



SIM MODULE BOOK

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

COM2107



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BUSINESS COMMUNICATION (COM2107)

Module Book - INTRODUCTION

Content

This module aims to equip students with effective writing and oral communication skills to meet the challenges of working in a competitive environment. Students learn to master important business communication tools like reports, letters, minutes, memorandums, and electronic mail communication. Students will also acquire presentation and public speaking skills as well as listening and meeting skills essential for success in the new economy.

Module Aims

The aim of this module is to:

1. Equip students with effective writing and oral communication skills to meet the challenges of working in a competitive environment.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of this module, a participant will be able to:

1. Explain the communication process and recognize the common barriers which prevent effective communication and learn how to overcome them and thereby be an effective communicator.
2. Listen effectively and constructively to facilitate good interpersonal skills and teamwork.
3. Demonstrate the skills of conducting and participating at business meetings by exhibiting initiative and good leadership qualities.
4. Make systematic, effective, and professional presentations.
5. Demonstrate the application of clear and concise writing in business communications.
6. Craft internal and external business communications using the techniques in business writing.
7. Apply skills in writing electronic mail communications.

Delivery of Module and Lesson Plan			
Session	Topic	Learning Outcomes At the completion of this topic, participants will be able to:	Prescribed Text, Readings and/or Activities
1.	Communication Theory 1.1 Definition of communication 1.2 Importance of communication 1.3 Communication process 1.4 Cultural diversity & communication	1. Define communication. 2. Explain the importance of communication. 3. Describe the communication process. 4. Explain how cultural diversity affects communication.	Module Book COM2107 Session 1
2.	Team and Interpersonal Communication 2.1 Working in teams 2.2 Effective team 2.3 Listening skills 2.4 Nonverbal communication	1. Explain the importance and the characteristics of effective team. 2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teams. 3. Understand the types of listening skills and describe the listening process. 4. Explain the importance of nonverbal communication.	Module Book COM2107 Session 2
3.	Planning Reports 3.1 Writing process 3.2 Conducting research 3.3 Primary research 3.4 Informational reports 3.5 Analytical reports	1. Describe business reports and the three-step writing process. 2. Describe an effective process for conducting business research. 3. Explain the role of primary research. 4. Explain how to plan informational report content. 5. Identify the three most common ways to organize analytical reports.	Module Book COM2107 Session 3

Delivery of Module and Lesson Plan			
Session	Topic	Learning Outcomes At the completion of this topic, participants will be able to:	Prescribed Text, Readings and/or Activities
4.	Writing Reports 4.1 Writing Introduction, body and close 4.2 Design of visuals 4.3 Completing reports	1. Organizing the introduction, body, and close of reports and proposals. 2. Discuss six principles of graphic design for business visuals. 3. Summarize tasks in completing business reports and proposals.	Module Book COM2107 Session 4
5.	Planning Business Messages 5.1 Writing process 5.2 Analyse the situation 5.3 Gathering information 5.4 Medium and Channels 5.5 Organizing the message	1. Describe the three-step writing process. 2. Explain how to analyse the situation when planning a message. 3. Describe the techniques for gathering information. 4. Describe the major classes of medium and channels. 5. Explain why good organization of the message is important.	Module Book COM2107 Session 5
6.	Writing Business Messages 6.1 Audience needs 6.2 Credibility & relating to the audience 6.3 Business-like tone and language 6.4 Selecting the right words 6.5 Types of sentences 6.6 Coherent paragraphs	1. Identify the four aspects of being sensitive to audience needs. 2. Explain how to establish credibility and relate to the audience. 3. Explain how to use a business-like tone and language. 4. Describe how to select the right words. 5. Recognize the different types of sentences and their emphases. 6. Define the key elements of a coherent paragraph.	Module Book COM2107 Session 6

Delivery of Module and Lesson Plan			
Session	Topic	Learning Outcomes At the completion of this topic, participants will be able to:	Prescribed Text, Readings and/or Activities
7.	Completing Business Messages 7.1 Revising drafts and evaluating work 7.2 Improve readability 7.3 Editing for clarity and conciseness 7.4 Designing documents 7.5 Proofreading 7.6 Distributing messages	1. Describe steps to revise and evaluate first drafts and work done by others. 2. Describe techniques to improve the readability of messages. 3. Write clearly and concisely. 4. Describe principles of effective design of documents. 5. Explain the importance of and steps in proofreading. 6. Explain how to distribute messages.	Module Book COM2107 Session 7
8.	Persuasive Messages 8.1 Writing persuasive messages 8.2 Developing the message 8.3 Categories of persuasive messages 8.4 Sales and marketing messages 8.5 Ethics in writing messages	1. Apply the Three-step writing process to persuasive messages. 2. Describe a strategy for developing the messages. 3. Identify the categories of persuasive business messages. 4. Describe a strategy for developing sales and marketing messages. 5. Identify steps to avoid ethical lapses in marketing and sales messages.	Module Book COM2107 Session 8

Delivery of Module and Lesson Plan			
Session	Topic	Learning Outcomes At the completion of this topic, participants will be able to:	Prescribed Text, Readings and/or Activities
9.	Business Routine and Positive Messages 9.1 Strategy for business routine requests 9.2 Types of routine requests 9.3 Strategy for routine replies and positive messages 9.4 Common types of replies and positive messages.	1. Describe an effective strategy for writing routine business requests. 2. Describe three common types of routine requests. 3. Outline an effective strategy for writing routine replies and positive messages. 4. Describe six common types of routine replies and positive messages.	Module Book COM2107 Session 9
10.	Negative Messages 10.1 Writing negative messages 10.2 Conveying negative messages 10.3 Indirect approach 10.4 Sending negative messages 10.5 Employment related messages 10.6 Organizational news 10.7 Social media	1. Apply the three-step writing process to negative messages. 2. Explain how to convey negative news. 3. Explain the indirect but ethical approach to convey negative news. 4. Describe strategies for sending negative messages. 5. Identify when to convey negative organizational news. 6. Explain how to respond to negative information in a social media environment.	Module Book COM2107 Session 10

Delivery of Module and Lesson Plan			
Session	Topic	Learning Outcomes At the completion of this topic, participants will be able to:	Prescribed Text, Readings and/or Activities
11.	Developing Oral Presentations 11.1 Business presentations 11.2 Developing presentations 11.3 Visual aspects 11.4 Completing presentations 11.5 Delivery Presentation in a social media environment	1. Explain the importance of business presentations. 2. Describe the steps to developing a presentation. 3. Explain how to enhance your presentation with effective visuals. 4. Identify special tasks in completing a presentation. 5. Identify aspects of an effective delivery of presentation in a social media environment.	Module Book COM2107 Session 11
12.	Meetings & Minutes 12.1 Definition of meetings 12.2 Purposes of meetings 12.3 Preparation of meetings 12.4 Role of chairperson 12.5 Role of participants 12.6 Writing agenda and minutes of meetings	1. Define “meeting”. 2. Discuss the purpose of meetings. 3. Describe the preparations for a meeting. 4. Discuss the roles and responsibilities of a chairperson/ participants. 5. Delineate steps to make meetings more effective. 6. Write an effective agenda and minutes of meeting using appropriate vocabulary, language, and convention.	Module Book COM2107 Session 12

Teaching and Learning Methods

Lectures are used to introduce foundational topics like Communication Theory and Barriers and Solutions to Communication and facilitate the understanding of listening, meeting, and presentation skills.

Tutorials will be used to discuss key concepts and skills. Students will be expected to participate in discussions and present solutions to questions posed in the tutorial exercises each week. These exercises will provide a measurement of their level of understanding of key concepts. Case studies will be used to test the ability of the students to apply these concepts to real-life scenarios. Students will be required to complete written exercises and be able to apply the techniques learnt in effective business writing.

Students will work together in groups for their group presentations. They will be expected to plan, discuss, and organize their presentations. They then will be expected to make their formal presentations with the use of appropriate aids and incorporate activities to involve the audience.

Indicative Readings

Textbook required	Business Communication Module Book, SIM Global Education, 2016
Supplementary reading	Bovee, C. & Thill, J. V. (2016). <i>Business Communication Essentials</i> . 7 th Edition. NJ: Pearson. ISBN/ISSN: 9780132564809.

Assessment/Coursework

All assessments must comply with the SIM Rules and Regulations. To satisfy module requirements, students must:

- 1) Satisfactorily complete and present on due dates their completed assignment. A penalty of 20% of the total marks will be imposed for late submission. A submission later than 1 calendar day past deadline will receive a zero mark.
- 2) Complete all assignments and the common test in a satisfactory manner.
- 3) Reference all their work and observe SIM's policy on plagiarism. Students found guilty of plagiarism will be dealt with severely.
- 4) Adopt the APA (American Psychological Association) Referencing Styles.
- 5) Spend at least 100 hours (including class attendance and assignments) on the module to fare reasonably.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 1

COMMUNICATION THEORY

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Define communication.
 2. Explain the importance of communication.
 3. Describe the communication process.
 4. Explain how cultural diversity affects communication.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of communication and understand the importance of effective communication. Next, we discuss the nature of communication in an organization using an audience-centered approach. Then we analyse the communication process model. Finally, we learn how cultural diversity can affect business communication and the steps to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries.

2. Fundamentals of Communications

To develop good communication skills, it is essential to understand the fundamentals of communications. This section outlines the numerous ways in which good communications benefit both your career and the organization that hires you.

2.1 Definition of Communication

Communication involves exchanging messages or information between two or more parties. It is the process of transferring information and meaning between senders and receivers, using one or more written, oral, visual, or electronic channels. The essence of communication provides accurate data, reliable information, valuable insights, and inspirational two-way exchange that benefit all parties of communication.

2.2 The Importance of Communication

Effective communication plays a vital and strategic role in individual career and organization's success. It can strengthen the internal communication within the organization in productivity, problem solving, decision making, smoothen operation and people management. It can also establish the external communication between the organization, its stakeholder and marketplace in strong corporate image, branding and advertising thereby sizing all opportunities to influence perceptions and trends.

2.3 Characteristics of Effective Communication

Effective communication is crucial for the success of a productive business meeting.

The characteristics of effective communication are:

1. Provide practical and logical reasoning
2. Give accurate facts rather than vague impressions
3. Present information in a concise, efficient manner
4. Manage business-oriented expectations
5. Clarify roles and responsibilities
6. Present compelling, persuasive arguments
7. Offer recommendations and solutions

2.4 Communication in Organization Context

Every organization has its own communication “system” that connects all employees inside the organization and connects the organization to the outside world. The “system” is a complex design of the combination of:

1. Communication channels via email, intranet and or face to face meeting
2. Company policies on the use of social media and distribution of information
3. Organizational structure that is either in flat and flexible or hierarchical and rigid
4. Formal and/or informal interpersonal relations to enhance positive working environment and generating increased level of productivity

2.4 The Audience-Centred Approach

Skilful and successful business executives use an audience-centred approach in the business communication. They focus on understanding, caring, and meeting the needs of their target audience thereby providing important information that is essential to them. The other important elements include the ability to listen, write and speak in the way that will harness and maintain positive working relationships.

2.5 Business Etiquette

Organizations expect business executives to conduct and behave in a professional way that will protect and promote the organization's reputation. Business etiquette is the expected behavioural norms that make people feel good within the clients' interaction.

Figure 1.1 shows the business etiquette rules that applying the three simple principles of common sense, showing courtesy and respect will help save guard against business deal breaking mistakes and encourage forgiveness even if mistakes do surface.

