without getting angry improves the effectiveness of a claim message.

Concluding a Claim With a Specific Action Request

End a claim message with a courteous statement that promotes goodwill and summarizes your action request. If appropriate, include an end date (*I hope*

Written claims submitted promptly are taken more seriously than delayed ones.

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you understand that mistakes in ordering online sometimes occur. Because I have enjoyed your prompt service in the past, I hope that you will be able to issue a refund or store credit by May 2). Finally, in making claims, act promptly. Delaying claims makes them appear less important. Delayed claims are also more difficult to verify. By taking the time to put your claim in writing, you indicate your seriousness. A written claim starts a record of the problem, should later action be necessary. Be sure to keep a copy of your letter. When sending an e-mail, file an electronic copy of your customer claim in a folder for easy retrieval.

Putting It All Together and Revising

When Keith Krahnke received a statement showing a charge for a three-year service warranty that he did not purchase, he was furious. He called the store but failed to get satisfaction to his complaint. Then he decided to write. You can see the first draft of his direct claim letter in Figure 6.4. This draft gave him a chance to vent his anger, but it accomplished little else. The tone was belligerent, and the message assumed that the company intentionally mischarged him. Furthermore, it failed to tell the reader how to remedy the problem. The revision, also shown in Figure 6.4 tempered the tone, described the problem objectively, and provided facts and figures. Most important, it specified exactly what Keith wanted to be done.

Notice in Figure 6.4 that Keith used the personal business letter style, which is appropriate for you to use in writing personal messages. Your return address, but not your name, appears above the date.

Adjustments

Even the best-run and best-loved businesses occasionally receive claims or complaints from consumers. When a company receives a claim and decides to respond favorably, the message is called an *adjustment*. Most businesses make adjustments promptly: they replace merchandise, refund money, extend discounts, send coupons, and repair goods. Businesses make favorable adjustments to legitimate claims for two reasons. First, consumers are protected by contractual and tort law for recovery of damages. If, for example, you find an insect in a package of frozen peas, the food processor of that package is bound by contractual law to replace it. If you suffer injury, the processor may be liable for damages. Second, and more obviously, most organizations genuinely want to satisfy their customers and retain their business.

Most companies make adjustments promptly because (a) customers can sue if they are harmed and (b) most businesses want to please customers and keep their business.



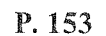
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In responding to customer claims, you must first decide whether to grant the claim. Unless the claim is obviously fraudulent or excessive, you will probably grant it. When you say yes, your adjustment message will be good news to the reader. Deliver that good news by using the direct pattern. When your response is no, the indirect pattern might be more appropriate. Chapter 7 discusses the indirect pattern for conveying negative news.

You have three goals in adjustment messages:

- Rectifying the wrong, if one exists
- Regaining the confidence of the customer
- Promoting further business

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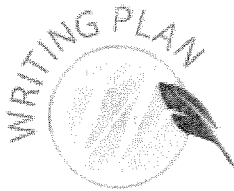
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Airline troubles continue to mount as weary air travelers complain of lost luggage, long delays, canceled flights, and soaring ticket prices. In one customer-service debacle, major U.S. carriers shut down 3,700 flights in a single month after failing to meet safety inspections mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration. The grounded flights affected hundreds of thousands of passengers, underscoring the airline industry's last-place finish in a Consumer Satisfaction Index survey conducted by the University of Michigan. *What guidelines should airline companies follow when writing adjustment letters to disgruntled customers?*

A positive adjustment message follows the direct strategy described in the following writing plan:

WRITING PLAN FOR ADJUSTMENT MESSAGES



- **Subject line (optional):** Identify the previous correspondence and refer to the main topic.
- **Opening:** Grant the request or announce the adjustment immediately.
- **Body:** Provide details about how you are complying with the request. Try to regain the customer's confidence. Apologize, if appropriate, but don't admit negligence.
- **Closing:** End positively with a forward-looking thought; express confidence in future business relations. Include a sales promotion, if appropriate. Avoid referring to unpleasantness.

Revealing Good News Up Front in an Adjustment Message

Instead of beginning with a review of what went wrong, present the good news immediately. When Kathy Nguyen responded to the claim of customer Ultima Electronics about a missing shipment, her first draft, shown at the top of Figure 6.5, was angry. No wonder. Ultima Electronics apparently had provided the wrong shipping address, and the goods were returned. Once Kathy and her company decided to send a second shipment and comply with the customer's claim, however, she had to give up the anger. Her goal was to regain the goodwill and the business of this customer. The improved version of her letter announces that a new shipment will arrive shortly.

Readers want to learn the good news immediately.

If you decide to comply with a customer's claim, let the receiver know immediately. Don't begin your letter with a negative statement (*We are very sorry to hear that you are having trouble with your dishwasher*). This approach reminds the reader of the problem and may rekindle the heated emotions or unhappy feelings experienced when the claim was written. Instead, focus on the good news. The following openings for various letters illustrate how to begin a message with good news.

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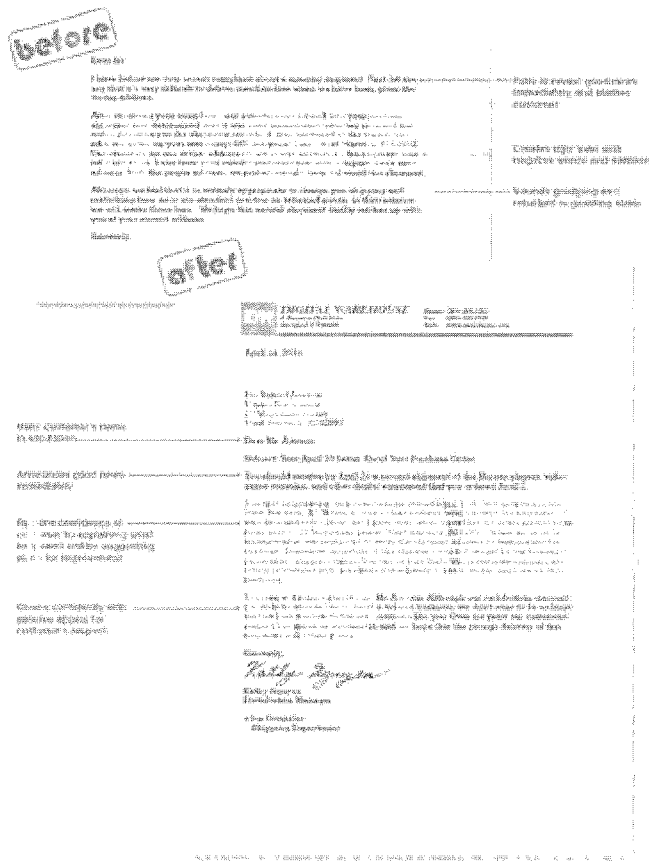


FIGURE 6.5 Customer Adjustment Letter © Cengage Learning

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You're right! We agree that the warranty on your American Standard Model UC600 dishwasher should be extended for six months.

You will be receiving shortly a new slim Nokia cell phone to replace the one that shattered when dropped recently.

Please take your portable Admiral microwave oven to A-1 Appliance Service, 200 Orange Street, Pasadena, where it will be repaired at no cost to you.

The enclosed check for \$325 demonstrates our desire to satisfy our customers and earn their confidence.

When possible, begin with good news in adjustment messages.

In announcing that you will make an adjustment, try to do so without a grudging tone—even if you have reservations about whether the claim is legitimate. Once you decide to comply with the customer's request, do so happily. Avoid halfhearted or reluctant responses (*Although the American Standard dishwasher works well when used properly, we have decided to allow you to take yours to A-1 Appliance Service for repair at our expense*).

Explaining Compliance in the Body of an Adjustment Message

In responding to claims, most organizations sincerely want to correct a wrong. They want to do more than just make the customer happy. They want to stand behind their products and services; they want to do what's right.

Most businesses comply with claims because they want to promote customer goodwill.

In the body of the message, explain how you are complying with the claim. In all but the most routine claims, you should also seek to regain the confidence of the customer. You might reasonably expect that a customer who has experienced difficulty with a product, with delivery, with billing, or with service has lost faith in your organization. Rebuilding that faith is important for future business.

How to rebuild lost confidence depends on the situation and the claim. If procedures need to be revised, explain what changes will be made. If a product has defective parts, tell how the product is being improved. If service is faulty, describe genuine efforts to improve it. Notice in Figure 6.5 that the writer promises to investigate shipping procedures to see whether improvements might prevent future mishaps.

Sometimes the problem is not with the product but with the way it is being used. In other instances customers misunderstand warranties or inadvertently cause delivery and billing mix-ups by supplying incorrect information. Remember that rational and sincere explanations will do much to regain the confidence of unhappy customers.

In your explanation avoid emphasizing negative words such as *trouble*, *regret*, *misunderstanding*, *fault*, *defective*, *error*, *inconvenience*, and *unfortunately*. Keep your message positive and upbeat.



“Even if the problem is not the company's fault, something like ‘I'm sorry to hear that you're not satisfied with our service’ is at least conciliatory, without involving the company [in] accepting any liability.”

—Robert Ashton, business writing trainer and CEO of UK firm Emphasis

Deciding Whether to Apologize

Whether to apologize is a debatable issue. Attorneys generally discourage apologies fearing that they admit responsibility and will trigger lawsuits. However, both judges and juries tend to look on apologies favorably. More than 20 U.S. states have passed some form of “apology laws” that would allow an expression of regret without fear that those statements would be used as a basis for liability in court.² Some business writing experts advise against apologies, contending that they are counterproductive and merely remind the customer of unpleasantness related to the claim. If, however, apologizing seems natural, do so.

Although apologies can be misconstrued and potentially trigger lawsuits, they are generally viewed favorably.

