

A 2016 study (conducted by Global Strategies Group) of about 500 senior managers and C-suite executives (a corporation's most important senior leaders) revealed that most applicants right out of college are only “somewhat” prepared to solve problems, think critically, and communicate their ideas “clearly and persuasively in writing.” In light of such industry insight, this first assignment measures your ability to think critically and rhetorically, and to compose effective day-to-day professional correspondence.

For this assignment, you will write three pieces of correspondence that respond to the prompts presented below. Consider them carefully. Think rhetorically. Respond strategically, in a way that benefits both you and the organization(s). Also, be sure to format each appropriately according to its respective medium (memo, letter, and email). Further, add the necessary particulars (fact and/or fiction) in-support of your response. Finally, consider matters of ethics – do your responses reflect the careful consideration of your values and shared obligations, and is the communication itself fair, balanced, responsible?

Correspondence Prompts

Inquiry Memo – In this scenario, you are a mid-level manager on Floor 2 of Company ‘X’. Your workers have been having difficulty with the computers at their workstations: the equipment is no longer capable of supporting many of the more complex tasks required, which is hampering productivity. In order to garner permission to explore possible replacements and make a recommendation (which would be formally presented in a later recommendation report), you decide to compose a memo to several higher-ups in the company, to include your immediate supervisor and the CEO.

Claim Letter (Complaint Letter) – In this scenario, your company, Company ‘X’, has purchased computers from manufacturer ‘Y’ to replace the computers on Floor 2. While the purchase is generally satisfactory, you have discovered that several of the computers used for especially demanding tasks do not perform adequately. Upon closer inspection, you have discovered that the machines do not meet the contracted specifications, but calls to the customer service department have not resolved the issue.

Adjustment email – You are an employee at Manufacturer ‘Y’ in the Customer Service Department. You have just received a letter from an employee of Company ‘X’ who claims they have made repeat attempts to resolve a problem with computers purchased from Manufacturer ‘Y’, to no avail. (See the prompt above regarding the nature of the complaint.) It is your responsibility to resolve the issue. (Your records show that Company ‘X’s claims are false and the computers meet the requirements of the contract.)

Final length: length is rhetorically-informed; however, most business correspondence is concise, efficient, so aim for responses of one “page” or less.

Rhetorical Annotation Memo

In-support of the documents you’ve composed, you must include a rhetorical analysis memo, from you addressed to me. This document is essential to my assessment; after all, I cannot hope to grade you accurately without insight into the situation and the techniques you’ve chosen.

Be thorough in this enterprise: the memo must include a fully developed description of the rhetorical situation, an itemized account of the rhetorical moves you’ve made, and a defense of the rhetorical strategies you’ve employed. If matters of ethics were important to your strategy, include the rationale for your approach in this domain. Finally, remember to organize and format the memo according to the conventions we discussed in class.

If you have questions or concerns regarding the assignment, please ask.

Good luck!