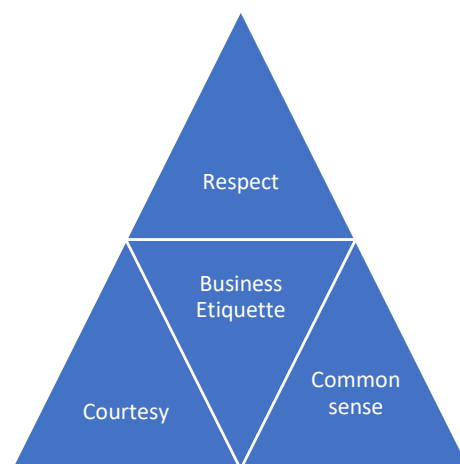


Figure 1.1: Business Etiquette

2.6 The Communication Process

Very often, even with the best efforts, communication can fail. Essentially, understanding the communication as a process in eight distinct steps outlined in Table 1.1 provides an overview of a basic communication model which is further illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Table 1.1: The Eight Distinct Steps of Communication Process

Step	Sender	Remarks
1	Conceive idea	The nature & intent of the idea is key to a successful outcome
2	Encode message	Can be expressed in words, image, verbally or non-verbally
3	Produce message	Written in Transmittable medium can be email or letter
4	Transmit message	Delivering Channels can be internet or courier or postal
Step	Receiver	Remarks
5	Receive message	Sense the presence of the message, select it from all other messages and perceive it as an actual message
6	Decode message	A complex process to extract the idea from the message. May extract different meanings leading to misunderstanding.
7	Responds to message	Motivation to reply is subject to receiver remembering the message long enough to act on it.
8	Feedback sent	Can be verbal or nonverbal or both. This feedback needs to be decoded carefully.

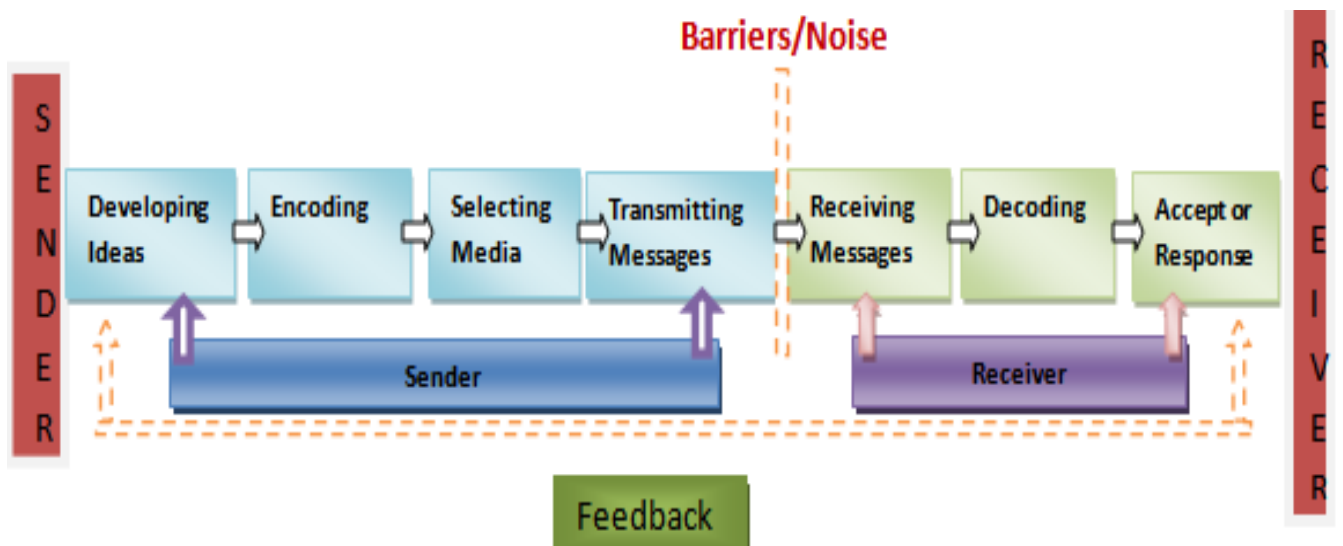


Figure 1.2: The Basic Communication Model

3. Communication in a Diversified Global Business Environment

In a global business environment, the challenge of effective communication intensified with disadvantages in differences in culture, age, gender, nationality, race, religion, languages, and a long list of complexity with globalisation in the business world.

Along with the challenges, the diversity of globalised workforce offers advantages to a wider spread of expertise, creativity, opinions, and experiences that equip the organization to understand and associate with the diverse markets and wide range of employee talents. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the differences and the potential frictions that coexist.

Improving intercultural sensitivity requires the realization of the interaction between culture and communication. Hence, we will further review the advantages and challenges of a diverse workforce from a communication perspective, key differences among cultures, and advises for communicating across cultures.

3.1 Effect of Culture on Communication

Organizations seeking to create competitive advantage in the global market must know the impact of globalization on cross-culture communication. Improving cross-culture sensitivity requires the realization of interaction between culture and communication.

Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a group of people defined by everything from languages, religion, idea, beliefs, values, expectations and social habits, music, and arts. It influences the way people perceive the world and respond to others, which then affects the way they communicate as both senders and receivers.

Subconsciously, it also influences one's beliefs and behaviours. And so, culture can potentially create friction in communication as it leads people to assume that everyone should think and feel in the same or similar way.

3.2 Cultural Context

Every attempt at communication occurs within a cultural context, non-verbal cues, social norms, and implicit understanding that convey meaning between members of the same society. In short, culture affects the way one thinks, relates, and varies widely in the role that context plays in communication. Therefore, it is necessary for executives to attain a basic level of cultural competency and proficiency to ensure successful communication.

3.3 Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is the ability to operate effectively in different culture contexts. It does require cultural knowledge and awareness of the cultural sensitivity and differences that affect communication, and the ability to adjust one's communication style to ensure that efforts to send and receive messages across cultural boundaries are successful.

3.4 High Context Culture

High-context culture rely less on the explicit content of the message and more on the context of nonverbal actions and environment setting to convey meaning. The primary role of communication in high context culture is building relationships, not exchanging information. Persons from high-context culture put less emphasis on the written word and consider personal pledges more important than contracts.

3.5 Low Context Culture

Low-context culture rely more on the explicit content and less on circumstances and cues to convey meaning. The primary task of communication in low context culture is to exchange information. The different expectations of high and low context culture can create friction and misunderstanding when one communicates across cultural boundaries.

4 Social Customs

Social behaviour is guided by numerous rules; some of them formal and specially articulated such as eye contact is mandatory in all meetings and reflect openness, while others more informal and learned over time such as the standing distance between two speakers in an office. The rules of social customs differ from culture to culture.

The combination of formal and informal rules influences the overall behaviour of everyone in a society in such areas as manners, attitudes toward time, individual versus community values, attitudes toward status and wealth, and respect for authority, and the degree of openness and inclusiveness. Understanding the nuances of social customs takes time and effort, business associates are happy to explain the habits and their culture.

5 Nonverbal Signals

Nonverbal communication is an important part of the communication process through sending and receiving wordless cues between people. It includes visual cues such as body language, touch, smell, distance, and physical appearance. Everything from facial expressions to style of dress can influence the way receivers decode messages, and the interpretation of nonverbal signals can vary widely from culture to culture.



6 The Perspective of Age Differences

Every generation can bring diverse strength to the workforce. The experience workers may benefit the organization with their deep expertise and the strong important business relationships nurtured over many years. The youth, on the other hand, may offer energy, creativity, and technology savvy while in some culture, youth may be associated with a lack of powers, loss of respect and authority.

7 The Perspective of Gender Differences

Different cultures perceive men and women in business differently and the differences can affect communication efforts. In the western cultures, there is emphasis of equality in both genders at the workplace. While in some cultures, men hold most senior positions of authority, and women are subjected to take on a more subservient role. Regardless of culture differences, there is a common social perception that men and women tend to have different communication styles. Men generally tend to emphasize context in their communication efforts, whereas women place a higher premium on relationship maintenance. Nevertheless, generalizations are not accurate in all situations.

8 Improving Intercultural Communication

It is imperative to consider every circumstance as unique encounter when making an effective communication. In any cross-cultural stations, whether it is physically within the organization or with an audience halfway around the world via conferencing technology, one can communicate more effectively using the guidelines below:

- Avoid ethnocentrism, do not judge others by their behaviours, customs and ethnic.
- Avoid stereotyping, do not generalise others by their race, culture, or social group.
- Accept all differences in others without judging nor imposing your ways on them.
- Acknowledge your own culture biases and be respectful to all different cultures.
- Always observe, learn and be flexible to change your habits and attitudes.

8.1 Intercultural Writing

Bridging cross-cultural differences has become a fundamental ingredient to successful business communication. When diversity issues are involved, the following guidelines will prove helpful in enhancing intercultural writing.

- Use plain language in short and simply words that convey your message clearly.
- Ensure clarity relying specific terms and relevant examples to state your point.
- Cite number carefully use numeric 27 versus possible misspelling of twenty-seven.
- Avoid slang, technical jargon or abbreviations that might create confusion.
- Be brief by constructing short and simple sentences.
- Use short paragraphs and keep each paragraph to one topic.
- Use transitions to enable readers to follow the flow of thoughts.

8.1 Speaking with Multilingual Audiences

It is often assumed that the multilingual target audience will understand English. However, in this global business environment, it is good to be aware that there are often business associates and / or colleagues whose native language is not English. Therefore, it is more challenging for them as it requires real time interpretation.

When speaking to multilingual audience, it is helpful to use the following guidelines:

- Pronounce words clearly, slowly, and simply making one point at a time.
- Look for feedback such as any non-verbal signs of confusion in your audience.
- Use simple words for clear understanding to avoid unnecessary rephrasing.
- Use concrete and specific examples to illustrate all meaning of any vague ideas.
- Do not talk down to others with the tendency of laying blame and intimidation.
- Learn important phrases to establish connections and greetings to show respect.
- Adopt a direct or indirect communication style that follow suit your audience.
- Be sure to establish understanding and agreement by checking for comprehension, do not assume that nods and smiles mean understanding and approval.
- Summarise the conversation of the meeting and establish follow up actions to take.

9 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

Which of the following statement is true?

- (a) Communication is important to most organization except engineering industry.
- (b) The higher position requires specialised skills and less of communication skills.
- (c) Good communicators are easier to find than good accountants and engineers.
- (d) Organizations that communicate well outperform those that communicate poorly.

Question 2

To be effective in communication, business messages should _____.

- (a) use abstract words that lend themselves to interpretation.
- (b) never contain opinions, argument, or recommendation.
- (c) give facts rather than vague impressions.
- (d) present more information than required.

Question 3

When one puts an idea into a message, he is _____it or expressing in words or images.

- (a) encoding
- (b) decoding
- (c) abstracting
- (d) indexing

Question 4

Which of the following examples of a communication medium and channel is correct?

- (a) A telephone is a medium, while a voice message is a channel.
- (b) A podcast is a medium, while an Intranet is a channel.
- (c) A cell phone is a medium, while a text message is a channel.
- (d) The internet is a medium while a Twitter is a channel.

Question 5

In a low context culture _____.

- (a) the primary role of communication is to build relationships.
- (b) people rely more on the explicit content of the message to convey meaning.
- (c) people rely more on cues and non-verbal language to convey meaning.
- (d) the rules of social custom are rarely stated explicitly.

Question 6

In a high context culture _____.

- (a) the primary role of communication is to build relationships.
- (b) people rely less on the explicit content of the message to convey meaning.
- (c) people rely less on cues and non-verbal language to convey meaning.
- (d) the rules of social custom are stated explicitly.

Question 7

Which of the following is a guideline for improving intercultural communication?

- (a) Always consider personal appearance when trying to judge a person.
- (b) Avoid using sources like travel guidebooks to learn about a culture.
- (c) Recognise your own cultural biases, avoid ethnocentricity and stereotyping.
- (d) Always assume that others will think, believe, and behave as you do.

Question 8

When writing for multilingual audiences, you should _____.

- (a) use slang, technical jargon, and abbreviation generously.
- (b) spell out numbers instead of using figures to cite numbers.
- (c) avoid using transitions to keep the statement as short as possible.
- (d) rely on specific terms and concrete examples to explain your points.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 2

TEAM AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Explain importance and characteristics of effective team.
 2. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teams.
 3. Understand the types of listening skills and describe the listening process.
 4. Explain the importance of nonverbal communication.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of the characteristics of effective teamwork and understand the importance of effective teamwork. Next, we discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teams. Then we analyse the listening process model and understand the types of listening skills. Finally, we learn how nonverbal communication can affect business communication and the steps to communicate effectively.

