

Negative Message Assignment

(Assignment case from Bovee and Thill)

Task

Create a letter, include a formal letter heading (return address, date, delivery address, salutation) and signature close with case details noted below.

Respond to a message you received from your client, Fleetwood. Review the case background and details below to help you create your message. The focus for this message is for you to respond to your client's request while using the indirect approach.

You can make-up any relevant or reasonable background or contextual information (once you've used all other case data provided) in the opening, evidence to support your main idea in the body or action/deadline information in the close.

Situation

You are an account manager at a company that purchases media ads for clients. Your job requires you to purchase ad time months in advance, in order to gain a price advantage in the local market for your clients. One of your major clients is Fleetwood Sport, a regional chain company that sells a wide variety of sporting goods. Fleetwood's products include team sports equipment, camping and fishing gear, golf and tennis equipment, and active apparel.

In December, you bought advance local ad spots scheduled for May and June on a popular radio station. When you bought the ads, the radio station told you that the time slot for those ads would feature a new radio host who would be starting early in the new year. You had your doubts about the new host, who had been known as "controversial" in his previous job in another city, but the client (Fleetwood) insisted that the host was "terrific" and would likely get higher ratings. After much thought, you bought the ads. The initial agreed upon plan was to use the radio ad time slot to launch a new spring campaign for Fleetwood's outdoor equipment collection geared towards a younger audience that would include high-tech camping, biking, and rock climbing gear.

Now it is April, and the client (Fleetwood) is eager to hear about the ratings of the new radio host. You have just seen the latest ratings and are distressed to find that in almost every category the audiences for your ad's time slot are well below your expectations. The exception is with the over-50 demographic, where ratings are significantly higher than you expected. Your ads have not aired yet, but you know that Fleetwood is expecting better overall ratings than those earned in April by this time slot.

You want to respond to your client's main idea request for an update on the host's show ratings. You will also want to prioritize your message focus on obtaining your client's approval to change the ad campaign focus given the audience that the host is attracting. You should include updated campaign suggestions that appeal to a 50+ audience.

In this case the ad spot is already paid for and will only be effective if you tailor to the older audience tuning in. The priority for this message is that you remind your client about all of the background information and the role they played in making earlier decisions. Additionally, you will need to make specific suggestions to your client as to how and what the new ad should focus on to appeal to the 50+ audience that is tuning in. You can also add suggestions you might have to still appeal to the younger audience, which will likely be completely separate from the ad you need to now change. However, any reference to appealing to the younger audience should be secondary to the priority of your client having to change the ad focus.

Keep in Mind

When there is negative content in a message, you want to limit attention to it. You only need to refer to the poor ratings once, likely in your main idea statement. However, there is no need to focus on the negative beyond the one reference. Instead, offer your suggestions for moving forward based on the ratings. You can focus your priority on suggesting a change in the ad, where you highlight Fleetwood's products that appeal to 50+ audience and you can also consider noting any other suggestions related to how you can appeal to the initial intended market, which might not be through the current radio station.

Minimum Assignment Requirements

- Include a formal letter heading, salutation and signature close.
- **Create a message with 4 sections – open/body/body/close with 4-5 sentences in each paragraph or ~15-20 sentences total** and include reference to associated techniques applied to content after each sentence in your message. (see table below with techniques to choose from)
- **Also indicate which sentence is your main idea sentence** (Note "main idea" in parentheses next to the sentence that reflects your main idea in your message.) **Indicate which sentence you applied "you attitude"** using same format as main idea.
- **Include a buffer in the opening of your message and indicate which type of buffer you are using in parentheses in the message.**
- Try to respond to/include "who/what/where/when/why/how/how much/how often" in your message, where applicable
- Use design elements -> headings, bold, italics, tables, graphs, pictures, etc.
- Single space ONLY

Submission Requirements

Submit in PDF, DOC or DOCX file format through the correct assignment link. You can use Google Docs to create your message and download a pdf or doc file and submit through assignment link.

TIPS FOR CREATING A NEGATIVE NEWS MESSAGE

- * Typically for indirect approach you would include a buffer in opening and your main idea or bad news in your body after facts/evidence..
- *Be "diplomatic," show an ability to deal with people in a sensitive and effective way.
- *Reduce or eliminate the need for future correspondence.
- *Pay attention/anticipate/respond to reader's feelings.
- *Prevent any misunderstandings from the reader's viewpoint.
- *State the reasons for the bad news clearly in the body.
- *Close with a positive statement.

