

Negative/Persuasive Message Assignment (50 Points)

Purpose

Unfortunately, in business, not all messages are positive or even routine. Negative, or “bad news,” messages are also relatively common. These kinds of messages include rejecting job applicants; denying claims from customers or requests from employees; disagreeing with a co-workers suggestion or idea; notifying your supervisor or customers of a mistake you made; and many more. Because these kinds of communication send negative messages, it is especially important to use respect, courtesy, and care so that the receiver maintains a positive (or at least neutral) impression of you and the company for which you work.

In this assignment, you will compose a negative message, with a slight difference: you will also include a persuasive element or section. Your goal is to help your recipient see your message as a good idea; you will need to analyze the situation (and use your creativity) to complete this message.

Instructions:

1. Select ONE of the scenarios below and compose the necessary message.
2. Use indirect structure—i.e., the Hamburger Model from the instructor’s video.
3. In the place for the counter-proposal on the Hamburger Model, include a section that will help persuade your recipient to accept your plan, see it as a good idea, etc. See the video and PowerPoints for ideas on how to be persuasive when communicating.
4. Submit your message as a Microsoft Word document to the Bad News Message assignment on Blackboard.
5. Remember to include all relevant conventions so that your channel choice is clear. For example, if you’re writing an email, include the To/From/Date/Subject/Attachment (if applicable) information at the top and your signature block at the bottom. If you plan to communicate a message in person, prepare the statement you will deliver to the other person.

Negative Message Scenarios

1. Deliver Negative Feedback

In this scenario, you are the Human Resources Director for a medium sized marketing company, Bearkat Advertising. Due to rampant unprofessionalism in the Sales Department’s internal emails, you have recently worked with the CEO to implement a new policy regulating electronic communication used by all employees. The policy outlines the CEO’s expectations for employee email usage including mandates such as “Employees will write objective, fact-based emails, and less personal judgments and evaluations” and “Employees will avoid escalation of conflict and tension via email by focusing on work objectives.” The Vice President of Sales, Lee Smith, was one of the worst offenders; he was often overly critical and vulgar in his emails to his sales teams. Therefore, compose a message to the VP of Sales informing him

of the new Email Communication Policy for all employees, which includes him. Consider the following as you plan your message:

- In what ways can you persuade Mr. Smith to be responsive to your feedback?
- In what ways can you demonstrate care and courtesy?
- What information can you use to demonstrate the problem? What is the recommended action? What are the effects of the problem and the recommended action?
- How will you ensure a positive working relationship in the future? How can you demonstrate good will?

2. Announce the Implementation of Telecommuting Policy

In this scenario, you are the CEO of Bearkat Apps, a company that creates mobile apps for small businesses. For many years, Bearkat Apps has leased offices and workspaces in downtown Houston where all the employees work together during traditional hours (8 a.m. – 5 p.m., Monday – Friday). This consistent contact between employees has helped the company develop a collaborative, energetic, and productive culture where employees feel happy and engaged. Since March, most of your employees have worked remotely due to the pandemic. Based on comments some of your employees have made, working from home has made them feel isolated and disconnected from their co-workers; others fretted that it was harder to get direction and feedback on their work from managers; some have even worried that not having sustained, face-to-face contact with managers and co-workers can make it harder to be successful or advance in the company. Therefore, most of your employees are looking forward to returning to the office and carrying on as before.

However, because of the downturn in the economy and the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, you are looking for ways to decrease the company's expenses. The lease on your (very expensive) office space is up at the end of 2020, and you feel it would be best for your company to move to a less expensive location in the suburbs. You have located just such a space, but there's a catch: it does not have workspaces for all of your current employees. Therefore, you have decided to implement an ongoing remote work policy in which the employees will work at home three days a week on a revolving basis.

The new requirement will take effect January 1, 2021, but employees are strongly encouraged to make the transition sooner. Compose a message to all employees informing them of the new policy requiring them to work remotely. Consider the following as you plan your message:

- In what ways can you persuade your employees that this new policy will be beneficial to them?
- In what ways can you demonstrate care and courtesy?
- What potential concerns/complaints might your employees have? How can you address those concerns/complaints? (Feel free to be creative here. Think: what actions could you take to alleviate their worries or complaints?)
- What information would help your receivers understand the need for the policy?

- What details do your receivers need?