2. Communicating Effectively in Teams

Collaboration is working to meet complex challenges. The productivity and quality of collaborative efforts depend heavily on communications skills. Developing the skills to communicate successfully in team settings will give you an important advantage with the virtual teams, whose members work in different location and interact through one or more electronic channels, because the physical separation can complicate everything from helping new members get oriented to capturing the knowledge a team accumulates over time.

2.1 Advantages of Teams

Successful teams can improve productivity, creativity, employees' involvement, and job security.

The advantages of successful teamwork include increased efficiency in:

1. Information and knowledge – by leveraging the pooled experiences of individual.
2. Diversity of views – by gathering variety of perspectives guided by a common goal.
3. Acceptance of a solution – by supporting and encouraging others to accept it.
4. Performance levels – solving complex problem far exceed top performing individuals.

2.2 Disadvantages of Teams

Lack of trust and poor communication are the two most common reasons cited for unsuccessful teamwork, resulting teams in conflict, waste of time and resources pursuing unclear goals.

Hence it is important to be aware and work to counter the potential disadvantages of teams:

1. Groupthink – business team can generate tremendous pressure to conform.
2. Hidden agenda – these are private, counter-productive motives for selfish reasons.
3. Cost – the coordination of schedules and meetings consumes resources, time, and money.

2.3 Characteristics of Effective Teams

Effective teams are the core of participative management, which is the effect to involve employees in the process of company's decision making. The 6 characteristics of effective teams include:

1. Understand and share a common sense of purpose.
2. Encourage full engagement from all team members.
3. Procedures for reaching decisions by building consensus.
4. The right mix of creative and technologies talents for task at hand.
5. Stay focused with the clear objective.
6. Resolve conflict by communicating openly and honestly.

3 Recognising the Four Types of Listening

Listening is one of the most important skills in the workplace.

To be a good listener, adapt the different types of listening to suit the situation.

1. Content Listening – to understand and retain information

- Ask questions to clarify the material but don't argue or judge.
- Try to overlook the speaker's style and limitation in the presentation.
- Just stay focus on the information and stay objective.

2. Critical Listening – to understand and evaluate the meaning of message

- Analyse at various level: the logic of argument, the strength of evidence, the validity of the conclusion, the implication of the message for you and the organization, the speaker's intentions and motives, the omission of any important or relevant points.
- Be on the lookout for bias that might colour the way the information is presented.
- Be careful to separate opinion from facts and note that the intent is not to criticize.

3. Empathic Listening – to understand the speaker's feelings, needs and wants

- Let the speaker know you appreciate his or her feelings and view of the situation.
- Help individual to release emotions, do not judge the speaker's feeling.
- Avoid giving advice unless the person asks for it.
- Establish a connection to help the speaker search for a solution in a calm, clear-headed approach to the subject matter.

4. Active Listening – to truly understand the message without biases

- Effective listeners practice active listening.
- Make a conscience effort to turn off your own filters and biases.
- Ask questions or summarize the speaker's message to verify key points.
- Encourage the speaker through positive body language and supportive feedback.

3.1 Improving Your Listening Skills

Effective listening is vital to the process of building trust between organization and individuals. It strengthens the organization relations, alerts the firm to opportunities for innovation, and allows the company to manage growing diversity both in the workplace and in its customers. Companies whose employees and managers listen effectively can stay informed, up to date, and out of trouble. Conversely, poor listening skills may incur legal and opportunity cost.

3.2 The Listening Process

Listening is a far more complex process and most of us are not very good at it. Most of us listen at no better than 25 percent efficiency rate, remember only about half of what's said during a 10-minute conversation, and forget half of that within 48 hours.

Table 2.1 that summarises the five distinct steps to effective listen process.

Step	Receiver	Remarks
1	Receiving	Sense the presence of the message, physically hear the message, and recognise it as incoming information.
2	Decoding	A complex process to extract the idea from the message by assigning meaning to sounds, according to your own values, beliefs, ideas, expectations, roles, needs, and personal history. May extract different meanings leading to misunderstanding.
3	Remembering	Store the information for future processing. The motivation to reply is dependent on how long it is remembered to act on it.
4	Evaluating	Analyse the quality of the information. Can be verbal or nonverbal or both and need to be decoded carefully.
5	Responding	React based on the situation and the nature of the information.

Table 2.2: The Five Distinct Steps of Listening Process

3.3 Effective Listeners vs. Ineffective Listeners

Table 2.2 distinguish the ten differences between effective listeners and ineffective listeners.

No.	Effective Listeners	Ineffective Listeners
1	Listen actively	Listen passively
2	Take careful and complete notes	Take no notes or ineffective notes
3	Make frequent eye contact with speaker	Make little or no eye contact
4	Stay focus on the speaker and the content	Easily distracted or work on related tasks
5	Paraphrase to ensure comprehension	Fail to paraphrase
6	Adjust listening style to the situation	Listen with same style in all situations
7	Give non-verbal cues e.g., nodding to agree	Fail to give speaker feedback
8	Save questions until appropriate time	Interrupt whenever disagree
9	Non-judgemental and remain focus	Judgemental and distracted by own biases
10	Look for opportunities to learn	Assume they already know everything

Table 2.2: The Ten differences between effective listeners and effective listeners

3.4 Overcoming Barriers to Effective Listening

Good listeners look for ways to overcome the potential barriers to effective listening:

1. Physical receptions - one has no control over some barriers such as conference room acoustics, poor cell phone reception, and background music and so on.
2. Selective listening – this is the most common barriers to effective listening. When one mind wanders, his mind stay tuned out until he hears a word or phrase that gets his attention once more. Instead of remembering what the speaker said, he would remember what he thinks the speaker probably said. Thus, the true message is lost in the listening process.
3. Prejudgement – this is a common barrier to interpretation since the listener is making up his mind before truly hearing what the speaker has to say.
4. Selective perception – leads listeners to mould a message to fit what one already believes about a given subject.
5. Lack of Common ground – this is the reason for frequent misinterpretation between speakers of different native languages, even when they are trying to speak the same language and with good intention.

4 Improving Nonverbal Communication Skills

Nonverbal signals play a vital role in communication because they can either strengthen, when the nonverbal signal match the spoken, or weaken a verbal message when nonverbal don't match words. At times, non-verbal signal can even replace words entirely. For example, you might tell a client that a project is proceeding on time and within budget, but your forced smile and nervous glances send an entirely different message.

4.1 Six types of Nonverbal Signals

As you work with a diverse range of people in the global marketplace, you will need to grasp the different meanings of common gestures, expressions, and other signals in various cultures.

The following six types of signals are particularly important:

1. Facial expressions

- Face is the primary site for expressing one's emotions; it reveals both the type and the intensity of your feelings.
- Eyes are especially effective for indicating attention and interest, influencing others, regulating interaction, and establishing dominance.
- Facial signals vary culture to culture. Maintaining eye contact is viewed as sincerity and openness in the Western countries, but it can be viewed as rude in Japan.

2. Gestures and postures

- Many gestures have a special, intentional and/or unintentional meaning.
- Slouching, leaning forward, fidgeting, and walking briskly are all unconscious signals that can reveal whether you feel confident or nervous, friendly, or hostile, assertive, or passive powerful or powerless.

3. Vocal characteristics

- Speaker can intentionally control pitch, pace, and stress to convey a specific message.
- Unintentional vocal traits can convey happiness, surprise, fear, and other emotions.

4. Personal appearance

- Many companies have guidelines concerning attire, body art, and code of conduct.
- People respond to others based on their physical appearance, sometimes fairly and other times unfairly.
- Grooming, clothing, accessories, style are controllable factors to make a good impression, adopt the style of the people you want to impress.

5. Touch

- It is a powerful way to convey warmth, comfort, reassurance and even control.
- Touch is a highly complex subject that cultural customs govern touching behaviour.
- A sound advice to heed is when in doubt, do not touch.

6. Time and space

- It can be used to assert authority, imply intimacy, and send another nonverbal signal.
- Being mindful not to invade others' private space is a way to show respect for others.
- Be aware that expectations of time and space vary by culture.

5 Tutorial Questions

True-False Questions

1. Effective listening is blocked when you jump to conclusions and close your mind to additional information.
2. Strategies for effective listening include tuning out dry subjects and taking extensive notes.
3. Your facial expression reveals both the type and the intensity of your feelings.
4. When others stand too close or too far away, we are likely to feel ill at ease.

Question 5

Which of the following correctly describes the sequence of the listening process?

- (a) Receiving, remembering, decoding, responding, and evaluating.
- (b) Responding, evaluating, remembering, receiving, and decoding.
- (c) Receiving, decoding, remembering, evaluating, and responding.
- (d) Responding, decoding, receiving, remembering, and evaluating.

Question 6

Prejudgement involves _____.

- (a) listening selectively.
- (b) taking control of the conversation.
- (c) jumping to conclusions and closing your mind to additional information.
- (d) thinking negatively.

Question 7

Which of the following is a poor listener?

- (a) Turning out if delivery is poor.
- (b) Judging content.
- (c) Taking limited notes.
- (d) Avoiding distractions.

Question 8

Which of the following is the primary site for expressing your emotion?

- (a) Face
- (b) Voice characteristics
- (c) Gestures
- (d) Eyes

Question 9

Which of the following could be used to assert authority?

- (a) Touching behaviour
- (b) Use of time
- (c) Use of space
- (d) All the above

Short Answer Questions**Question 10**

List the six characteristics of an effective team.

Question 11

List and briefly explain the five potential barriers to effective listening.

Question 12

Differentiate among the four primary types of listening.

Question 13

Discuss the six categories of nonverbal communication.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 3

PLANNING REPORTS

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Describe business reports and the three-step writing process.
 2. Describe an effective process for conducting business research.
 3. Explain the role of secondary and primary research.
 4. Explain how to plan informational report content.
 5. Identify the three most common ways to organize analytical reports.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of the three basic categories of informative, analytical reports and proposals, as well as to adapt the 3-step writing process of planning, writing, and completing reports and proposals.

Next, we discuss the effective process for conducting business research and explain the role of secondary and primary research. Then we explain how to organize the research information. Finally, we identify the three basic categories of most common analytical reports and the most effective ways to organize analytical reports.

2. Business Reports

Business reports offer the opportunity and the platform to display the writer's grasp of business issue. It is prudent to view business report writing as an opportunity to showcase the knowledge of the audiences' challenges as well as the ability to contribute to the organization's success.

Business reports fall into three basic categories (see Figure 4.1):

1. **Information reports** offer data, facts, feedback, and other types of information without analysis or recommendations.
 - **Monitor and Control Operations Reports** – provide feedback and information for decision making (plans, operating reports, personal activity reports).
 - **Policies and Procedures Implement Reports** – communicate organizational rules and positions (guidelines, position papers).
 - **Compliance Reports** – provide information to show regulators or other authorities that the company meets formal requirements.
 - **Progress Reports** – provide managers or consumers with information on project status.
2. **Analytical reports** offer both information and analysis and can also include recommendations.
 - **Opportunities Assessment Reports** – explain the risks and rewards of choosing a course of action (market analysis reports, due diligent reports).
 - **Problem Analysis Reports** – analyse problems and possibly suggest solutions (troubleshooting reports, failure analysis reports).
 - **Decision Analysis Reports** – judge the merits of past or future decisions (feasibility reports, justification reports).
3. **Proposals** feature structured persuasive requests for decision or action.
 - **Internal Proposal** – request decisions from managers within the organization (funding proposals, general project proposals).
 - **External Proposal** – request decisions from parties outside the organization (investment proposals, grant proposals, sales proposals).