People like to hear apologies. It raises their self-esteem, shows the humility of the writer, and acts as a form of “psychological compensation.”³ Don't, however, fall back on the familiar phrase, *I'm sorry for any inconvenience we may have caused*. It sounds mechanical and insincere. Instead, try something like this: *We understand the frustration our delay has caused you, We're sorry you didn't receive better service*, or *You're right to be disappointed*. If you feel that an apology is

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appropriate, do it early and briefly. You will learn more about delivering effective apologies in Chapter 7 in which we discuss negative messages.

The primary focus of an adjustment letter is on how you are complying with the request, how the problem occurred, and how you are working to prevent its recurrence.

Using Sensitive Language in Adjustment Messages

The language of adjustment letters must be particularly sensitive, because customers are already upset. Here are some don'ts:

- Don't use negative words (*trouble*, *regret*, *misunderstanding*, *fault*, *error*, *inconvenience*, *you claim*).
- Don't blame customers—even when they may be at fault.
- Don't blame individuals or departments within your organization; it's unprofessional.

- Don't make unrealistic promises; you can't guarantee that the situation will never recur.

To regain the confidence of your reader, consider including resale information. Describe a product's features and any special applications that might appeal to the reader. Promote a new product if it seems appropriate.

Because customers are upset when making a claim, don't use negative words, don't blame the customer or individuals in your company, and don't make unrealistic promises.

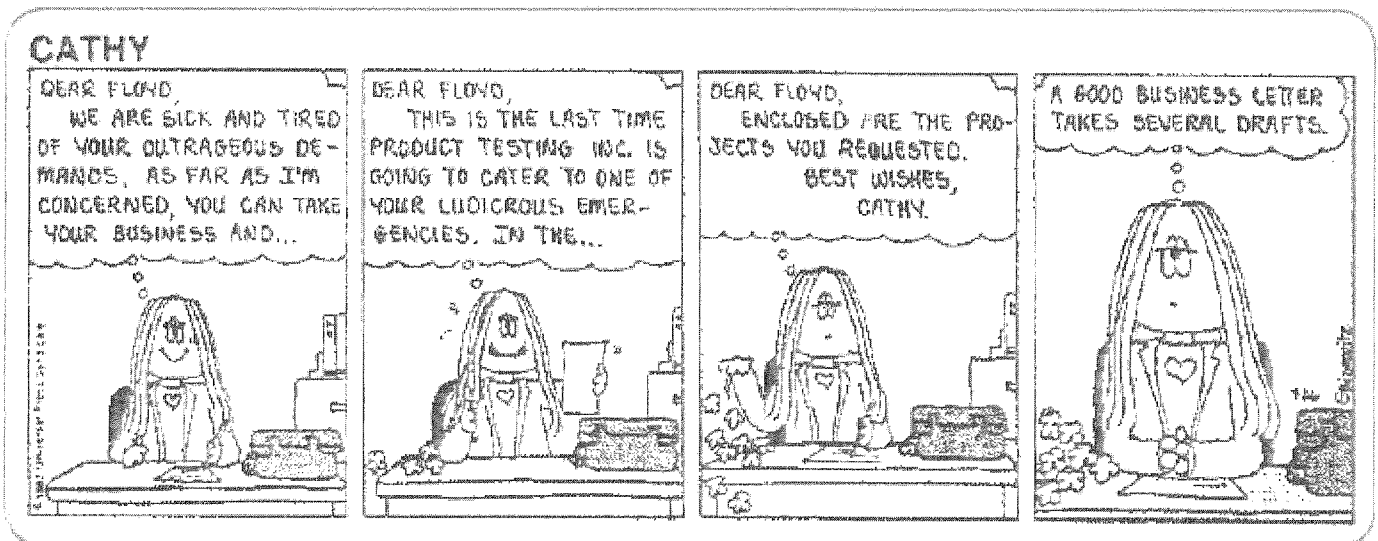
Showing Confidence in the Closing

End positively by expressing confidence that the problem has been resolved and that continued business relations will result. You might mention the product in a favorable light, suggest a new product, express your appreciation for the customer's business, or anticipate future business. It is often appropriate to refer to the desire to be of service and to satisfy customers. Notice how the following closings illustrate a positive, confident tone.

You were most helpful in informing us of this situation and permitting us to correct it. We appreciate your thoughtfulness in writing to us.

Thanks for writing. Your satisfaction is important to us. We hope that this refund check convinces you that service to our customers is our No. 1 priority. Our goals are to earn your confidence and continue to merit that confidence with quality products and excellent service.

Your Asus Netbook will come in handy whether you are connecting with friends, surfing the net, listening to music, watching movies, or playing games. What's more, you can add an HD TV tuner and built-in GPS for a little more. Take a look at the enclosed booklet detailing the big savings for essential technology on a budget. We value your business and look forward to your future orders.



Cathy © Universal Uclick

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Although the direct pattern works for many requests and replies, it obviously won't work for every situation. With more practice and experience, you will be able to alter the pattern and adapt your skills to other communication problems.

Goodwill Messages

Many communicators are intimidated when they must write goodwill messages expressing thanks, recognition, and sympathy. Finding the right words to express feelings is often more difficult than writing ordinary business documents. That is probably why writers tend to procrastinate when it comes to goodwill messages. Sending a ready-made card or picking up the telephone is easier than writing a message. Remember, though, that the personal sentiments of the sender are always more expressive and

more meaningful to readers than are printed cards or oral messages. Taking the time to write gives more importance to our well-wishing. Personal notes also provide a record that can be reread, savored, and treasured.

Messages that express thanks, recognition, and sympathy should be written promptly.

In expressing thanks, recognition, or sympathy, you should always do so promptly. These messages are easier to write when the situation is fresh in your mind. They also mean more to the recipient. Don't forget that a prompt thank-you note carries the hidden message that you care and that you consider the event to be important. You will learn to write various goodwill messages that deliver thanks, congratulations, praise, and sympathy. Instead of learning writing plans for each of them, we recommend that you concentrate on the five Ss. Goodwill messages should be:

- **Selfless.** Be sure to focus the message solely on the receiver not the sender. Don't talk about yourself; avoid such comments as *I remember when I ...*
- **Specific.** Personalize the message by mentioning specific incidents or characteristics of the receiver. Telling a colleague *Great speech* is much less effective than *Great story about McDonald's marketing in Moscow*. Take care to verify names and other facts.
- **Sincere.** Let your words show genuine feelings. Rehearse in your mind how you would express the message to the receiver orally. Then transform that conversational language to your written message. Avoid pretentious, formal, or flowery language (*It gives me great pleasure to extend felicitations on the occasion of your firm's twentieth anniversary*).
- **Spontaneous.** Keep the message fresh and enthusiastic. Avoid canned phrases (*Congratulations on your promotion, Good luck in the future*). Strive for directness and naturalness, not creative brilliance.
- **Short.** Although goodwill messages can be as long as needed, try to accomplish your purpose in only a few sentences. What is most important is remembering an individual. Such caring does not require documentation or wordiness. Individuals and business organizations often use special note cards or stationery for brief messages.

Goodwill messages are most effective when they are selfless, specific, sincere, spontaneous, and short.

Expressing Thanks

When someone has done you a favor or when an action merits praise, you need to extend thanks or show appreciation. Letters of appreciation may be written to customers for their orders, to hosts and hostesses for their hospitality, to individuals for kindnesses performed, and especially to customers who complain. After all, complainers are actually providing you with “free consulting reports from the field.” Complainers who feel that their complaints were heard often become the greatest promoters of an organization.⁴



“Saying ‘Thank You’ is an important concept in our business. When people are sincerely appreciated for their efforts, they tend to be more effective and do a better job.”

—Nowell C. Wisch, editor of Wearables Business and veteran of the promotional products industry

Because the receiver will be pleased to hear from you, you can open directly with the purpose of your message. The letter in Figure 6.6 thanks a speaker who addressed a group of marketing professionals. Although such thank-you notes

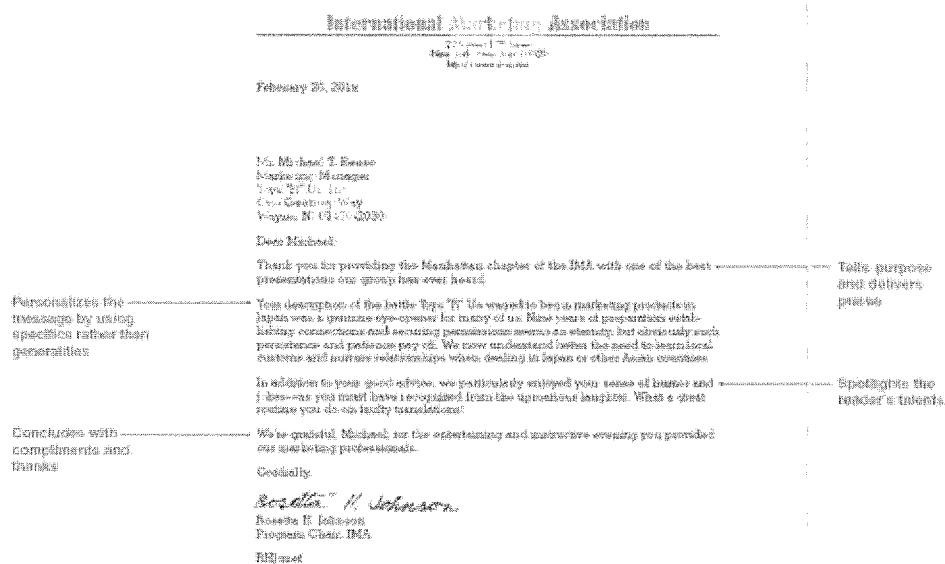


FIGURE 6.6 Thank-You Letter for a

Favor © Cengage Learning 2013

can be quite short, this one is a little longer because the writer wants to lend importance to the receiver's efforts. Notice that every sentence relates to the receiver and offers enthusiastic praise. By using the receiver's name along with contractions and positive words, the writer makes the letter sound warm and conversational.