Writing Techniques for Negative Messages

Use general techniques in addition to selected negative message techniques. **Bolded content relate more specifically to techniques for writing a negative business message. Choose from the most appropriate techniques in table for your message and assignment requirements.**

Don't forget to COMPLETE your message and do your best to include relevant details that include who/what/when/where/why/how/how much/how often, where applicable.

Please note, techniques are not listed in any particular order of importance.

OPEN SECTION TECHNIQUES

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| Positive Statement | Thank you for being a valued AAA customer for 10 years. |
| General Purpose - To inform, To persuade | This letter is being sent to inform you of a new benefits procedure |
| Who are you? What are you writing about? When is the deadline? When did we contact you? | (Who) I'm a customer service representative from American Express. (What) I'm writing in regards to your American Express Costco Card. (When) You were contacted by one of our representatives on February 13 th , 2013 and I am following up on that discussion. |
| Main Idea (If Direct Approach) (Specific Purpose/Action/News/Request) | New provider selections must be made online by Feb 1, 2010. |
| History/Background/Context related to topic of message. What information can you provide to help bring your audience up-to-speed on your message? Or what does your audience need to know to adequately understand your message. | For the past 20 years your benefit selections were made on a form sent through snail mail. |
| Review Topics to be Covered in Your Message. Organize your content and guide your reader so they know what your message will review. | This memo includes steps you need to take to correctly make your new benefits selection and contact information for any questions. |
| SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES | SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES |
| Buffer If you use the indirect approach then you would typically include a buffer to help ease any adverse reaction to your main idea, which is your negative news. Buffer Types - Agreement, Praise, Appreciation, Good News, Understanding, Cooperation, etc.). | Appreciation - We appreciate your gold standard membership with alliance airlines for the past five years. |
| Main Idea/Bad News If you use the direct approach then you don't have to use a buffer (you still can use a buffer if you think it will support your main idea and overall message) and instead you would include your main idea, which is your negative news in the opening. | Your airline miles will expire at the end of this year, 12/31/10. |

BODY SECTION TECHNIQUES

Support Main Idea

| Writing Technique | Example |
|---|---|
| Relevant Details Define your problem and provide all of the necessary details surrounding problem, if applicable. Provide specific details to clarify your main idea | I ordered the IPOD online at Apple website on January 1, 2010. The IPOD was sent via UPS, tracking# is, order# is, etc. (Note: Depending in your message and your organization of content, you might also include information about when and where you placed your order in opening section.) |
| Evidence/Facts Include proof to substantiate your main idea. | Please find photos of broken shipping carton and photos of broken IPOD attached to this message. |
| Justify Main Idea (In this case the main idea, which is a request, is being justified or | Due to the former manual form and snail mail procedure for benefits changes, process time was |

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|---|--|
| explained.) Provide any reasons and/or explanations surrounding your main idea. | extensive. Instead of requesting new benefits information one year in advance, we will now request changes one month in advance. |
| Questions to Ask Group any questions you might have for your audience. | Please provide me with answers to the following questions in order to expedite your order. |
| Topic Relevant Related Data | Invoice payments and dates for receipt of payment. |
| Anticipate and respond to questions. Put yourself in your audience's shoes and consider what questions they might have or what information they might need and include it. This approach might help prevent additional communications. Determine best placement for this type of content based on overall message and logical flow. You can also include this type of content in the close section. | You will not need to be home to receive your new IPOD, you will receive your replacement IPOD via FEDEX ground on 2/15/2010. |
| SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES | SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES |
| Include Reasons that are detailed, tactful, individualized, unapologetic, and positive. | Due to a recent merger with star airlines we are modifying our frequent flyer program. |
| Explain what you DID/CAN DO, not what you DIDN'T/CAN'T DO. Focus on the positive. | Our new FF program will include an expiration date to miles. |
| Explain Company Policy | As stated on the back of your receipt, all items must be unworn, unwashed, and tags need to be attached in order to return your merchandise. |
| Main Idea/Bad News - If Indirect Approach | Your airline miles will expire at the end of this year, 12/31/10. |
| Suggest Alternative Solutions If applicable, explain what other present or future options exist for your audience. This technique can work in both your body and close sections. | UCLA offers a similar Entrepreneurial program, they might still be accepting new students, go to their website www.ucla.edu or call for more information.) |