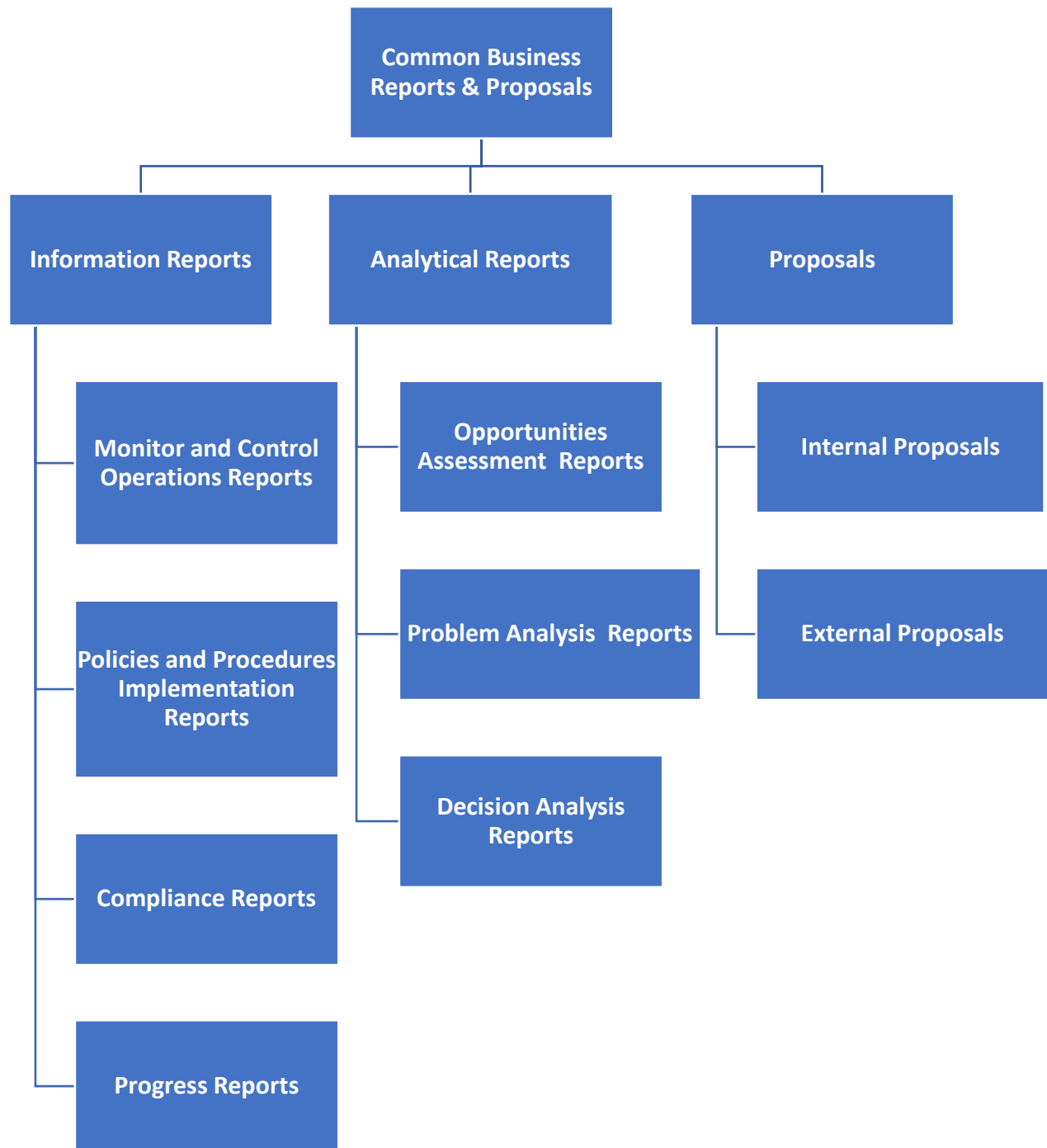


Figure 4.1 outlines the three basic categories of the most common business reports.

3 Adapting the Three-Steps Writing Process in Reports

The three-steps writing process applies to reports and business messages. It is easily adaptable and makes large and complex projects an easier to document by providing a methodical, efficient approach to plan, write and complete the business reports and proposals.

Planning business reports involves four tasks:

1. Analysing the situation
2. Gathering information
3. Selecting the right medium
4. Organizing information

3.1 Analysing the Situation

Reports can be complex and time consuming, it is most helpful to analyse the situation carefully. The **Statement of Purpose**, which explains *why* the reason for the report and *what* the report will deliver. Begin with *an infinitive phrase* helps to pin down the general goal (such as to inform, to identify, to analyse), will avoid wasting time with unnecessary rework.

A. In an informative report, the Statement of Purpose can be simple as:

- To identify potential markets for our new mini palm size laser colour printer.
- To update the board of directors on the latest merger and acquisition.
- To submit required information to the Steering Committee.

B. In an analytical report, the Statement of Purpose needs to be comprehensive:

- To analyse the Travel & Expense (T&E) budget, evaluate the impact of recent changes in airfares and hotel costs, and suggest ways to reduce overall company T&E expenses.

C. In a proposal report, the Statement of Purpose focus on craving a persuasive message:

- To secure \$10 million from new investors to start production of the new eye-phone.
- To get management approval to reorganize the Global sales force.

3.2 Gathering Information

Acquiring data is a massive task and requires careful planning; some reports may even require formal research projects. When gathering all the necessary information, review both the statement of purpose and the audience's needs to:

- stay on schedule and on budget;
- acquire the data and information needed;
- focus on the most important questions.

3.3 Selecting the Right Medium

When choosing the medium for a report, think carefully about how:

- the audience might want to use, edit, and update the report.
- the audience want to provide feedback on the report or proposal.
- the choice of medium and channel sends a message e.g., a routine sales report dressed up in expensive multimedia will look like a waste of valuable company resources.

3.4 Organizing Information

Reports can be organized using the direct and indirect approach.

- **Use the direct approach** for report when audience is receptive and open-minded. For instance, lead with a summary of your key findings, conclusions, recommendations.
- **Use the indirect approach** for report when audience is sceptical of the report's main idea. As such, overcome audience reservations with good reasoning and evidence.

4 Supporting Messages with Reliable Information

Good research requires a clear process:

1. Plan research – the most important step, solid plan yields better results in less time.
2. Locate the data and information needed – and how to access data and information.
3. Process the data and information needed – statistical analysis and other processing.
4. Apply findings – summarised information, draw conclusions, and develop recommendation.
5. Manage information efficiently – using knowledge management systems.

4.1 Research Planning

Start with a problem statement that defines the purpose of the research; then follow the four steps to help define problem statement:

- Identify the conclusion needed to reach at the end of the process.
- Identify the information needed for decision making or reaching the conclusion.
- Generate questions that will constitute research finding.
- Prioritize the information needs in view of the limited time and resources.

4.2 Locating Data and Information

Generally, the sources available to business researchers are the primary and secondary research.

1. **Primary research** – gathers data and information for the specific new research project which will involve collection of new data through customised surveys and interviews.
2. **Secondary research** – gathers information that are compiled and published in magazines, websites, books, journals, and reports relating to an industry, a company, a market, a new technology, or some financial statistics.

4.3 Applying Research Findings

The collection of the data and information from the primary and secondary research can be overwhelming. It is necessary to digest and translate them into usage content specifically to the project. This may involve tabulating survey data into charts and tables and reviewing interviews into quotations from primary research. It may also involve paraphrasing and/or summarising from secondary research. And finally drawing conclusion from all the findings and analysis, which essentially makes recommendations.

In writing the report, be very careful to avoid ethical lapses of plagiarism thereby using the content from the secondary research without giving proper credit to the original source.

Hence, it is vital to use quotations, paraphrasing and summarising correctly in report writing.

- **Quoting** a source is reproducing the actual content by citing the original source.
- **Paraphrasing** is expressing other's ideas in the writer's own word.
- **Summarising** is distilling the content into few words.

4.4 Drawing Conclusion

The conclusion is the analytical review and the interpretation of the research findings of all factual data, statistics, and information. The ability to derive a good conclusion from all the massive facts and findings is indeed an important in business report writing.

4.5 Making Recommendations

The recommendation offers solutions, new ideas and options to improve the current derived conclusion. Credible recommendations that are based on logical analysis will gain support from the audience. The course of action recommended to follow should be clear, practical, and doable.

5. Conducting Primary Research

There are many techniques conducting primary research. Surveys and interviews are the two most applied techniques for conducting primary research.

5.1 Conducting Surveys

Surveys provide invaluable insights when they are:

- Reliable - arriving at similar outcome over repeated questioning.
- Valid – with the scope of measurable relating to the project.
- Representative – the sample size should comprise of a full range of target audience.

Selecting relevant research participants and effective questionnaires are key factors to achieve a reliable and valid survey.

Design effective questionnaires with the following guide:

- Ask questions with clear instructions to direct respondents to a direct answer.
- Formulate questions to provide answers that are easy to tabulate and analyse.
- The entire questionnaire should be brief and simple to answer within minutes.
- Do not ask question that could lead to a desired bias respond.
- Avoid ambiguous words such as “often”, “regular”, “seldom”, “and mostly”.
- Do not ask compound questions such as “do you watch movies and TV programmes”
- Do not ask for information that respondents cannot remember such as “what do you have for breakfast last month?”

5.2 Conducting Interviews

Interviews are planned conversations that can be conducted in various settings (one to one, group meetings, focus groups) in which questions are designed with a predetermined purpose. Closed questions are asked to elicit a specific answer and open questions are asked to invite experts to offer insightful information and opinions.

Plan the sequence of the questions for interview such that the answers will review the layers of information that review insight. And provide questions in advance if there is an intention to quote the interviewee. Face-to-face interviews allow observation of nonverbal signals that accompany answers, e-mail interviews are becoming more popular.

6. Conducting Secondary Research

Online and printed published sources are the most direct sources for conducting secondary research. The corporation and universities libraries offer exclusive research materials and resources. And the public libraries generally have many sources of business information as well as the services of the experienced librarians who are well trained in research techniques that will help guide research to locating the many sources of business information:

- **Periodicals** are business magazines, industries trade journals and academic journals.
- **Business books** are less timely than periodicals have in-depth coverage and analysis materials.
- **Directories** published include the membership information for all professions and industries.
- **Almanacs** are guides to factual and statistical sources on countries, politics, and labour forces.
- **Government publications** include laws and court decisions, tax, and regulatory issues.
- **Databases contain** vast collection of computer searchable information categorized in specific areas of business, law, science, technology, and education. Some of these are available on by institutional subscription in which the library is the only way to gain access to them.

7 Planning Information Reports

Informational reports are used to monitor and control operations, to implement policies and procedures, to demonstrate compliances, and to document progress.

- **Operation Monitor Reports** - are used by managers to review how the companies are functioning thereby establishes expectations and guidelines to direct future action.
- **Policies & Procedures Reports** - are business procedures, operating manuals and position papers also called as whitepapers or backgrounders that outline the potential key success factors to an organization's official position on current issues.
- **Compliance Reports** – are business requirement ranging from tax returns, financial reporting and reports describing the proper handling of hazardous materials.
- **Progress Reports** – are simple updates or comprehensive status reports to inform the progress of projects to the management, investors, and customers on a periodical basis.

7.1 Organizing Information Reports

Use the direct approach for conveying informational and the indirect approach for building up bad news. The topical organization method offers options to arrange materials in various ways:

- **Comparison** – between similarities and differences, advantages vs. disadvantages.
- **Importance** – list from the most important to the least and vice versa.
- **Sequence** – organized in steps of procedures or stages in process.
- **Chronology** – line a chain of events from oldest to newest and vice versa.
- **Geography** – categorise by religion, state, city, country, region etc.
- **Category** – group by top line and bottom-line key focus of sales, profit, cost, investment.

8 Planning Analytical Reports

Analytical reports are used to review current situation, future threats, and opportunities, to manage and resolve problems, as well as to add value in the decision-making process. Nonetheless, the main purpose of analytical reports is to analyse, understand and explain.