Written notes that show appreciation and express thanks are significant to their receivers. In expressing thanks, you generally write a short note on special notepaper or heavy card stock. The following messages provide models for expressing thanks for a gift, for a favor, and for hospitality.

Expressing Thanks for a Gift

When expressing thanks, tell what the gift means to you. Use sincere, simple statements.

Thanks, Laura, to you and the other members of the department for honoring me with the elegant Waterford crystal vase at the party celebrating my twentieth anniversary with the company. The height and shape of the vase are perfect to hold roses and other bouquets from my garden. Each time I fill it, I will remember your thoughtfulness in choosing this lovely gift for me.

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Sending Thanks for a Favor

In showing appreciation for a favor, explain the importance of the gesture to you.

I sincerely appreciate your filling in for me last week when I was too ill to attend the planning committee meeting for the spring exhibition. Without your participation, much of my preparatory work would have been lost. Knowing that competent and generous individuals like you are part of our team, Mark, is a great comfort. Moreover, counting you as a friend is my very good fortune. I'm grateful to you.

Extending Thanks for Hospitality

When you have been a guest, send a note that compliments the fine food, charming surroundings, warm hospitality, excellent

host and hostess, and good company.

Jeffrey and I want you to know how much we enjoyed the dinner party for our department that you hosted Saturday evening. Your charming home and warm hospitality, along with the lovely dinner and sinfully delicious chocolate dessert, combined to create a truly memorable evening. Most of all, though, we appreciate your kindness in cultivating togetherness in our department. Thanks, Jennifer, for being such a special person.

Responding to Goodwill Messages

Should you respond when you receive a congratulatory note or a written pat on the back? By all means! These messages are attempts to connect personally; they are efforts to reach out, to form professional and/or personal bonds. Failing to respond to notes of congratulations and most other goodwill messages is like failing to say “You’re welcome” when someone says “Thank you.” Responding to such messages is simply the right thing to do. Do avoid, though, minimizing your achievements with comments that suggest you don’t really deserve the praise or that the sender is exaggerating your good qualities.

Take the time to respond to any goodwill message you may receive.

Answering a Congratulatory Note

In responding to congratulations, keep it short and simple.

Thanks for your kind words regarding my award, and thanks, too, for sending me the newspaper clipping. I truly appreciate your thoughtfulness and warm wishes.

Responding to a Pat on the Back

When acknowledging a pat-on-the-back note, use simple words in conveying your appreciation.

Your note about my work made me feel good. I’m grateful for your thoughtfulness.

Sympathy notes should refer to the misfortune sensitively and offer assistance.

Conveying Sympathy

Most of us can bear misfortune and grief more easily when we know that others care. Notes expressing sympathy, though, are probably more difficult to write than any other kind of message. Commercial “In sympathy” cards make the task easier—but they are far less meaningful than personal notes. Grieving friends want to know what you think—not what Hallmark’s card writers think. To help you get started, you can always glance through cards expressing sympathy. They will supply ideas about the kinds of thoughts you might wish to convey in your own words. In writing a sympathy note, (a) refer to the death or misfortune sensitively, using words that show you understand what a crushing blow it is; (b) in the case of a death, praise the deceased in a personal way; (c) offer assistance without going into excessive detail; and (d) end on a reassuring, forward-looking note. Sympathy messages may be typed, although handwriting seems more personal. In either case, use notepaper or personal stationery.

Expressing Condolences

Mention the loss tactfully, recognize the good qualities of the deceased, assure the receiver of your concern, offer assistance, and conclude on a reassuring note.

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We are deeply saddened, Gayle, to learn of the death of your husband. Warren’s kind nature and friendly spirit endeared him to all who knew him. He will be missed. Although words seem empty in expressing our grief, we want you to know that your friends at QuadCom extend their profound sympathy to you. If we may help you or lighten your load in any way, you have but to call.

We know that the treasured memories of your many happy years together, along with the support of your family

and many friends, will provide strength and comfort in the months ahead.

Conclude a condolence message on a positive, reassuring note.

Is E-Mail Appropriate for Goodwill Messages?

In expressing thanks or responding to goodwill messages, handwritten notes are most impressive. However, if you frequently communicate with the receiver by e-mail and if you are sure your note will not get lost, then sending an e-mail goodwill message is acceptable, according to the Emily Post Institute.⁵ To express sympathy immediately after learning of a death or accident, you might precede a phone call or a written condolence message with an e-mail. E-mail is a fast and nonintrusive way to show your feelings. However, advises the Emily Post Institute, immediately follow with a handwritten note. Remember that e-mail messages are quickly gone and forgotten. Handwritten or printed messages remain and can be savored. Your thoughtfulness is more lasting if you take the time to prepare a handwritten or printed message on notepaper or personal stationery.



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Positive Messages: Summing Up and Looking Forward

Although e-mail is becoming an important communication channel for brief messages, both internal and external, business letters are still important. They are necessary for messages that must produce a permanent record, are confidential, convey formality and sensitivity, and deliver persuasive, well-considered ideas. In this chapter you learned to write direct messages that request information or action. You also learned to write instruction messages, direct claims, direct responses, adjustments, and a variety of goodwill messages. All of these routine messages, whether e-mails, memos, or letters, use the direct strategy. They open immediately with the main idea followed by details and explanations. But not all messages will carry good news. Occasionally, you must deny requests and deliver bad news. In Chapter 7 you will learn to use the indirect strategy in conveying negative news.

Positive Messages: Critical Thinking

1. In an age when millions of e-mails are sent daily, does the writing of an “old-fashioned” business letter potentially provide a competitive advantage or reflect favorably on the writer? Under what circumstances and why?
2. The opening and the closing are the most emphatic parts of any message. How can writers avoid sounding demanding and abrupt in these two most important sections?
3. Is it true that the “squeaky wheel gets the most grease,” meaning that the customer complaining the loudest and most aggressively will get noticed and receive the greatest concessions?
4. Why are apologies in business so complex and controversial?
5. **Ethical Issue:** Is it ethical to write a “hyped-up” letter of recommendation or one that is only lukewarm or vague? How would you feel if someone you trust wrote you either a letter of recommendation that stretches the truth or one that is less than glowing?

Positive Messages: Chapter Review

6. How can you determine when it is appropriate to send an e-mail, a memo, or a letter?
7. Which silent messages does a business letter convey?
8. What does frontloading the message mean, and what are the advantages in direct requests?
9. Why are a plain *Thank you* or a standard phrase such as *Thank you in advance for your cooperation* undesirable in a closing of a business message?
10. How can you make messages delivering instructions most readable?
11. When should you write a claim letter instead of venting your frustration by e-mail?
12. Why should you state facts in a claim message logically, objectively, and unemotionally?
13. What are the two main reasons that motivate businesses to grant favorable adjustments to their customers if they have legitimate claims?
14. Why is positive language so important in adjustment messages, and what are some of the major don'ts?

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15. Why are many communicators intimidated when they must write goodwill messages expressing thanks, recognition, and sympathy?

Positive Messages: Writing Improvement Exercises

Improving Opening Paragraphs

Your Task. Revise the following openings so that they are more direct. Add information if necessary.

16. Despite the economy, Liberty Bank has been investigating the possibility of initiating an internship program within our Financial Services Department. I have been appointed as the point person to conduct research regarding our proposed program. We are fully aware of the benefits of a strong internship program, and our management team is eager to take advantage of some of these benefits. We would be deeply appreciative if you would be kind enough to help us out with answers to a number of specific questions.
17. My name is Kimberly Sanchez, and I am assistant to the manager of Information Services & Technology at Onyz, Inc. We are interested in your voice recognition software that we understand allows you to dictate and copy text without touching a keyboard. We are interested in answers to a number of questions, such as the cost for a single-user license and perhaps the availability of a free trial version. Will you please answer the following questions.
18. Your letter of March 4 has been referred to me. Pursuant to your inquiry, I have researched your question in regard to whether or not we offer our European-style patio umbrella in colors. This unique umbrella is one of our most popular items. Its 10-foot canopy protects you when the sun is directly overhead, but it also swivels and tilts to virtually any angle for continuous sun protection all day long. It comes in two colors: cream and forest green.
19. I am pleased to receive your inquiry regarding the possibility of my acting as a speaker at the final semester meeting of your business management club on May 2. The topic of online résumés interests me and is one on which I think I could impart helpful information to your members. Therefore, I am responding in the affirmative to your kind invitation.
20. So far I have been happy with my Timex Ironman watch, but lately it's been rather erratic. The display has been fading, and the numerals are hard to read. I suspected that a new battery was needed, but the problem remained even after a new one was inserted. I wore the watch while surfing and I suspect that water may have penetrated the watch. Can you recommend a convenient service location to have the watch looked at?

Writing Instructions

Your Task. Revise the following wordy, dense paragraphs into a set of concise instructions. Include an introductory statement.

21. Orders may be placed at our Web site by following certain steps. Here they are. As a visitor to our site, you should first look

over everything and find the items you want from our catalog. Then your shopping cart is important. You will add items to your shopping cart. When you are finished adding things to your shopping cart, the next step is to proceed to checkout. But wait! Have you created a new account? After creating a new account, we next need to know what shipping address to ship your items to. We will also need to have you choose a shipping method. Then you will be expected to provide payment information. Finally, you are nearly done! Payment information must be provided, and then you are ready to review your order and submit it.