CLOSE SECTION TECHNIQUES

| Writing Technique | Example |
|--|--|
| Specific Information for Action Steps What details do you need to provide your audience surrounding your main idea? | Complete enclosed form and return with envelope by 3/30/08 |
| Specific Next Steps for Audience to Take Identify the specific steps your audience can take to respond to your main idea. | Go to our website www.business.com to see answers to FAQ's and for more details about our program. |
| Make Action Easy Provide several distribution/media options for your audience to respond to your request. | Call, email, or order our product online |
| Focus on the Positive If appropriate, end your message on a positive note to facilitate goodwill and a positive association with your business. | We hope we can meet your future pet grooming needs. |
| Contact Information Provide contact information if you want to facilitate additional communications and/or if you want to make it easy for the reader to reach you. | Please contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email at name@company.com to begin your new life today!). |

| | |
|---|---|
| Deadline Information If applicable, clearly indicate when you need to hear back from your audience. | In order to receive your dress in time for your trip, you need to send us your dress size by Friday, May 15 th , 5PM, PT. |
| Cordial Close Consider including a statement that will be pleasing to your audience. | We appreciate your business, thank you for being a loyal AAA customer since 2000. |
| SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES | SPECIFIC TO NEGATIVE MESSAGES |
| Suggest Alternative Solutions | If you do not intend on traveling in the near future, consider gifting, donating, or selling your air miles. Alternatively, you may trade your miles for a product or service through our partner providers available at our website. |
| Provide Sales Promotion Information, if Applicable | As a special promotion we are offering “buy one, get one free” for every mile purchased between 2/1/10 and 3/1/10. |
| Limit/Minimize Future Correspondence | Avoid “If you should have future problems” (where applicable). Please talk with your manager if you have additional questions regarding the new dress code policy. |
| Anticipate Questions and Concerns and Answer Them | If you are not satisfied with this response please go to the following website or call this number for information about the appeal process. |

Create formal letter heading with made-up information

Return Address - include made-up business name

Date

Delivery Address – include company name (Fleetwood Sport with made-up address)

Salutation – “Dear Sandy,” (you can make-up a title, use formal “Mr or Ms” approach or create a name).

Add a signature close at end of message.

Sample Outline

Open

- A. Melissa from Media Ad company working on your account (Who you are)
- B. Received your request for new radio host ratings (Context)
- C. Host ratings are mixed depending on demographic. (General Purpose)

Body I

- A. Purchased ad times months in advance to lock in discount price in local market. (Anticipate and Respond to Questions/Relevant Tactful, Unapologetic Details)
- B. New controversial host scheduled, but reassured of proven track record for increased ratings. (Anticipate and Respond to Questions/Relevant Tactful, Unapologetic Details) (Don't forget to add enough connecting content – related content and/or use of transition)
- C. Expected audience for time slot below expectations, whereas over 50 demographic exceeded expectations. (Main Idea = Response to Request)

**Body II (Recommendations based on research/knowledge of 50+ demographic)
Good place to add a table and/or bullets**

- A. As a result of ratings we updated our media ad recommendations. (Suggested Solutions)
- B. Outdoor equipment collection focus on 50+ demographic (Suggested Solutions)
- C. Team Sports – bowling, tennis (For C through E content choose areas to focus on and be creative. You can offer client options to choose from) (Suggested Solutions)
- D. Camping Gear – RV travel (Suggested Solutions)
- E. Fishing, golf, tennis, active apparel for 50+, biking, (Suggested Solutions)

Close

- A. Take advantage of new customer base/make the best of situation. (Focus on Positive)
- B. Please select from Media Ad options presented by 'x' date to meet radio deadlines. (Action/Next Steps)
- C. I will follow-up with you after we address this immediate ad change to assess future station and host decisions. (Anticipate Concerns/Next Steps)
- D. Look forward to hearing from you, contact me with any questions. (Contact Info, Cordial Close)