There are three categories of analytical reports:

1. Reports to assess opportunities

- Market analysis report are used to judge the success for new products or territory
- Due Diligence reports examine the financial aspects of a proposed decisions such as acquiring another company.

2. Reports to solve problem

- Troubleshooting and Failure Analysis reports are written when individuals need to understand and why something isn't working properly and how to fix it.
- Failure analysis reports study events that happened in the past, with the hope of learning how to avoid similar failures in the future.

3. Reports to support decision

- Feasibility reports are written to explore the potential ramifications of a decision that managers are considering.
- Justification reports are written to explain decisions that have already been made.

8.1 Focusing on Conclusion

When audience is trusting and receptive to the research information, write the analytical report focusing on conclusion. There may be some questions about the data and methodology from audience, therefore the need to support the conclusion with solid reasoning and evidence.

8.2 Focusing on Recommendations

When the audience are interested in the research recommendation, organized the report focusing on recommendations. Use direct approach to unfold the course of actions in five stages:

1. Align the need for action with the brief description of the problem or opportunity.
2. Review the achievable benefits if the recommendation is adopted.
3. List the recommendations required and use action verbs for emphasis.
4. Elaborate each step clearly by revealing details or procedures, costs, and benefits.
5. Summarize the overall recommendations.

9 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

The purpose of an analytical report is to _____.

- (a) convince the audience that the conclusions and recommendations developed are valid.
- (b) convince the audience you are an excellent writer.
- (c) provide facts only about a situation.
- (d) accomplish none of the above.

Question 2

The work plan for a complex report should include _____.

- (a) the problem statement, the purpose statement, and the scope of your investigation.
- (b) the unsolicited proposal, the solution, and the schedule.
- (c) a final outline of your report, the solicited proposal, and the method you'll use for your investigation.
- (d) all the above.

Question 3

Which primary research method is best for collecting opinions from a large group of consumers?

- (a) Observation
- (b) Interviews
- (c) Surveys
- (d) Experiments

Question 4

Using someone else's words or ideas without proper credit is _____.

- (a) paraphrasing
- (b) summarizing
- (c) plagiarism
- (d) referencing

Question 5

Conclusions are _____.

- (a) the facts you collected.
- (b) logical interpretation of facts.
- (c) suggestions of what to do about the facts.
- (d) none of the above.

Question 6

"To identify potential markets for our new chocolate chip cookies," is a good statement of purpose for informational reports. Which of the following is a good statement of purpose for analytical reports?

- (a) To provide feedback about the newly installed technical hardware.
- (b) To access the benefits of investing in the manufacturing sector for the next quarter.
- (c) To update the board of directors on the progress of the Solomon acquisition plan.
- (d) To submit statutory information to the government agency.

Question 7

Bill needs to organize information for his report, and he has been told to follow the direct approach. Bill should _____.

- (a) present the report's recommendations followed by the conclusions.
- (b) present conclusions but no recommendations, in the close of the report.
- (c) draw conclusion in the body of the report.
- (d) present conclusions but no recommendations, in the body of the report.

Question 8

Simon needs to conduct market research on viability of his company's new product. While planning his research, he needs to define its purpose (that is the conclusion he needs to reach at the end of the process). He should therefore develop a(n) _____.

- (a) problem statement
- (b) work plan
- (c) objectives document
- (d) statement of scope

Question 9

Richard needs to get in-depth information about a new performance analysis tool straight from an expert whose ideas would be quoted in a report. For this Richard should _____.

- (a) use a simple survey format
- (b) ask closed questions to get the experts opinion
- (c) insist on a videotaped interview.
- (d) email a copy of the questions to the expert, two days before the interview.

Question 10

Joe is aware of the huge losses his company incurred due to a few unplanned investments in technology shares. He needs to prepare a report which brings out the lessons learned from this debacle. Reports of this kind are examples of _____.

- (a) problem-solving reports
- (b) trouble-shooting reports
- (c) failure-analysis reports
- (d) due diligence reports

Group Activity

Analyze the data presented.

- State at least three conclusions that could be drawn from the data.
- Prepare three to five recommendations to be submitted to the store manager.
- How could they be implemented?

Table 1

**REACTIONS OF SHOPPERS TO
FOUR PROPOSALS ABOUT PLASTIC BAGS**

N = 560 shoppers

	Agree (%)	Undecided (%)	Disagree (%)
For major purchases, the retail store should:			
Provide no plastic bags; encourage shoppers to bring their own bags	73.9	4.5	21.6
Provide no plastic bags; offer cloth or other environmentally friendly bags at reduced price (about \$3)	61.8	3.6	34.6
Continue to provide plastic bags	23.6	3.0	73.4
Give a cloth bag with each major purchase, the cost to be included in membership fees	11.4	2.7	85.9

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 4

WRITING REPORTS

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Organizing the introduction, body, and close of reports and proposals.
 2. Discuss six principles of graphic design for business visuals.
 3. Summarize tasks in completing business reports and proposals.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to Step 2 of the three-step process for writing report organizing and formulating the relevant content of the introduction, body and close of business reports. Next, we discuss the six principles of graphic design to aid illustrate reports with effective visual aids such as tables, bar charts, pie charts, space charts, relating the relationships of trends and variables as well as proofreading these visual aids to ensure report accuracy thereby establish the writer's credibility with the audience.

Then we focus on Step 3, Completing Reports by drawing logical conclusions from all the research findings and analysis thereby making sound and logical recommendations for future course of action. Finally, we learn how to master the skills of completing business reports by applying the four steps of revision of the draft report, production of the final report, proofreading and distribution of the formal reports.

2. Writing Reports

Report writing comprises all the writing concepts and techniques from the writing of content adaptive to audience to completing reports along with creating graphical elements to illustrate message of all kind content.

2.1 Adapting to Audience

The lengthy reports can be demanding on readers – the audience. Therefore, the adaption of the ‘you’ attitude is important, along with the balance of formality and tonality of the writing skill through word choices and writing style.

- **Adopt an informal tone** if the writer knows the readers reasonably well and the report is likely to meet with approval. To present a less formal tone, write in the first person, referring reader as “you” and writer as “I”. Note that the informal elements such as humour or casual language tend to translate poorly from one culture to another.
- **Adopt a more formal tone** when communicating with audience from other cultures and countries. This would serve to respect other cultural preferences and reduce the risk of miscommunication. To present in a more formal tone, use the “impersonal journalism style”. Emphasize objective, avoid personal opinions, and build the argument on provable facts. Also eliminate all personal pronouns, avoid humour and be careful with use of metaphors, colourful adjective, or adverbs.

2.2 Composing Reports

The lengthy business report can be demanding to the time-pressed audience. To lighten audience's resistance towards reading wordy report, the report can be simplified and arranged into three main sections: Introduction, Body and Close. (See table 4.1)

1. A good **Introduction** will achieve the following:

- Assist audience to learn the report in context by relating to an issue or concern.
- Briefly highlight the topic, issue, subject matter and indicates why it is important.
- Previews the main ideas and the order in which they will be covered.
- Set the tone of the report and the writer's relationship with the audience.

2. The **Body** presents, analyzes and interprets the data and information gathered from the primary and secondary research. The findings and analysis eventually lead to the conclusion and accordingly, derived the list of recommendations for the course of actions to follow.

3. The **Close** presents the last chance to convey the message across to the audience. It got to be convincing and compelling. The close has three important functions:

- Reinforce the main points.
- Highlight the benefits for any recommendations.
- Consolidate all the course of action.

.

Finally, use headings, transitions, preview and reviews to guide audiences stay on track:

- Write clear headings and subheadings guide audience to follow the structure of the report and help them pick up the key points of the message.
- Use plenty of transitions to connect ideas and to relate one thought to another.
- Include preview sections to help readers get ready for new information and review sections after a body of material to summarize key points.

2.3 Drafting Report Content

Report writing should be professional and insightful. All content should be accurate, complete, balanced, clear and logical, properly documented with all reference sources.

- **Accurate.** If your reader suspect that your information is shaky, they are likely to view all your work with skepticism.
- **Complete.** Include everything necessary for readers to understand the situation, problem or recommendations. Support all your key assertions, using examples, explanations and facts/evidence.
- **Balanced.** Present all sides of the issue fairly and equitably. It should include all essential information even when not all of it will support your line of reasoning.
- **Clear and logical.** Reports often contains large amount of information and involve reasoning, so make sure your writing is easy to follow.
- **Documented properly.** By providing information about your sources, you improve your own credibility as well as the credibility of the facts and opinions you present. Documentation gives readers the means for checking your findings and pursuing the subject further. It also gives credit to those whose work you have drawn from.

Two commonly used styles are:

1. American Psychological Association (APA)

It details the author-date system, which is preferred in the social sciences and often in the natural sciences as well.

2. Modern Language Association (MLA)

It serves as a basis for the note and bibliography style used in much academic writing and is recommended in many college textbooks on writing term papers; provides a lot of examples in the humanities.

Table 4.1: Content Elements to Consider for Reports

Introduction: Put the report in context; identify the subject, preview main ideas and set tone.

- **Authorization.** Reiterate who authorized the report, if applicable.
- **Problem/Purpose.** Explain the reason for the report and what the report will achieve.
- **Scope.** Describe what will and won't be covered in report.
- **Background.** Review historical conditions or factors that led up to the report.
- **Sources and methods.** Discuss the primary and secondary sources and methods used.
- **Definitions.** List terms and definitions.
- **Limitations.** Discuss factors beyond your control that affect report quality.
- **Report organizations.** Identify the topics to be covered and in what order.

Body: Present relevant information and supports recommendations and conclusions.

- **Explanations.** Give complete details of the problem, project, or idea.
- **Facts, statistical evidence, and trends.** Lay out the results of studies or investigations.
- **Analysis of action.** Discuss potential courses of action.
- **Pros and cons.** Explain advantages, disadvantages, costs and benefits of the course of actions.
- **Methods and approaches.** Discuss how the problem is studied and arrived at your solution.
- **Conclusions and recommendations.** Discuss what the evidence reveals and proposal.

Close: Closing and Recommendations that summarize key points and emphasize benefits of proposal.

- **For direct approach.** Summarize key points listing them in the order they appear in the body. Briefly reinstate your closing and recommendations.
- **For indirect approach.** Present the closing and recommendations.
- **For motivating action.** List the course of actions and provide a schedule of specific task assignments.

3. Illustrating Reports with Effective Visuals

Effective visuals enhance the power of words. Using graphics can be most helpful to communicate with multilingual and different culture audiences.

Given the importance of visuals in today's business environment, visual literacy, the ability to create effective images and interpret visual messages, becomes a key business skill.

3.1 The Six Principles of Graphic Design for Business Visuals

1. **Consistency** - Use consistent colour, shape, size, texture, position, scale, or typeface to help audience understand and compare a series of ideas.
2. **Contrast** - To showcase differences, depict items in contrasting colours, such as black and white.
3. **Balance** - Visual balance can be either formal (images are arranged symmetrically around a central point or axis) or informal (elements are unevenly distributed, but stronger and weaker elements are arranged to achieve an overall balanced effect).
4. **Emphasis** - Use the visually dominant element in a design for the most important information as audience tends to make that assumption.
5. **Convention** - Be guided by generally accepted cultural rules or conventions when designing your visuals. For example, in any given culture, certain colours and shapes may have specific meaning.
6. **Simplicity** - Limit the number of colours and design elements and take care to avoid 'chart junk' – decorative elements that clutter document without adding relevant information.

3.2 Choosing the Right Visual

Deciding the type of visual to use is most often determined by the type of information you wish to present to your audience. For example, a table is an obvious choice for presenting a large set of numerical values or detailed textual information; and a line chart is used to show trend over time.