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22. If you want to make a YouTube video, here are some important tips for those who have not done it before. First, you will need to obtain a video recording device such as a cell phone, webcam, or camcorder. Another thing you will have to do is make a decision on whether or not to make a video blog, comedy skit, how-to video, or a video that is about travel. Remember that your video must be no more than 15 minutes long for traditional YouTube membership accounts. You will want to create a video with good light quality, and that usually means daytime recording. Finally, be sure to use editing software to change or delete anything.

23. A number of employees have asked about how to make two-sided copies. Here's what to do. The copy for side 1 of the original goes face down on the Document Glass. Then the Document Cover should be closed. Next you should select the quantity that you require. To copy side 1, you should then press Start. Now you remove the first original and place the second original face down on the Document Glass. The Document Cover should be closed. Now you remove side 1 copy from the Output Tray. It should be inserted face down into the Paper Bypass Tray. Then select the Alternate Paper Tray and press Start.

Positive Messages: Writing Improvement Cases

6.1 Direct Request: Workplace Security

The following letter requests information; however, the first draft suffers from many writing faults.

Your Task. Analyze the message. List its weaknesses and then outline an appropriate writing plan. If your instructor directs, revise the message. A copy of this message is provided at www.meguffey.com for revision online.

Current date

Mr. Gregory Howard, Sales Manager
HiTek Software and Computing
16544 Burt Street
Omaha, NE 68154-3749

Dear Sir:

Our insurance rates will be increased in the near future due to the fact that we don't have security devices on our computer equipment. Local suppliers were considered, but at this point in time none had exactly what we wanted. That's why I am writing to see whether or not you can provide information and recommendations regarding equipment to prevent the possible theft of office computers and printers. In view of the fact that our insurance carrier has set a deadline of April 1, we need fast action.

Our office now has 18 computer workstations along with twelve printers. We need a device that can be used to secure separate computer components to desks or counters. Would you please recommend a device that can secure a workstation consisting of a computer, monitor, and keyboard. We wonder if professionals are needed to install your security devices and to remove them. We are a small company, and we don't have a staff of maintenance people.

One problem is whether the devices can be easily removed when we need to move equipment around. We are, of course, very interested in the price of each device. What about quantity discounts, if you offer them.

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Until such time as we hear from you, thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

1. List at least five weaknesses of this letter.
2. Outline a writing plan (not the actual message) for a direct request.

Opening:

Body:

Closing:

6.2 Direct Response: Can Chatter Beat Facebook?

The following memo responds to a request for information about safer, more business-appropriate social networking services than Facebook and Twitter.⁶

Your Task. Analyze the following poorly written memo about Chatter, a new application created by enterprise software leader Salesforce.com with headquarters in San Francisco. List its weaknesses, and then outline an appropriate writing plan. If your instructor directs, revise the message. A copy of this message is provided at www.meguffey.com for revision online.

Date: March 4, 201x

To: Helen Lazar, CEO

From: Gilbert S. Luce

Subject: Chatter

Thanks for asking me to research and investigate potential alternatives to Facebook and Twitter. I stumbled upon Chatter, a new social networking service provided to its customers by San Francisco-based Salesforce.com, a fast-growing upstart whose stock has more than doubled over the last year, to \$120 per share. I had fun doing research and would welcome another opportunity anytime. Let me know if you want me to present my findings to you and other executives in greater detail. Okay, back to Chatter and my report.

Imagine, a company that implements Chatter can expect its e-mail traffic to drop 40 percent as employees stay plugged in to the organization and remain connected. You can also track which workers add value to the company because you can keep an eye on deals being struck and monitor support staff members who excel at nipping problems in the butt.

The disadvantages of online social networks are obvious and clearly apparent. They sap and drain employees' time and productivity. Their openness creates a corporate security nightmare. Chatter, however, allows for virtual watercooler conversations but with limitations that are appropriate for business. Management can control and restrict access to sensitive information and records.

Salesforce.com is offering the Chatter service as part of its existing service to some 82,000 customers worldwide. Currently, about 20,000 companies have deployed Chatter, computer maker Dell and advertising agency Saatchi & Saatchi among them. At Dell, some 20,000 workers are on Chatter, allowing managers to track deals. As for the cost, Chatter is included at no extra charge in the monthly fees of \$65–\$125 for customer-relationship management and other Salesforce.com business software. As a stand-alone product, Chatter costs \$15 a month per user.

Did I mention how Chatter works? It is a lot like Facebook and Twitter, but it asks what people are working on, not what is on their mind or what is happening. Salesforce.com calls Chatter a “real-time collaboration cloud,” meaning that users need only a browser and an Internet connection to access it. Users create profiles, and their status updates center on questions, salient tidbits, and hyperlinks that are shared with coworkers in their personal networks. Together those comments and updates merge into a running feed. As on Twitter, employees can follow each other, their customers, and deals. Additional advantages are that (a) workers can connect with colleagues in the whole company, not just their workgroups, and (b) profiles are searchable for needed skills, say, if you need someone who speaks Mandarin and so forth. Chatter also makes suggestions to account users about people they should follow based on their past activities and job needs. Pretty nifty, isn't it?

This is just a summary of what I learned. If you want to hear more, please do not hesitate to call.

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1. List the weaknesses of this memo.
2. Outline a writing plan for a direct response.

Opening:

Body:

Closing:

6.3 Direct Claim: Rental Car Refund Complaint

The following letter conveys a complaint and makes a claim. However, its poor tone and expression may prevent the receiver from getting what she wants.

Your Task. Analyze the message. List its weaknesses and then outline an appropriate writing plan. If your instructor directs, revise the message. A copy of this message is provided at www.meguffey.com for revision online.

Current date

Mr. John Lear
Regional General Manager
Apex Car Rentals
4510 Cyprus Street
Denver, CO 80246

Dear Regional General Manager John Leer:

I have a horror story of gargantuan proportions to relate to you so that you know how incompetent the amateurish bozos are that work for you! You should fire the whole Colorado Springs airport branch. I'm tired of lousy service and of being charged an arm and a leg for extras that end up not functioning properly. Calling your company is useless because no one answers the phone or returns calls!

In view of the fact that my colleague and I were forced to wait for an hour for a car at Colorado Springs Airport on August 15, your local branch people gave us a free navigation device. That would have been really nice in the event that the thing had actually worked, which it didn't. We advised the counter person that the GPS was broken, but it took another half hour to receive a new one and to finally start our business trip.

Imagine our surprise when the "free" GPS showed up on our bill apparently costing a whopping \$180, plus tax! What came next would qualify as some dark Kafkaesque nightmare. I spent hours over the next three weeks talking to various employees of your questionable organization who swore that only "the manager" could help me, but this mysterious person was never available to talk. At this point in time, I called your Denver Airport location again and refused to get off the phone until I spoke to "the manager," and, lo and behold, he promised to credit the cost of the GPS to our corporate account. Was my nightmare over? No!

When we checked the status of the refund on our credit card statement, we noticed that he had forgotten to add about \$60 in taxes and surcharges that had also been assessed. So much for a full refund!

Inasmuch as my company is a new customer and inasmuch as we had hoped to use your agency for our future car rentals because of your competitive rates, I trust that you will give this matter your prompt attention.

Your very upset customer,

1. List at least five weaknesses of this letter.

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2. Outline a writing plan for a claim request.

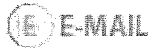
Opening:

Body:

Closing:

Positive Messages: Activities and Cases

6.4 Direct Request: Pamper Palace Spa Worries About Duplicate Charges



As an assistant to Donna K. Lilly, the busy proprietor of Pamper Palace Spa in Weymouth, Massachusetts, you have been asked to draft an e-mail to Virtual Treasures asking about an apparent duplicate charge for a small trial order of massage oils. The Weymouth location of Pamper Palace Spa, a professional spa franchise operating nationwide, wanted to try Virtual Treasures' exquisite Tahitian Monoi Tiare coconut oils. After reading a French magazine, your boss had ordered a few bottles and a bar of soap for \$58.88 to test the product, but when Ms. Lilly checked Pamper Palace Spa's business account online, she found what she believed to be a duplicate order. She wants you to write to Virtual Treasures and ask about the apparent error.

Donna Lilly is suspicious because a few weeks earlier, she had ordered a French press coffee pot for \$19 to use in her office and received two pots. Her account was charged \$38. She did not take any action, making good use of the two French press coffee pots in her business. For both orders, Ms. Lilly had used Virtual Treasures' EasyPay feature, a one-click convenience tool online. Now she worries that future orders may lead to costly duplicate shipments and double charges. The order was divided into two shipments, each with a different order number: #502-3385779-9590624 and #502-8112203-6442608. Donna Lilly may order large quantities of Monoi Tiare oil after trying the pending shipment.

Your Task. Write a direct request by e-mail to Virtual Treasures at *customer-care@virtualtreasures.com*. Inquire about the possible error stemming from the use of EasyPay. Format your e-mail correctly. Include the Pamper Palace Spa's location and your business e-mail, *info@pamperpalacespa.com*.

6.5 Direct Request: Searching for a Social Media Maven



For most consumers, social media are just fun. Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and MySpace are amusing and a pleasant way to keep in touch with friends. Only recently have companies begun to recognize that social media can also make money, and suddenly, social media mavens are in great demand. Petco, supplier of pet supplies and services, recently hired Natalie Malaszenko as its director of social media and commerce. Her assignment at Petco was to envision and articulate the company's social media strategy for the future. To that end, she created fan pages on Facebook, opened several Twitter accounts, and wrote a company blog. In addition to Petco, other organizations have hired social media officers, including Sears Holdings, Panasonic, Citigroup, AT&T, Fiji Water, Go Daddy.com, and Harrah's Entertainment.