3. Rejecting a Job Applicant

In this scenario, you are a lead manager in the Sales Department at Sammy's Kitchens, a company that creates custom kitchens for customers in Southeast Texas. Although the company normally hires new employees in May, upper management recently gave you permission to hire another sales person in October. Unfortunately, due to some unexpected set-backs, they decided to hold off on adding a new employee in October, and instead wait until the normal May new-hire schedule. You are especially disappointed by this news because one of the applicants, Barbara Gordon, would have been an excellent addition to the company. She recently graduated from Sam Houston State University, where she completed a senior project on the feasibility of developing environmentally-friendly home products for customers, an area in which Sammy's Kitchens is looking to grow. Her references also mentioned that she was highly self-motivated and good at helping others understand complex ideas. Compose a message to Ms. Gordon informing her that Sammy's Kitchens is unable to make an offer at this time, but that she should consider reapplying in May when the company normally hires new employees. Consider the following as you plan your message:

- What information needs to be included or excluded in your message to Ms. Gordon?
- How can you ensure that Ms. Gordon still has a positive impression of the company after receiving your message?
- What potential concerns might Ms. Gordon have? How can you address those concerns?
- Keep in mind that you can't promise that she will be hired in May. Reapplication will mean that she will be assessed compared to a new pool of applicants.

Grading Rubric

Area of Evaluation	Excellent (6)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (2)	Developing (1)	Unsatisfactory (0)
Organization – Buffer	Provides a brief buffer that establishes common ground, shows appreciation, and expresses goodwill. Buffer sets the tone for the rest of the message.	Provides a brief personal buffer, but doesn't express goodwill.	Provides a brief impersonal buffer, and doesn't express goodwill.	Provides an extensive buffer that is too long or an otherwise inappropriate buffer (i.e., not included in prior level).	Buffer is not identifiable.

Organization – Explanation	Provides a rationale for the bad news that is clear and specific.	Rationale for the bad news is present, but more information would have provided a clearer understanding. Some verbiage is not clear.	Rationale for the bad news is present, but information is extremely brief and not explicit.	Rationale for the bad news is vague or incongruous.	Rationale for the bad news is not identifiable.
Organization – Bad News	Delivers the bad news all together after the explanation/ reasons in the message.	Delivers the bad news all together early in the message (i.e., before the reasons).	Delivers the bad news in pieces throughout the document.	Delivers the bad news all together only at the end of the message.	Does not clearly state the bad news or bad news is not identifiable.
Organization – Persuasive Element (Counter-Proposal, Alternative, Benefits, etc.)	Includes a persuasive section with realistic solutions, alternative courses of action, and/or the benefits that current sacrifices make possible.	Includes a persuasive section but more information would have provided a clearer understanding. Some wording or ideas are not clear.	Persuasive section is extremely brief and/or vague in places.	Persuasive section is vague the majority of the time.	Persuasive section is not identifiable.
Organization – Show of Goodwill	Demonstrates good will. Includes personal statements that reflect a desire for a positive future relationship.	Provides an impersonal statement that reflects a desire for a future relationship.	Statement regarding a positive future relationship is extremely brief.	Vague indication of a desire for a positive future relationship.	No indication for a positive future relationship.
Area of Evaluation	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Satisfactory (3)	Developing (2)	Unsatisfactory (0)
Document Design	Font is attractive and readable. Margins are balanced. Spacing between elements is correct.	Appropriate format, but minor errors in structure.	Appropriate format, but significant errors in structure.	Incorrect format, but structure is correct for format chosen.	Incorrect format and errors in structure.

Tone	Message is professional, written in a positive tone, and personalized. Reflects genuine concern.	Message is professional and written in a positive tone, but impersonal or genuine concern is vague.	Message is professional, but tends to have a negative tone.	Message has an unprofessional or overwhelmingly negative tone in places, but is not offensive.	Multiple instances of unprofessional writing throughout document, some of which could be offensive.
Writing Style & Document Design	The language used is accurate, specific, and concise. The document is designed for easy navigation	The language is accurate and specific, but is wordy, and/or design is difficult to navigate.	The writing style is clear in parts, and organization and/or design are difficult to navigate. Some information is not specific.	Some lapses or flaws in organization, idea development or focus. Much of the language is vague, unclear, and wordy.	Frequent organizational flaws, uneven development of ideas, or uncertain focus. Overall message is unclear.
Grammar & Mechanics	The message is free of any errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation	Very few errors (1-2)	Some errors (3-5)	More than 6 errors	Errors so severe they detract from the meaning of the message