3.2.1 Tables

Tables are ideal when the audience needs information that would be either difficult or tedious to handle in the main text. When preparing a table, be careful to:

- Use common, understandable units and clearly identify them.
- Express all items in a column in the same unit and round off for simplicity.
- Label column heads clearly and use a subhead if necessary.
- Use columns and rows with lines or extra space so that the table is easy to follow.
- Don't cram so much information into a table that it becomes difficult to read.
- Document the source of the data below the table.

	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Sales	\$128.3	\$97.2	\$74.6	\$61.9	\$68.3
Gross Margin	\$71.0 55%	\$53.2 55%	\$40.1 54%	\$25.7 42%	\$15.9 23%
Selling/Admin	\$40.2	\$31.8	\$25.9	\$27.0	\$33.8
Net R&D	\$15.4	\$12.2	\$12.4	\$27.0	\$12.0
Earnings (Loss) from Operations	\$8.0	\$(0.02)	\$(10.6)	\$(39.6)	\$(74.8)
Net Earnings (Loss)	\$8.1	\$(91.6)	\$(8.4)	\$(55.0)	\$(308.5)
Net Earnings per Share	\$0.12	\$(0.02)	\$(0.13)	\$(0.87)	\$(5.09)

Figure 4.1 - Table

3.2.2 Line Charts

Line charts are commonly used to show trends over time or plot the relationship of two variables.

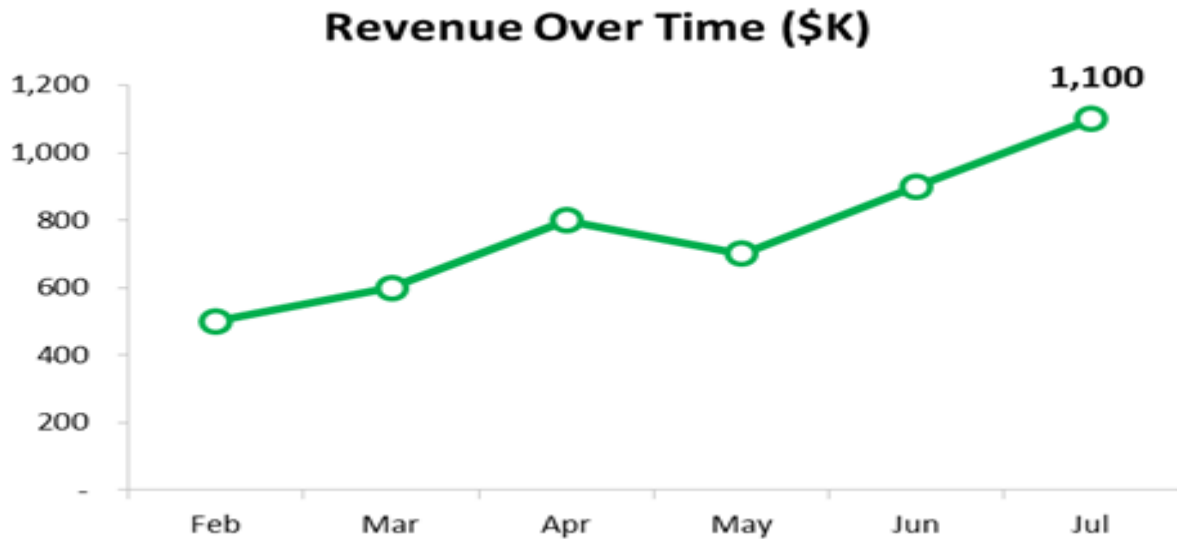


Figure 4.2 – Single Line Chart

The vertical Y axis shows the amount, and the horizontal X axis shows the time. The line chart can be just a single line illustrated in figure 4.2 or overlay of multiple lines to compare different entities as shown in figure 4.3.

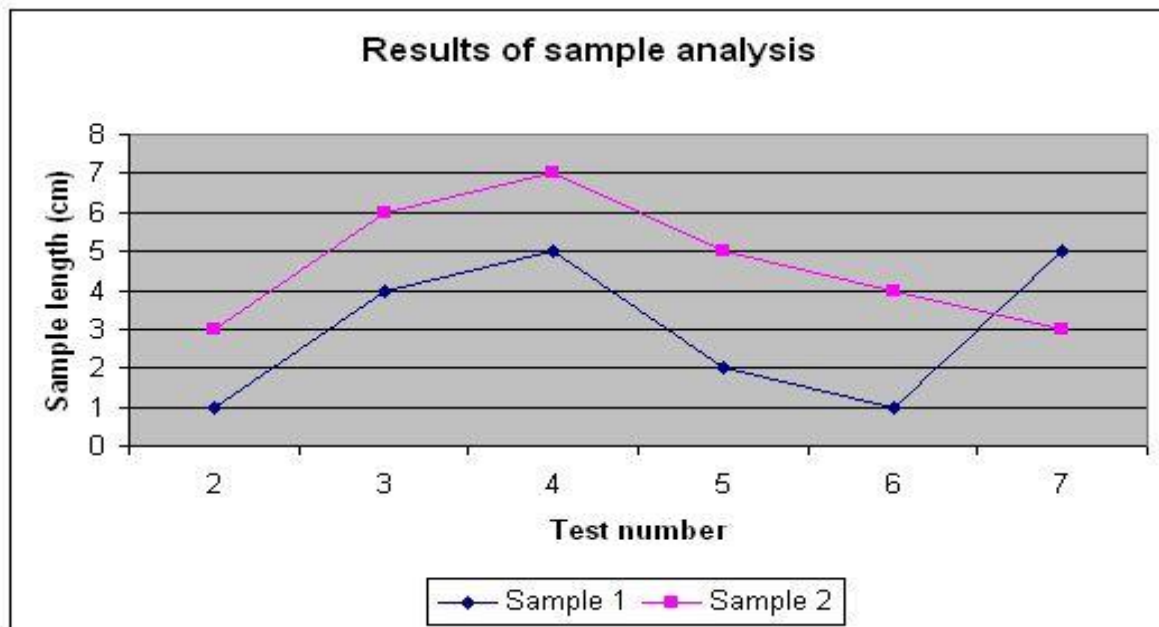


Figure 4.3 - Multiple Line Chart

3.2.3 Surface Charts

A surface chart, also known as an area chart, shows a combination of trends over time and the individual contribution of the components. It is another form of line chart that illustrate a cumulative effect that all lines, the least at the bottom and the most important at the top, which then represents the total. (See figure 4.4).

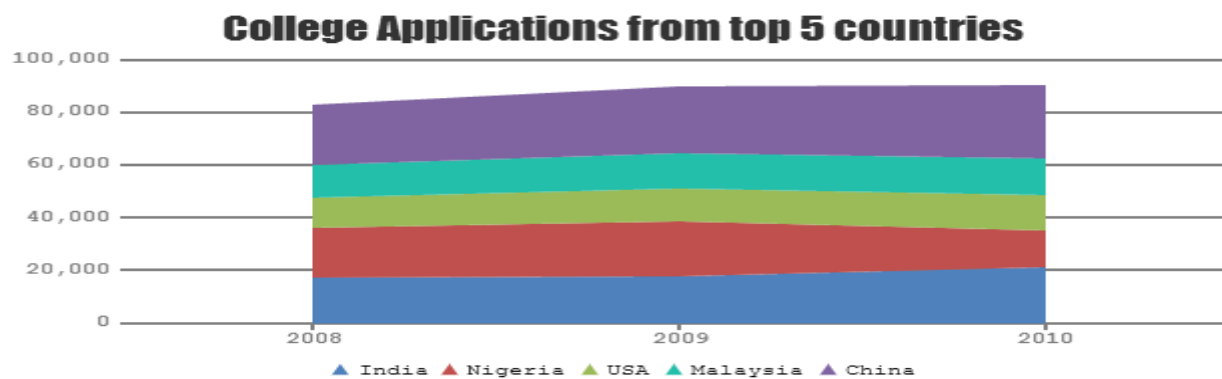


Figure 4.4 – Area Chart

3.2.4 Bar Charts

Bar charts illustrate a variety of relationships among two or more variables making a series of numbers easy to grasp quickly. Bar charts are useful to compare the size of several items at one time and show changes in one item over time. (See figure 4.5).

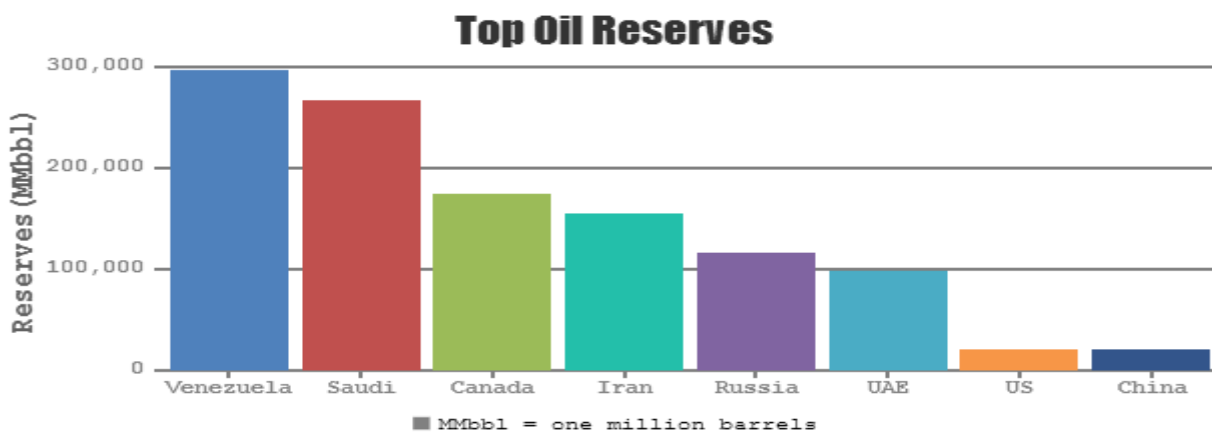


Figure 4.5 – Bar Chart

3.2.5 Pie Charts

Pie charts are commonly used in business presentation. It is audience friendly particularly to show how parts of a whole are distributed. However, it is difficult to compare percentages when there is massive data and becomes too difficult to compare.

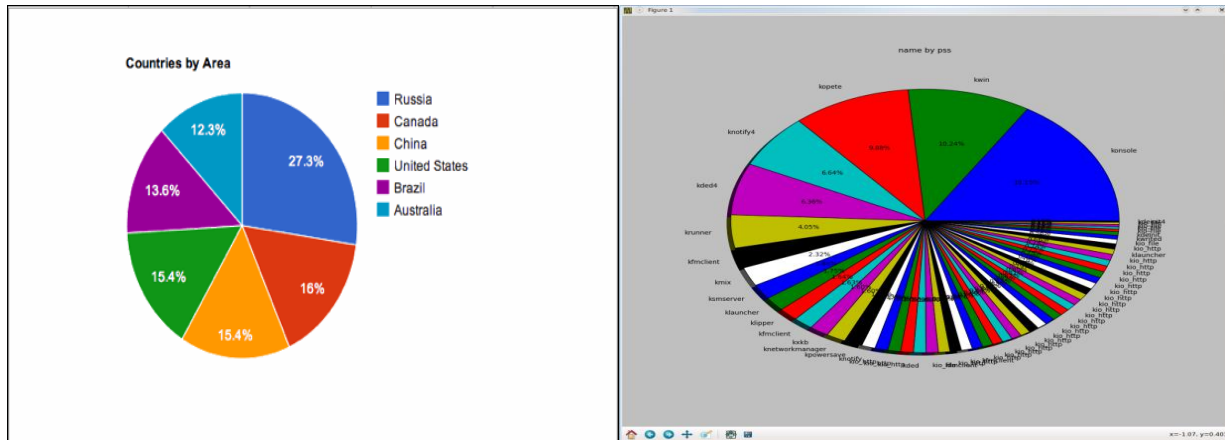


Figure 4.6 – Pie Chart

3.2.6 Flowcharts and Organization Charts

A flow chart is used to illustrate processes, procedures, and sequential relationships to achieve consensus i.e., solving the acceptable solution from start to finish. (See Figure 4.7)