As the director of corporate communication for HomeCenter, a large home supply store, you are charged with looking into the possible hiring of a social media specialist. You know that other companies have both profited and been hurt by fast-moving viral news. Nobody wants to suffer the fate of United Airlines, which took a beating last year after ignoring a wronged passenger who was a musician. He posted a clever song about how the airline had broken his guitar, and the video skyrocketed into cyberspace with millions of viewers enjoying its YouTube ribbing. Social media mavens, companies hope, can monitor cyberspace and be ready to respond to both negative and positive messages. They can help build a company's brand and promote its online reputation. They can also develop company guidelines for employee use and encourage staffers to spread the good word about the organization.

To learn more about social media, you decide to go to Rick Trumka, who was recommended as a social media consultant by your CEO, David Seldenberg. You understand that Mr. Trumka has agreed to provide information and will be paid by HomeCenter.

This whole social media thing may be just another passing fad. You are not convinced that any real benefits would result from having a social media specialist on your staff. However, the CEO wants you to explore the possibilities. You decide that this is not a matter that can be handled quickly by a phone call. You want to get answers in writing.

Many issues concern you. For one thing, you are worried about the hiring process. You have no idea about a reasonable salary for a social media expert. You don't know where to place that person within your structure. Would the media maven operate out of corporate communications, marketing, customer service, or exactly where? Another thing that disturbs you is how to judge a candidate. What background would you require? Do colleges actually award degrees in social networking? How will you know the best candidate? And what about salary? Should you be promising a full-time salary for doing what most people consider to be fun?⁷

Your Task. Compose an e-mail inquiry to *rick.trumka@mediaresources.com*. Explain your situation and list specific questions. Mr. Trumka is not an employment source; he is a consultant who charges for his information and advice. Make your questions clear and concise. You realize that Mr. Trumka would probably like to talk on the phone or visit you, but make clear that you want a written response so that you can have a record of his information to share when you report to the CEO.

6.6 Direct Request: Raising Puppies to Become Guide Dogs

As an assistant in the Community Involvement Program of your corporation, you have been given an unusual task. Your boss wants to expand the company's philanthropic and community relations mission and especially employee volunteerism. She heard about The Seeing Eye, a program in which volunteers raise puppies for 14 to 18 months for guide dog training. She thinks this would be an excellent outreach program for the company's employees. They could give back to the community in their role as puppy raisers. To pursue the idea, she asks you to request information about the program and ask questions about whether a company could sponsor a program encouraging employees to act as volunteers. She hasn't thought it through very carefully and relies on you to raise logical questions, especially about costs for volunteers.

Your Task. Write a direct request letter to Susanna Odell, The Seeing Eye, 9002 East Chaparral Road, Scottsdale, AZ 85250. Include an end date and a reason.

6.7 Direct Request: Planning a Winter Retreat in Jackson Hole, Wyoming



Despite grim economic news, your employer, Stremer Media Group of Dallas, Texas, has had an excellent year and the CEO, Peter Stremer, would like to reward "the troops" for their hard work with a rustic yet plush winter retreat. The CEO wants his company to host a four-day combination conference/retreat/vacation for his 55 marketing and media professionals with their spouses or significant others at some spectacular winter resort. Ideally, the location would delight any taste, with activities ranging from dining and relaxing in style to downhill and cross-country skiing, snowboarding, snowmobile tours, and other winter sports.

One of the choices is Jackson Hole, Wyoming, a famous ski resort town with steep slopes and dramatic mountain views. The location is popular for its proximity to Grand Teton National Park, Yellowstone, and the National Elk Refuge. Mr. Stremer has asked you, as marketing manager, to write a letter so that you can have a permanent, formal record of all the resorts you investigate. You will also look into winter resorts in Utah and Colorado.

As you search the Web and investigate the options in Jackson Hole, you are captivated by the Four Seasons Resort, a five-star facility with outdoor pool, spa tub, ski in/ski out access, and an amply equipped gym and fitness room. Other amenities include an on-site spa with massage and treatment rooms, a sauna, and facial and body treatments. You can see that the guest rooms are well appointed with DVD players, MP3 docking stations, and coffee/tea makers. Bathrooms feature separate bathtubs and showers, double sinks, and bathrobes. For business travelers, the hotel offers complimentary wired high-speed Internet access, complimentary wireless Internet access, and multiline phones as well as fax availability.

The Web site of the Four Seasons Jackson Hole is not very explicit on the subject of business and event facilities, so you decide to jot down a few key questions. You estimate that your company will require about 50 rooms. You will also need two conference rooms (to accommodate 25 participants or more) for one and a half days. You want to know about room rates, conference facilities, A/V equipment in the conference rooms, and entertainment options for families. You have two periods that would be possible: December 15–19 or January 12–16. You realize that both are peak times, but you wonder whether you can get a discounted group rate. You are interested in entertainment on site, in Jackson Hole, and in tours to the nearby national parks. Jackson Hole airport is 4.5 miles away, and you would like to know whether the hotel operates a shuttle. Also, one evening the CEO will want to host a banquet for about 85 people. Mr. Stremer wants a report from you by September 15.

Your Task. Write a well-organized direct request letter to Denise O'Handley, Sales Manager, Four Seasons Resort, 7680 Granite Loop Road, Teton Village, WY 83025. You might like to take a look at the Four Seasons Resort Web site at <http://www.fourseasons.com/jacksonhole> and search for general information about Jackson, Wyoming.

6.8 Direct Response: Virtual Treasures Reassures Business Customer



Online retailer Virtual Treasures has received the direct request from Donna K. Lilly (see Activity 6.4), who is concerned that her company, Pamper Palace Spa, is being charged twice for the same order whenever she uses the convenience feature EasyPay. As customer care representative at Virtual Treasures, you investigate the request and find that Ms. Lilly ordered five items on September 16, which were divided into two orders. The first, #502-3385779-9590624, was for Monoi Tiare Tahiti (Gardenia) Bar Soap, 4.6 oz., and three 4-ounce bottles of coconut oil, Monoi Coco (Natural Coconut Oil), Monoi Pitae (Coconut Oil w/Jasmine), and Monoi Santal (Coconut Oil w/ Sandalwood). Order #502-8112203-6442608 was for Monoi Tiare Tahiti (Coconut Oil w/Gardenia), also 4 ounces. The invoice total accurately read \$58.88; there were no duplicate charges.

When you talk to your technical team, however, you learn that occasionally customer account statements have shown duplicate orders when EasyPay was activated. The IT people assure you that the technical malfunction has been fixed. You are glad that, in turn, you can now reassure the customer.

Each e-mail you send out for Virtual Treasures contains two standard links allowing customers to click answers to the options “Did we solve your problem?” or “If not, we are very sorry. Please click the link below.” This second option also suggests to the customer to contact Virtual Treasures by telephone. Soliciting feedback from customers in every message serves the purpose to “build America’s Friendliest Company.”

Your Task. Write a direct reply e-mail to Donna K. Lilly. You may want to list the full order for reference. Ensure eye appeal and readability when writing and formatting your message.

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6.9 Direct Response: Telling Job Applicants How to Make a Résumé Scannable



As part of a team of interns at the outdoor e-tailer Campmor.com, you have been asked to write a form letter to send to job applicants who inquire about your résumé-scanning techniques. The following poorly written response to an inquiry was pulled from the file.

Dear Ms. Fratelli:

Your letter of April 11 has been referred to me for a response. We are pleased to learn that you are considering employment here at Campmor, and we look forward to receiving your résumé, should you decide to send same to us.

You ask if we scan incoming résumés. Yes, we certainly do. Actually, we use SmartTrack, an automated résumé-tracking system. We sometimes receive as many as 300 résumés a day, and SmartTrack helps us sort, screen, filter, and separate the résumés. It also processes them, helps us organize them, and keeps a record of all of these résumés. Some of the résumés, however, cannot be scanned, so we have to return those—if we have time.

The reasons that résumés won't scan may surprise you. Some applicants send photocopies or faxed copies, and these can cause misreading, so don't do it. The best plan is to send an original copy. Some people use colored paper. Big mistake! White paper (8 1/2 × 11-inch) printed on one side is the best bet. Another big problem is unusual type fonts, such as script or fancy gothic or antique fonts. They don't seem to realize that scanners do best with plain, readable fonts such as Helvetica or Arial in a 10- to 14-point size.

Other problems occur when applicants use graphics, shading, italics, underlining, horizontal and vertical lines, parentheses, and brackets. Scanners like plain, unadorned résumés. Oh yes, staples can cause misreading. And folding of a résumé can also cause the scanners to foul up. To be safe, don't staple or fold, and be sure to use wide margins and a quality printer.

When a hiring manager within Campmor decides to look for an appropriate candidate, he is told to submit keywords to describe the candidate he has in mind for his opening. We tell him (or sometimes her) to zero in on nouns and phrases that best describe what they want. Thus, my advice to you is to try to include those words that highlight your technical and professional areas of expertise.

If you do decide to submit your résumé to us, be sure you don't make any of the mistakes described herein that would cause the scanner to misread it.

Sincerely,

Your Task. As a team, discuss how this letter could be improved. Decide what information is necessary to send to potential job applicants. Search the Web for additional information that might be helpful. Then, submit an improved version to your instructor. Although the form letter should be written so that it can be sent to anyone who inquires, address this one to Chiara Fratelli, 1019 University Drive, Boise, ID 83725.

6.10 Direct Response: The Real-World Click Has Arrived



Online companies have enjoyed a distinct advantage over traditional brick-and-mortar retailers. On the Web, e-tailers can personalize deals to shoppers and allow instant price comparisons. They can establish a unique user profile based on the purchasing behavior of the customer and tailor special offers or recommendations to the shopper upon his or her next visit. Amazon.com and other e-commerce sites have mastered this technique.

Offline retailers, on the other hand, depend on foot traffic to make a sale and may never learn anything about a shopper who

walks in, buys an item, and walks out again. However, as opposed to a Web site's visitors, a small proportion of whom actually make a purchase, traditional retailers experience a much higher "conversion rate," the percentage of patrons who walk into the store and actually buy an item. For example, about 20 percent of fashion shoppers buy a piece of clothing; in electronics, the percentage of store visitors who make purchases ranges from 40 to 60 percent.

New smartphone-centered services offered by cutting-edge tech entrepreneurs now promise to bridge the gap between e-commerce advantage and the traditional retail paradigm. Internet services such as Foursquare, Booyah, Shopkick, Gowalla, and, yes, Facebook, have begun to extend digital efficiencies to the physical retail world by enticing millions of consumers to digitally "check in" to real-world locations. With location-sensing technology, the visitor to a physical store is asked to open an app that sends this location information to selected friends. By checking in frequently, the user earns certain advantages such as gift certificates or a chance to win prizes. The services are designed to give brick-and-mortar businesses the opportunity to customize deals to patrons and to build enduring relationships with the otherwise anonymous walk-ins, potentially their best customers.

Big retailers are coming on board: Gap, Starbucks, Sephora, Best Buy, American Eagle, and Sports Authority all have forged partnerships with the upstart services. The digital check-in services try to make their interfaces interesting by using "game mechanics." In other words, they include gamelike features in their apps and help their retail partners—Sony and AT&T Wireless among them—to build game mechanics into their own Web sites as well. Traditional retailers are hoping that the services will catch on so that they will know—as an e-commerce Web site does—who their customers are, where they are, and even when they are nearby, potentially ready to spend.

Your boss, Jane McKinley, vice president of e-commerce and digital marketing at Verizon Wireless, heard that competitor AT&T Wireless is already using Scvngr. In groups or individually, research the following start-ups: Scvngr, Foursquare, Stickybits, Gowalla, Shopkick, and Booyah. Additionally, you could take a look at Barcode Hero and Facebook Places. Find out how they work, which retail partners they serve, how many users they have, and so forth.⁸

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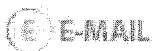
Your Task. Ms. McKinley asked you, a group of interns at Verizon Wireless, to conduct research that would help her decide whether any of the current Internet upstarts offering check-in services could benefit the company. She may request an e-mail or a memo about each individual service from the researcher or group assigned to it. If your instructor directs, later the contributions of each researcher or group might be combined in a direct response memo to Ms. McKinley.

6.11 Direct Response: Describing Your Major

A friend in a distant city is considering moving to your area for more education and training in your field. Your friend has asked you for information about your program of study.

Your Task. Write a letter describing a program in your field (or any field you wish to describe). What courses must be taken? Toward what degree, certificate, or employment position does this program lead? Why did you choose it? Would you recommend this program to your friend? How long does it take? Add any information you feel would be helpful.

6.12 Instruction Message: What to Do in an Emergency



In talking with your boss, Sue Curry, one day, you learned that she was concerned about fires and safe evacuation in your office building. She thinks that you, as director of human resources, should prepare a set of procedures for employees to follow in case of fires. She also thinks that the two of you can work out the procedures in a conversation, and she begins talking with you.

She notes that if an employee sees a fire, that person should pull the alarm and call the fire department. The number of that department is 9-911. If the fire is small, the employee can attempt to extinguish it with a fire extinguisher. At this point, you ask your boss if the person who discovered the fire should also notify a supervisor, and your boss agrees. The supervisor is probably the one who should size up the situation and decide whether the building should be evacuated. You then begin to think about the evacuation process. What to do? Ms. Curry says that all doors should be closed and employees should secure their workstations. You ask what exactly that means, and she says employees should turn off their computers and put away important documents, but perhaps that information is unnecessary. Just stick to the main points, she says.

If employees are evacuating, they should go to the nearest exit in an orderly manner. In addition, it's very important that everyone remain calm. You ask about people with disabilities. "Sure," she says, "we should assist all visitors and persons with disabilities." Then Ms. Curry remembers that employees have been told about predetermined gathering places, and they should

go there and wait for more instructions from floor monitors. It's also important that employees not reenter the building until given the all-clear. When they are outside, they should stay out of the way of fire department personnel and equipment.

"Do you have all the information?" she asks. "Great! Now prepare a draft memo to employees for my signature."

Your Task. Draft an e-mail or memo to employees from Sue Curry, CEO. Provide brief background data and explain the main idea. List clear fire instructions. Provide your name, title, and office phone number if receivers want more information.

6.13 Instruction Message: How to Copy Pictures and Text from PDF Documents

As a summer intern in the Marketing Department at Jovanovic Laboratory Supply, Inc., in Bozeman, Montana, you have been working on the company's annual catalog. You notice that staffers could save a lot of valuable time by copying and inserting images and text from the old edition into the new document. Your boss, Marketing Director Linda M. Trojner, has received numerous inquiries from staffers asking how to copy text and images from previous editions. You know that this can be done, and you show a fellow worker how to do it using a PDF feature called **Snapshot Tool**. Marketing Director Trojner decides that you are quite a tech-savvy student. Because she has so much confidence in you, she asks you to draft a memo detailing the steps for copying images and text passages from portable document format (PDF) files.

You start by viewing the **Tools** pull-down menu in an open PDF document. Depending on the Acrobat version, a feature called **snapshot Tool** emerges either under **Basic** or under **Select & Zoom**. This feature is represented by a camera icon. To copy content, you need to select the part of the PDF document that you want to capture. The cursor will change its shape once the feature is activated. Check what shape it acquires. With the left mouse button, click the location where you want to insert the copied passage or image. At the same time, you need to drag the mouse over the page in the direction you want. A selected area appears that you can expand and reduce, but you can't let go of the left mouse button. Once you release the left mouse button, a copy of the selected area will be made. You can then paste the selected area into a blank Microsoft Office document, whether Word, Excel, or PowerPoint. You can also take a picture of an entire page.

Your Task. Prepare a memo addressed to Marketing Department staff members for the signature of Linda M. Trojner. Practice the steps described here in abbreviated form and arrange all necessary instructions in a logical sequence. You may need to add steps omitted here. Remember, too, that your audience may not be as computer literate as you are, so ensure that the steps are clear and easy to follow.

6.14 Instruction Message: So Your Work Computer Won't Work?



As the manager of Computing Support Services for Primacy Group, a small financial services firm, you always tried to handle computer repairs on a personal level. In the past managers and employees called you when they had a problem, and you asked for details on the telephone and then sent one of your two tech assistants to clear up the problem. However, Primacy Group recently merged with Midstate Financial Providers, doubling the number of employees. You realize that to continue to provide timely and effective service, you must give up your personal approach and establish a set of instructions to be followed by anyone seeking help.

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You must send an e-mail explaining the new instructions. Here's what you decided to do. First, you would tell staff members who are reporting a problem to close all software programs, reboot, and try again. It's surprising how many times this simple trick works. But if that doesn't work and a real problem persists, they should go to a Web page you have established. It's located at <http://www.primacysupport.com>. On this page, staff members should look for the tab that says **Service Request**. This is where you want them to give you information such as their name, room number, phone number, and e-mail address. But wait! If their computer is down, how can they fill out this Web form? You remember to insert an instruction telling them to go to another staff member's computer to access the Web page.

One of the most important pieces of information you will need is an explanation of what they were doing before and at the time of the problem. What happened? What did they see on the screen? Finally, you want to warn staff members not to try to repair computer equipment or printers themselves. No matter how much they know about computers, you don't want them to tamper with company equipment. It may result in more damage than necessary.

After a technician makes the repair, your department will send a Service Completion Report by e-mail. You would like staff members to tell whether the work was completed to their satisfaction. You are convinced that staff members will receive faster and better service if they follow this set of instructions.

Your Task. Write an e-mail to Primacy Midstate staff members explaining the new instructions for reporting computer problems.

Be sure to list the steps to follow and end with a concluding paragraph.

6.15 Direct Claim: Botched Valentine's Day Surprise



Randy Pettit is very disappointed. He planned to surprise his girlfriend Sue at her workplace with beautiful roses and a vase for Valentine's Day. Sue works as an analyst for a major financial services company, and Randy knows that a generous bouquet sent there would impress not only Sue but also her colleagues and superiors. Randy had read favorable reviews on the Internet praising Bouquet International, a Swiss-based flower-delivery service operating worldwide. Because Valentine's Day was to fall on a Saturday, Randy requested that the flowers be sent a day before the big date.

Alas, upon the delivery of the bouquet in its flower-friendly packaging, Sue heard the sound of broken glass and refused the FedEx shipment. The delivery driver actually had advised Sue to return the package and took it back. Randy's surprise was ruined, and he was frustrated and angry with Bouquet International. On top of that, the same package with the identical tracking number was delivered to Sue's workplace again some three days after Valentine's Day. Sue was away, and a colleague signed for the package not knowing the history of the order. Sue later called FedEx to pick up the potentially less-than-fresh flowers.

However, about two weeks later, Randy's credit card statement showed the order number 106928959 and a charge of \$73.25 from Bouquet International. Randy has friends and family on the East Coast and in Europe. He may potentially use Bouquet International's services to send flowers in the future. He decides to e-mail customer service to get his money back.

Your Task. Write a direct claim by e-mail to Bouquet International at *info@bouquetinternational.com* requesting a refund. Include the necessary information and organize it logically in a well-formatted, professional e-mail.