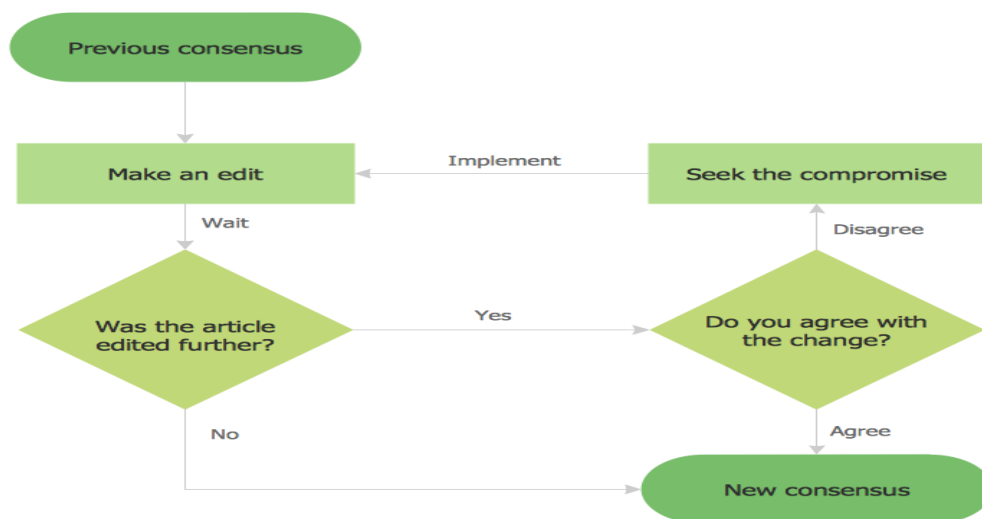


Figure 4.7 - Flow Chart

3.2.7 Organization Charts

The organization chart illustrates the hierarchy, position, units, functions of an organizations and how they interrelate (see Figure 4.8).

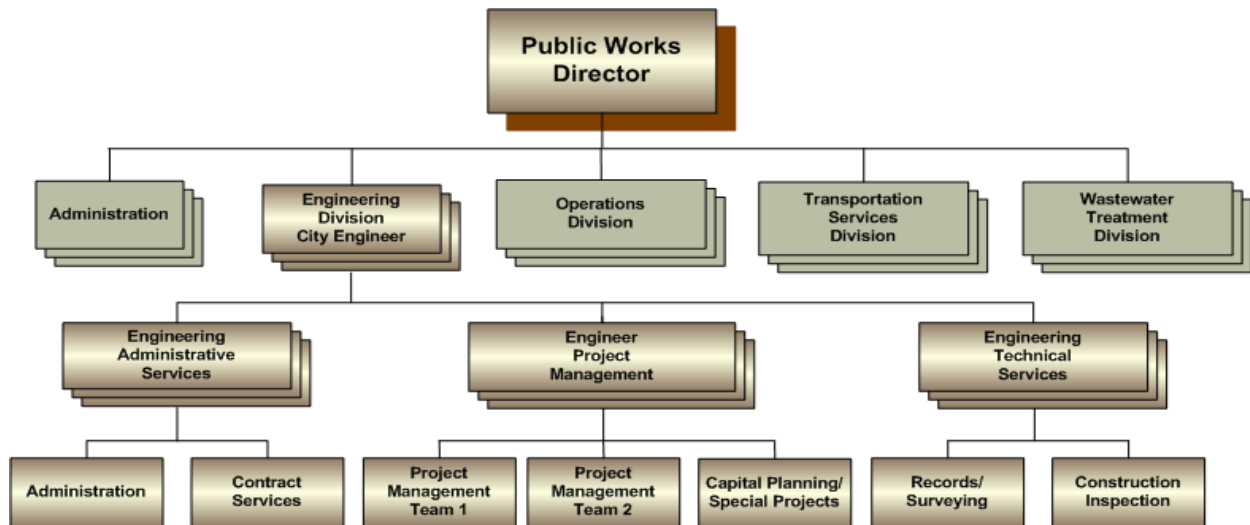


Figure 4.8 – Organization Chart

3.2.8 Animation and Video

Use animation drawings to guide audience to focus on the key details and use photographs for visual appeal and to show the same exact appearance (see Figure 4.9). And use digital video to show audience the sophisticated product demonstration and /or company overviews.



Figure 4.9 – Animation

4 Designing Effective Visuals

Well-designed visuals are effective tools to connect with audience. The very styles and quality of the visual help establish relationship with audience and integrate visuals with the text:

- Introduce the visuals in text and place them near the points they illustrate.
- Position the visuals so that audience does not have to flip back and forth (in printed documents) or scroll (on-screen) between the visuals and the text.
- Refer visuals by number in the text of report and guide audience to notice the importance of visuals by referring to them before audience see them in the document or on-screen.
- Write effective titles, captions, and legends.
 - **Titles.** A short description that identifies the content and purpose of the visual.
 - **Captions.** Several sentences to further discuss the visual content.
 - **Legends.** An explanation of what various colors and symbols stands for.
- Final check the completed visuals, proofread them carefully and ask:
 - Are there any typographical errors?
 - Is the color treatment consistent?
 - Are there any confusing or undocumented symbols?
 - Are there any misaligned elements?
 - Are the visuals honest and ethical?

5 Completing Reports

Be aware that even the slightest mistakes can tarnish the relationship and credibility the writer has established with audience. Therefore, once the first draft of the report is produced, it is essential to consider the final four stages of revise, produce, proofread and distribute to generate the complete the report.

5.1 Revising Report

- To evaluate organization, the style and tonality to ensure the content is current, clear, concise, and comprehensive as well as audience centric.
- Then work to improve the report readability by varying sentence length, keeping paragraphs short, using lists and bullets, and adding heading and subheadings.
- Trim off all content that does not meet audience's needs. A concise and coherent writing that is easy to skim will be a positive reading experience to audience.
- Finally, review it thoroughly one last time, looking for inconsistencies, errors, and missing components as well as double proofread all visuals presentation.

5.2 Producing Formal Reports

- **All parts** in the formal report ought to be relevant to the type of report, the audience's needs, the organization and the length of the report. (See Table 4.2)
- **The Introduction** is the key elements of the report to give the time pressed audience a sense and/or even all key points without having to spend time reading the entire report.
- **A synopsis or an abstract** is a brief half or one-page overview of a report's key points. Using the direct approach, the key points would be informative and presented in the order in which they appear in the report. And using the indirect approach, the key points would be in simple descriptive without presenting the conclusion or recommendation.
- **Executive summary** is a longer option to a synopsis or an abstract. The one-page concise version of the entire report is especially helpful to busy senior executives who need to be convinced and justify the time worth investing reading the entire report.

Table 4.2: Production Elements to Consider for Formal Reports

Prefatory elements: Before the start of the main report i.e., before introduction.

- **Cover.** Include a concise title that give audience the information they need to grasp the purpose and scope of the report. For printing formal report, choose heavy, high-quality paper.
- **Title fly.** This is, NOT necessary, a plain sheet of paper stating only the title of the report.
- **Title page.** The page of information of the report title, names(s) and professional title(s) of the writer(s), the names(s) and professional title(s) of the audience that the report is written for and date of submission, can be incorporated onto the cover.
- **Letter of authorization.** This is the letter of authorization issued by the audience to request for the presentation of the formal report. Do include this into this letter into the prefatory segment.
- **Letter of transmittal.** Set to introduce the report scope, methods and limitations. It highlights the key section of the report, suggest follow-up actions and further studies, as well as acknowledgement of help received in preparation of the report.
- **Table of contents.** List all main report section of headings and major subheadings with corresponding page number so that audience can have direct reference to the location and hierarchy of the information in the report. It also lists all prefatory parts that come after the contents page, and all supplementary parts.
- **List of illustrations.** Typically, this is not included in all report, however, do consider including one if the illustrations are particularly important.
- **Synopsis or executive summary.** One-page concise version of the overview of the report.

Supplementary elements: After the end of the main report i.e., after the close.

- **Appendixes.** Holds additional supporting information such as statistical report that could not be included in the text as it is too lengthy or at time lack of direct relevant.
- **Bibliography.** Also known as References list all secondary research materials.
- **Index.** An alphabetical list of names, places, and subjects mentioned in the report, along with the pages on which they appear.

5.3 Proofreading Reports

Proofread textual material, check for inconsistencies, errors, and missing components as well as the visuals and that they're positioned correctly.

Lastly, enlist two pairs of “fresh eyes” to proofread your report, ideally:

- One who is an expert in the subject matter who can ensure the report's technical accuracy.
- One isn't an expert in the subject matter but can reflect audience understanding of report.

5.4 Distributing Reports

Your choice of distribution method depends partly on the type of report or proposal:

- For physical distribution to a large group, consider a professional courier or package delivery service to help your document stand apart from the crowd.
- For physical distribution to a single person or small group, consider delivering it in person to answer immediate questions and emphasize recipient benefits.
- For electronic distribution, provide PDF documents to overcome people's reluctance to open word processor files because of their vulnerability to viruses and to control how your document is displayed to your audience.
- New applications such as Dropbox and Google-doc allow storage of files in the cloud and access or share them from computer base desktop or mobile devices.
- For web-based content management systems, shared workspaces, or other online locations, verify that you have uploaded the correct files to the right places and that all elements are in place and operational.

6 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

You should use an indirect approach for your report or proposal when your _____.

- (a) audience is receptive.
- (b) audience is sceptical or hostile.
- (c) proposal is a solicited proposal.
- (d) report is long and complicated.

Question 2

Which of the following would be an effective visual to detail the annual sales of 60 stores in a local shopping mall?

- (a) Pie Chart
- (b) Bar Chart
- (c) Table
- (d) Area Chart

Question 3

Which of the following would be an effective visual to compare the fourth-quarter sales of the five regions of a retail organization?

- (a) Pie Chart
- (b) Bar Chart
- (c) Table
- (d) Organization Chart

Question 4

In the close of a report that proposes a specific cause of action, you should _____.

- (a) provide hints on what the audience should do so you don't sound authoritarian.
- (b) adopt a "you" attitude.
- (c) ensure your readers understand exactly what's expected of them and when it's expected.
- (d) instruct your audience to contact you about what they should do next.

Question 5

Which of the following is an example of impersonal style?

- (a) I recommend we purchase new computers for the marketing department.
- (b) We expect to have new computers in the marketing department.
- (c) You should purchase new computers for the marketing department.
- (d) The company should purchase new computers for the marketing department.

Question 6

In what part of the report next would you find an explanation of the primary and secondary sources consulted and methods used?

- (a) Close
- (b) Body
- (c) Introduction
- (d) None of the above

Question 7

Words or phrases that tie ideas together and show how one thought is related to another are:

- (a) Headings
- (b) Transitions
- (c) Authorizations

(d) Transmittals

Question 8

When you are determining the scope of your formal report, you are _____.

- (a) defining your purpose.
- (b) setting the limits of your topic(s).
- (c) developing the preliminary outline.
- (d) designing the questionnaire.

Question 9

A fully developed 'mini' version of the report itself, which may contain headings, transitions, and even visual aids, is _____.

- (a) a synopsis.
- (b) a conclusion.
- (c) an executive summary.
- (d) all the above.

Question 10

For what purpose should be a write use of visual aids?

- (a) To support the primary message.
- (b) To help the reader understand the message.
- (e) To make the report more interesting.
- (f) To do all the above.

Exercise – INTRODUCTION Part of Report

In groups, look at the information below and organize the information under **Specific Headings** for the INTRODUCTION Part of your report.