6.16 Direct Claim: Duplicate Delivery of Fourth of July Beads



Barbara DiDonato, owner of Great Stuff Gifts & Cards in Norfolk, Virginia, bought 3,000 multicolored (red, white, and blue) beads from Gift Shoppe in time for the huge Independence Day parade in town. The \$600 shipment arrived by UPS two months before the holiday, and she had no problems selling all her beads in this patriotic town.

Much to her surprise, Barbara received another shipment of 3,000 beads from Gift Shoppe some 40 days after the Fourth of July holiday along with a new charge of \$600 to her business credit account. She called Gift Shoppe and sent the package back by UPS, tracking number U3529803873838583833. She asked the customer-service representatives to issue a refund, but even after repeated phone calls, Gift Shoppe insisted that the returned package had not been received and a credit could not be issued. Unnerved, Barbara followed up with UPS and was stunned when the otherwise highly reliable shipper admitted that the package had apparently been lost in transit and was not to be found in the system. The last record was a pickup at Great Stuff. UPS suggested that Gift Shoppe make a claim for a refund because the shipment of beads was insured and it was clear that the package had left the Great Stuff premises.

Your Task. Write a courteous e-mail to Gift Shoppe at *info@giftshoppe.com* requesting \$600 to be refunded to the company account. Clearly detail what happened to the return shipment by UPS.

6.17 Direct Claim: New Iron Gate Needs Work

You work for JPM, Johnson Property Management, in Portland, Oregon. Your employer specializes in commercial real estate. Just yesterday one of your business tenants in the trendy NW 23rd neighborhood complained about problems with an iron gate you had installed by Chung Iron Works just six months earlier, on August 20. Apparently, the two doors of the gate have settled and don't match in height. The gate gets stuck. It takes much force to open, close, and lock the gate. The iron gate was painted, and in some spots rust is bleeding onto the previously pristine white paint. The tenant at 921 NW 23rd Ave., Portland, OR 97210 is a petite shop owner, who complained to you about struggling with the gate at least twice a day when opening and closing her store.

You realize that you will have to contact the installer, Chung Iron Works, and request that the company inspect the gate and remedy the problem. Only six months have passed, and you recall that the warranty for the gate was for one year. To have a formal record of the claim and because Chung Iron Works does not use e-mail, you decide to write a claim letter.

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Your Task. Address your letter to Jin Ree at Chung Iron Works, 2255 NW Yeon Avenue in Portland, OR 97210. To jog his memory, you will enclose a copy of the company's proposal/invoice. Your business address is 1960 NE Irving Street, Portland,

OR 97209, phone (503) 335-5443 and fax (503) 335-5001.

6.18 Direct Claim: The Real Thing

Have you ever bought a product that didn't work as promised? Have you been disappointed in service at a bank, restaurant, department store, or discount house, or from an online merchant? Have you had ideas about how a company or organization could improve its image, service, or product? Remember that smart companies want to know what their customers think, especially if a product could be improved.

Your Task. Select a product or service that has disappointed you. Write a claim letter requesting a refund, replacement, explanation, or whatever seems reasonable. For claims about food products, be sure to include bar-code identification from the package, if possible. Your instructor may ask you to actually mail this letter. When you receive a response, share it with your class.

6.19 Adjustment: Responding to Valentine's day Bouquet Crisis



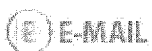
Like your major competitor Fleurop Interflora, your employer, Swiss-based Bouquet International, offers same-day florist delivery of fresh flowers, plants, and gifts all over the world, aided by a global network of 20,000 associated florists. You like the company's cheerful motto: "Express yourself with a bouquet!"

You receive an e-mail from a frustrated Randy Pettit (See Activity 6.15), who requests a refund of \$73.25 for a Valentine's Day bouquet that was delivered with a broken vase and subsequently refused only to be delivered again and sent back as before. You contact your shipping department about order number 106928959 to find out if more instances of broken vases have been reported or if this was an unfortunate but isolated incident. So far you haven't heard from your shipping department or from your contact at FedEx.

As an intern without your own e-mail account, you often write for your supervisor, Oksana Georgyevna Gotova, using her e-mail address, oggotova@bouquetinternational.com. You were tasked with delivering the good news to Randy Pettit at rpettit@sbeglobal.net that he will receive a credit of \$73.25 and that his flower order was canceled. Tell him to check his next credit card statement for the refund. You know that all employees must always include the case ID number in every e-mail and encourage customers to do the same when contacting your company. Randy is a frequent customer.

Your Task. Draft the e-mail to Randy Pettit for your supervisor. Try to rebuild Randy's trust in your services. For your electronic signature, you may want to indicate that the company is headquartered in Switzerland at Stiegengasse 5, CH-8065 Zurich, phone + 41 (0) 45 763 36 77 and fax + 41 (0) 45 763 25 70.

6.20 Adjustment: Refund for Duplicate Shipment and Charges Granted



Aubrey Gordy at Gift Shoppe Wholesale is terribly swamped, and in his despair he asks you to write an adjustment e-mail to Great Stuff owner Barbara DiDonato. Great Stuff of Norfolk, Virginia, had ordered 3,000 red, white, and blue beads for the Fourth of July parade for \$600 (see Activity 6.16). Then, a month and a half after the patriotic holiday, Great Stuff received another 3,000-piece shipment of the same beads and was charged \$600 again for this apparently unwanted batch of beads. A very good customer, Barbara DiDonato wants the \$600 credited back to her business account. She swears she returned the second shipment of beads to you immediately by UPS, and as proof she lists the tracking number U3529803873838583833. Gift Shoppe Wholesale, however, has no record of a return shipment of beads from Barbara, nor can it find the tracking number.

After speaking to UPS, as Ms. DiDonato has suggested, you learn that the package has indeed vanished in transit and cannot be located. It disappeared without a trace after pickup at the Norfolk store. UPS promises to reimburse you for the lost shipment. You know that you need to inform Barbara DiDonato about the pending refund of \$600 and process it as soon as possible.

Your Task. Write a polite adjustment e-mail to Barbara DiDonato announcing the refund and building goodwill.

6.21 Adjustment: Erroneous Charge for GPS Reversed

As assistant to John S. Lear, Regional General Manager at Apex Rent-a-Car, you read a shockingly irate complaint letter from a corporate customer (See Activity 6.3) addressed to your boss. Adriana Schuler-Reyes, Sales Manager for KDR Precision Components, Inc., in Phoenix, Arizona, has angrily detailed her tribulations with your company's Colorado Springs Airport branch.

Apparently, she and a colleague suffered long delays in obtaining their rental car. To compensate for the late car delivery, the customers received complimentary use of a navigation device, a \$180 value plus taxes and surcharges that add up to another \$60.

However, at the end of their rental period, their bill reflected the full cost of the GPS. After multiple phone calls to the Colorado Springs Airport branch as well as to ApexRent-a-Car corporate offices, Ms. Schuler-Reyes apparently was finally able to have the \$180 credited to KDR's business account. However, soon she realized that the \$60 levy had not been credited. She now wants the remainder of the refund. Ms. Schuler-Reyes has no confidence in the Colorado branch and is asking your boss to intervene on her behalf and reverse the remaining \$60 charge.

Mr. Lear asks you to investigate what has gone so terribly wrong at the Colorado Springs Airport location. You learn that the branch is an independent franchisee, which may explain such a laxness in customer service that is unacceptable under corporate rules. In addition, you find out that the branch manager, Scott Brown, was traveling on company business during Ms. Schuler-Reyes' rental period and then left town to attend two management training seminars. Mr. Lear is concerned that Apex might lose this disappointed

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customer and decides to offer discount vouchers for KDR's next three rentals at 20 percent off each, valid at any U.S. branch. He wants you to draft the letter and enclose the discount vouchers.

Your Task. Write a polite adjustment letter to Adriana Schuler-Reyes, KDR Precision Components, Inc., 2328 E Van Buren St., Phoenix, AZ 85006 to secure the customer's goodwill and future business.

6.22 Thanks for a Favor: Glowing Letter of Recommendation



One of your instructors has complied with your urgent request for a letter of recommendation and has given you an enthusiastic endorsement. Regardless of the outcome of your application, you owe thanks to all your supporters. Respond promptly after receiving this favor. Also, you can assume that your instructor is interested in your progress. Let him or her know whether your application was successful.

Your Task. Write an e-mail or, better yet, a letter thanking your instructor. Remember to make your thanks specific so that your words are meaningful. Once you know the outcome of your application, use the opportunity to build more goodwill by writing to your recommender again.

6.23 Thanks for a Favor: Business Etiquette Training Session



Your business communication class was fortunate to have the etiquette and protocol expert Pamela Eyring speak to you. A sought-after TV commentator and media personality, she runs the Protocol School of Washington, a training center for etiquette consultants and protocol officers. Ms. Eyring emphasized the importance of soft skills. She talked about outclassing the competition and dining like a diplomat. She addressed topics such as business entertaining, invitations, introductions, greetings, seating arrangements, toasting, eye contact, remembering names, and conversation skills. In the table manners segment, among other topics, she discussed dining dos and don'ts, host and guest duties, seating and napkin placement, place settings and silverware savvy, eating various foods gracefully, and tipping. With characteristic poise but also humor, Ms. Eyring brought utensils, plates, and napkins to demonstrate correct table manners.

The class was thrilled to receive hands-on training from a nationally known business etiquette expert who was able to lessen their fears of making fools of themselves during business meals or at business mixers.

Your Task. Individually or in groups, draft a thank-you letter to Pamela Eyring, director of The Protocol School of Washington, P.O. Box 376, Columbia, SC 29202. Check out the company's Web site <http://www.psow.edu>, or find The Protocol School of Washington on Facebook, where you can follow Ms. Eyring's frequent media appearances, interviews, and etiquette advice.

6.24 Thanks for the Hospitality: Boat Party and Harbor Cruise

You and other members of your staff or organization were entertained at an elegant dinner during the winter holiday season on board a large ship that was cruising the harbor of Marina Del Rey in California. The posh pleasure boat featured a live band, ballroom dancing, and a casino.

Your Task. Write a thank-you letter to your boss (supervisor, manager, vice president, president, or chief executive officer) or to the head of an organization to which you belong. Include specific details that will make your letter personal and sincere.

6.25 Responding to Good Wishes: Saying Thank You

Your Task. Write a short note thanking a former colleague who sent you good wishes when you recently found a good job after a long hiatus.

6.26 Extending Sympathy: To a Spouse

Your Task. Imagine that a coworker was killed in an automobile accident. Write a letter of sympathy to his or her spouse.

Positive Messages: Video Resources

Video Library 2: *Happy Cows in Harmony With Nature: Organic Valley*. Organic farmer Paul Deutsche has opened his Wisconsin organic dairy farm to a group of visitors. Paul, with his toddler son Emory, tells how he got started and what motivated him to purchase farmland that became Sweet Ridge Organic Dairy. He answers questions about the term *organic*, and he addresses the problems of meeting high organic standards, including expensive high-quality feed. He is part of a group of Organic Valley family farmers who work in harmony with nature without antibiotics, synthetic hormones, or pesticides. His animals, which you see in the background, are raised humanely and given certified organic feed—never any animal by-products. He's proud that his animals roam freely in certified organic pastures.

Your Task. Assume that you are part of a group of environmentally conscious farmers and activists. You heard that Paul Deutsche, one of Organic Valley's family farmers, occasionally

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opens his farm for tours. As the leader of your group, you have been given the task of writing a direct request to Organic Valley. You will request permission for your group to visit Paul Deutsche's Sweet Ridge Organic Dairy. Prepare a list of at least six appropriate questions that you would like Mr. Deutsche to discuss when your group visits. Fill in any necessary information and details. Address your direct request to Ms. Ann Simon, Community Service Director, Organic Valley Family of Farms, CROPP Cooperative, One Organic Way, LaFarge, WI 54639. Suggest dates and tell how many people you expect.

Positive Messages: Grammar/Mechanics Checkup—6

Commas 1

Review the Punctuation Review section of the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook, Sections 2.01–2.04. Then study each of the following statements and insert necessary commas. In the space provided, write the number of commas that you add; write 0 if no commas are needed. Also record the number of the G/M principle illustrated. When you finish, compare your responses with those shown near the end of the book. For more practice you will find a set of Bonus Grammar/Mechanics exercises with immediate feedback at your premier Web site, www.cengagebrain.com. If your answers differ, study carefully the principles shown in parentheses.

- _____ **Example** The hiring manager is looking for candidates who are conscientious, adaptable and flexible.
- _____ 1. We do not as a rule hire anyone who has not been interviewed.
- _____ 2. You may be sure Ms. Ebert that we will notify you immediately.
- _____ 3. Digital networking involves having your job hunt and qualifications spread virally among friends former colleagues and professional associates.
- _____ 4. We have scheduled two interviews for December 5 at the Hyatt Regency in Nashville beginning at 1 p.m.
- _____ 5. As a matter of fact job hunters regularly flub by submitting their résumés to multiple recruiters and hiring managers at the same firm.
- _____ 6. In the meantime please remember that today's hiring managers regularly search the Internet before hiring anyone.
- _____ 7. One hiring manager even found digital dirt on a candidate that went back to March 1 2005 in Chicago.
- _____ 8. Anne Lublin volunteered to move from Albany New York to Atlanta Georgia for a job.
- _____ 9. Eric Wong Teresa Cabrillo and Elise Rivers are the final three candidates.

- _____ 10. The benefits package mailed to Ms. Dawn Summers 1339 Kearsley Street Flint MI arrived exactly five days after it was mailed.
- _____ 11. Many job candidates think needless to say that they will find a job by searching the big job boards.
- _____ 12. Experienced job counselors feel however that the best way to find a job is through personal networking.
- _____ 13. Before going to his interview, Jon did three things: researched the hiring company prepared success stories and practiced answering questions.
- _____ 14. Valuable job leads can develop from projecting yourself online and making sure everyone you know is aware that you are looking for a job.
- _____ 15. I'm pleased to meet you Mr. Powell.

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Positive Messages: Editing Challenge—6

As the employee with the best communication skills, you are frequently asked to edit messages. The following letter has problems with spelling, proofreading, comma use, verbs, and other writing techniques you have studied. You may (a) use standard proofreading marks (see Appendix B) to correct the errors here or (b) download the document from www.meguffey.com and revise at your computer.

Your instructor may ask you to use the **Track Changes** feature in Word to show your editing comments. Turn on **Track Changes** on the **Review** tab. Click **Show Markup**. Place your cursor at an error, click **New Comment**, and key your edit in the bubble box provided. Study the guidelines in the Grammar/Mechanics Handbook as well as the lists of Confusing Words and Frequently Misspelled Words to sharpen your skills.

January 20, 2014

Mr. Arnold M. Rosen
3201 Rose Avenue
Mar Vista, CA 90266

Dear Mr. Rosen:

Subject: Your February 5 Letter About Our All Natural Products

We have received your letter of February 5, and we are pleased to be able to answer in the affirmative. Yes, our new line of freeze dried back packing foods meet the needs of older adults and young people as well. You asked a number of questions, and here are answers to your questions about our products.

- Our all natural foods contains no preservatives, sugars or additives. The increased list of danger items tell what foods are cholesterol, fat, and salt free.
- Large orders receive a free percent discount when they're placed direct with Outfitters, Inc. You can also purchase our products at Malibu Sports Center, 19605 Pacific Coast Highway Malibu CA 90266.
- Outfitters, Inc., food products are made in our sanitary kitchens which I personally supervise. The foods are flash froze in a patented vacuum process that retains freshness, texture and taste.
- Outfitters, Inc. food products are made from choice ingredients that combines good taste and health quality.
- Our foods stay fresh, and tasty for up to 18 months.

Mr. Rosen I started Outfitters, Inc., five years ago because of the fact that discerning back packers rejected typical camping fare. It's a great pleasure to be able at this point in time to share my custom meals with back packers like you.

By the way I hope you'll enjoy the enclosed sample meal, "Saturday Night on the Trail." This is a four-course meal complete with first course and elegant appetizers. Please call me personally at (310) 459-3342 to place an order, or to ask other questions about my backpacking food products.

Sincerely,


April Johnson

Enclosure

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Ethics: Communication Workshop: Using Ethical Tools to Help You Do the Right Thing

In your career you will no doubt face times when you are torn by ethical dilemmas. Should you tell the truth and risk your job? Should you be loyal to your friends even if it means bending the rules? Should you be tactful or totally honest? Is it your duty to help your company make a profit, or should you be socially responsible?

Being ethical, according to the experts, means doing the right thing *given the circumstances*. Each set of circumstances requires analyzing issues, evaluating choices, and acting responsibly. Resolving ethical issues is never easy, but the task can be made less difficult if you know how to identify key issues. The following questions may be helpful.

- **Is the action you are considering legal?** No matter who asks you to do it or how important you feel the result will be, avoid anything that is prohibited by law. Giving a kickback to a buyer for a large order is illegal, even if you suspect that others in your field do it and you know that without the kickback you will lose the sale.
- **How would you see the problem if you were on the opposite side?** Looking at both sides of an issue helps you gain perspective. By weighing both sides of an issue, you can arrive at a more equitable solution.
- **What are the alternative solutions?** Consider all dimensions of other options. Would the alternative be more ethical? Under the circumstances, is the alternative feasible?
- **Can you discuss the problem with someone whose opinion you value?** Suppose you feel ethically bound to report accurate information to a client—even though your boss has ordered you not to do so. Talking about your dilemma with a coworker or with a colleague in your field might give you helpful insights and lead to possible alternatives.
- **How would you feel if your family, friends, employer, or coworkers learned of your action?** If the thought of revealing your action publicly produces cold sweats, your choice is probably not a wise one. Losing the faith of your friends or the confidence of your customers is not worth whatever short-term gains might be realized.

Career Application. One of the biggest accounting firms uses an ethical awareness survey that includes some of the following situations. You may face similar situations with ethical issues on the job or in employment testing.

Your Task. In teams or individually, decide whether each of the following ethical issues is (a) very important, (b) moderately important, or (c) unimportant. Then decide whether you (a) strongly approve of, (b) are undecided about, or (c) strongly disapprove of the action taken.⁹ Apply the ethical tools presented here to determine whether the course of action is ethical. What alternatives might you suggest?

- **Recruiting.** You are a recruiter for your company. Although you know company morale is low, the turnover rate is high, and the work environment in many departments is deplorable, you tell job candidates that it is “a great place to work.”
- **Training program.** Your company is offering an exciting training program in Hawaii. Although you haven't told anyone, you plan to get another job shortly. You decide to participate in the program anyway because you have never been to Hawaii. One of the program requirements is that participants must have “long-term career potential” with the firm.
- **Thievery.** As a supervisor, you suspect that one of your employees is stealing. You check with a company attorney and find that a lie detector test cannot be legally used. Then you decide to scrutinize the employee's records. Finally, you find an inconsistency in the employee's records. You decide to fire the employee, although this inconsistency would not normally have been discovered.
- **Downsizing.** As part of the management team of a company that makes potato chips, you are faced with the rising prices of potatoes. Rather than increase the cost of your chips, you decide to decrease slightly the size of the bag. Consumers are less likely to notice a smaller bag than a higher price.

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Positive Messages: Endnotes

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Footnotes

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