1. This report considers four possible areas for the decline in sales: the range of merchandise sold, the sales service, the store displays and atmosphere and the pricing of items. A profile of our respondents was also analyzed.
2. The report was limited to the opinions of customers attending the Mega Sales Promotion due to budget and time constraints. However, it was deemed sufficient to reveal enough findings to explain the decline in sales.
3. Questionnaires were issued to 500 customers during LDGS's one-day Mega Sales Promotion on 6 April 2008. In addition, telephone calls were made to regular clients living in the vicinity to encourage participation. Customers, LDGS sales staff and purchasing officers were also interviewed. References were also made to the annual reports of companies and to the government's economic blueprint.
4. The purpose of this report is to investigate the reasons behind declining sales figures for Looking Good Departmental Store (LGDS). The report will also make recommendations to improve the sales figures.
5. Following the Introduction section above, would be the Findings section that analyzed the data and information gathered from the surveys, interview and document research. Subsequently, the report would show a conclusion based on the analysis of the findings. Finally, this report would offer some recommendations to improve sales at LGDS.
6. Sales at LGDS have declined by 2% per quarter over the last nine months. The company had previously enjoyed a steady increase in profits each year. Several reasons have been put forward for the declining sales figures. Two salient reasons forwarded thus far have been the economic ill health currently experienced as well as the high level of unemployment facing the manufacturing industry.
7. The report was commissioned by the Chief Operating Officer Mr Lim Teck Chong at the company review meeting on 13 March 2008 with all department heads.

A REPORT ON THE DECLINING SALES OF LOOKING GOOD DEPARTMENTAL STORE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Authorization

1.2 Problem/Purpose

1.3 Scope

1.4 Background

1.5 Methodology

1.6 Limitations

1.7 Report Organization

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 5

PLANNING BUSINESS MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Describe the three-step writing process.
 2. Explain how to analyse the situation when planning a message.
 3. Describe the techniques for gathering information.
 4. Describe the major classes of medium and channels.
 5. Explain why good organization of the message is important.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the writing of business message by understanding the three-step of writing process. Next, we explain how to analyse the situation by defining and profiling the target audience. Following, we learn the techniques on how to gather information by uncovering the audience's needs thereby to provide relevant information.

Then we explore the selection of the best combination of medium and channels by reviewing the options available in oral, visual, and written medium with the digital and non-digital channels; as well as the factors to consider when making the choice.

Finally, we learn of the various benefits to audience with good organization skills by defining the main idea to limiting the scope, to choosing between direct and indirect approach and outlining the content that will certainly help to achieve efficiency in report writing.

2. Understanding the Three-Step Writing Process

The goal of business communication is to convey all information in an effective and efficient manner. To be effective is meeting the audience's needs and having the intended message across. And to be efficient is making the best of both the writer's and audiences' time. The three-step process is a proven simple way to achieve both effective and efficient writing. (See Table 5.1)

2.1 Planning Business Messages

- Analyse the situation by stating the purpose and establishing the audiences' profile.
- Gather all information that will meet audiences' needs.
- Choose the right medium and channels to produce and deliver the message.
- Organize the information by defining the main idea, limiting scope, selecting the direct or indirect approach, and outlining the content.

2.2 Writing Business Messages

- Adopt a direct or indirect approach to adapt to the audience with sensitivity, relationship skills, and style.
- Start writing the business message with strong words, creating effective sentences, and developing coherent paragraphs.

2.3 Completing Business Messages

- Revise the first draft of the written message to make sure it is clear and concise.
- Produce the message with an attractive, professional appearance.
- Proofread the final printed message to ensure high quality and distribute successfully.

Table 5.1: Three Step Writing Process

Step 1 – Plan	Step 2 – Write	Step 3 – Complete
Analyse the Situation - define the purpose - develop audience profile Gather Information - Identify audience needs - Obtain the information necessary to satisfy those needs. Choose Medium & Channels - Identify the best combination of medium and channels for the situation, the message, and the audience. Organize the Information - Define your main idea - Limit your scope - Select a direct or indirect approach - Outline the content	Adapt to Audience - Be sensitive to audience needs - Use a “you” attitude, politeness, positive emphasis, and unbiased language. - Build a strong relationship with audience by establishing your credibility and projecting the company’s preferred image. - Control the style with a professional conversational tone, using plain English, Compose the Message - Choose strong words that will help you create effective sentences and coherent paragraphs.	Revise the Message - Evaluate content and review reliability - Edit and rewrite for conciseness and clarify. Produce the Message - Use high quality paper for a professional appearance. Proofread the message - Proofread the text message carefully - Proofread the visuals graphics. Distribute the message - Distribute the message via medium and channels. - Ensure all documents and relevant files are distributed successfully.

3. Analysing the Situation

Business communication occurs in a situation, with a specific message to send to a definite audience under a set of circumstances. Analysing the situation provides insights necessary to meet the communicator's need and meeting the information needs of the audience.

3.1 Defining the Purpose

Successful message has a clear purpose that link both the sender and audience's needs. There is a general purpose that will aid the overall approach to take from gathering information to organizing the message; and the specific purpose that identifies the goal to accomplish and the desired outcome with the message.

Once the purpose is defined, verify if the message will be worth the time and effort required to create, send, and receive it with the following four questions:

1. Will the message lead to any change or positive outcome?
2. Is the purpose realistic? It is good business sense to confirm a realistic goal.
3. Is the time right for the audience to be able to receive the message?
4. Is the purpose acceptable to the organization's objectives and policies; and even the laws that apply to the industry?

3.2 Developing Audience Profile

After a clear and meaningful purpose is set, the next step is to understand the audience, their needs and expectation, to help the audience realise that the message is relevant to their needs.

Conducting an audience analysis involves the following steps.

- **Identify the primary audience.** Be sure the audience include key decision makers.
- **Determine audience size and geographical distribution.** The business message designed for an audience of 500 people from various countries would not be the same kind of report designed for an audience size of 10.
- **Gauge audience's level of understanding.** Verify if the audience has the same level of knowledge of the subject matter as the writer and the need to educate audience.
- **Identify audience expectations.** If they are expecting a report or a one-page summary.
- **Forecast probable audience reaction.** If audience's respond is expected to be favourable and responsive, use a direct approach by stating the conclusion and recommendations up front and offer minimal supporting evidence. If audience's respond is expected to be sceptical with resistance, review conclusions gradually with more proof.

4 Gathering Information

There are useful informal techniques to guide research efforts for complex messages:

- **Consider audience's perspective.** Stand in audience's position to think, feel, and plan.
- **Listen to the community.** They are the stakeholders, customers, product enthusiast. They can be connected on social medial and be engaged in online discussion.
- **Read reports and other company documents.** Potential sources include annual reports, financial statement, new releases, and customer surveys. Some company uses knowledge-management system to host data, employees' insights throughout the organization.
- **Talk with colleagues, or customers.** They may offer information and insights into the needs of target audience.
- **Ask audience for input.** Confirming the audience's needs by asking direct is more credible then guessing or getting it wrong.

4.1 Uncovering Audience Needs

Audience's information need can be easily available and uncovered in situation such as when a consumer sends an email or make a call asking a specific question.

At times, it can be a complex situation whereby an investigation or engagement in focus conversation. Audience will be impressed by how thoroughly the problems have been investigated and be responsive to the conclusion and recommendations to offer.

4.2 Providing Required Information

Once the audience's needs are identified, the next step is to verify the quantitative and qualitative of the information and to ensure that information is accurate, ethical, and pertinent.

5 Selecting the Best Combination of Medium and Channels

Media is the *form* of a message takes and the **channel** is the *system* used to deliver the message. Media can be divided into oral, written, and visual forms, and all three can be distributed through digital and non-digital channels. Choose the best combination of media and channels to effectively reach the target audience. Table 5.2 list some examples of media form and channel system.

Table 5.2: Examples of Media form and Channel System	
Media: Form of a message takes	Channel: System used to delivery message
Oral – Speech, Radio, Presentation	Digital – social media, Email, Blogging
Written – Letter, Report, Memo,	Non-Digital – Newspaper, Magazines, Journals, Publication, Financial Reports
Visual – Animation, Video, Photograph	

5.1 Factors to Consider when Choosing Medium and Channels

Some companies' uses internal instant messaging such as WhatsApp or social network systems such as WeChat that employees use for one form of official work communication for project updates. Factors to consider for a when choosing media and channels are:

- **Richness.** The richness in the media's ability to:
 - Convey the message through oral, visual, and vocal.
 - Facilitate feedback (verbal and nonverbal).
 - Establish personal focus (face to face).
- **Formality.** The style and tone of message delivered via printed memo letter is more formal than text messages and email.
- **Medium and Channels limitations.** Instant messaging may be straight forward for two persons. But it can be less effective when it involves more than three or big group.
- **Urgency.** Respect the audience's time and workload. Call or text if the message is urgent that require immediate attention and choose Email and blog if it is not.
- **Cost.** Financial issues can be sensitive. Expensive advertising can send nonverbal message that of careless and disregard for company budgets.
- **Security and Privacy.** Be careful on sensitive information and never assumed digital channels are private. There are numerous counts of hacking on networks and confidential information leakage to the unauthorized party.
- **Audience preferences.** If it works, use the media and channel that audience preferred.

6 Organizing the Message

Good organizational plan helps the word flow on how the message is to be written and what information is to be included. Thereby eliminating unnecessary material and minimize the time spend revising the first drafts. A writer with good organizational skills establishes a reputation as a clear thinker who cares about the audience, who will in turn be attentive and receptive to him.

Good organization helps the audience in three ways:

1. **It helps audience understand message.** When the main idea is clear and supported by logical evidence, audience can grasp the essence of message.
2. **It helps audience accept message.** A cleverly organized message can soften the tension of unwelcome news or sceptical audience to respond to the message positively.
3. **It saves audience time.** Well organized message eliminates irrelevant information and save audience time.

6.1 Limiting the Scope

The scope of the message covers the range information and detail presented the overall length. This length has a preset limit from the report requirment instruction, the state of technology, or a time frame over a period of reserch time or speaker' time slots during a seminar.

Limit the scope of the message to the relevant information needed to convey the main idea efficiently. And finally, state the limitation of the report so as to set the audience's expectation as well as to justify any short coming or realistic research representation of the report findings.

6.2 Defining the Main Idea

The overall subject is the topic of the message. The main idea is the specific statement about the topic. For long report and presentation, use the following techniques to form creative ideas:

- **Brainstorming.** Helpful when thinking as individual or in groups, with others. Think aloud and list out all ideas and questions without stopping to criticize or organize. Look for patterns and connections to identify the main idea and the groups of supporting ideas.
- **5Ws and 1H approach.** Ask who, what, when, why and how questions to narrow down massive informative to and organize it into individuals, subject, time, reason and location.
- **Questions and answer chain.** Start with a key question that of the audience is likely to have and work back toward your message. In most cases, each answer leads to a new question, until the relevant information surface.
- **Storytelling.** This is an effective way to build audience's interest and help audience personalized the message to understand causes and consequences. Storytelling route is also helpful to writer as he reads the story aloud and listens to the play back to identify ways to scale down the main idea to a single, into concise message.
- **Mind mapping.** A graphical method to host ideas by starting with a main idea and then branch out to connect every other related idea that comes to mind.

6.3 Choosing between Direct and Indirect Approach

When the audience is likely to be receptive to the message, use direct approach. First, start with the main idea, next support with sound reasoning, then conclusion and recommendations, and finally follow that with supporting evidence and examples.

When the audience is likely to be skeptical and resistant to message, use indirect approach to build the main idea in a logical and sensitive way. Withhold the main idea until the logical persuading reasoning is built up with evidence and examples.

6.4 Outlining the Content

Always begin with outlining the content before hitting straight into writing the message with massive information. This may take some time and effort in the beginning but can certainly save time and effort in the composing and revising stages.

- **Start with the main idea**

- ✓ To establish the goals and general strategy of the message, and it summarises what the audience should do, think, feel, and respond after receiving the message; and why it makes sense for the audience to do so.
- ✓ Everything in your message should either support the main idea or explain its implications
- ✓ If using indirect approach, the main idea will appear toward the end of the message, only after logical persuading reasoning is built up with evidence and examples.

- **State the major points**

- ✓ Present the major points that clarify and explain ideas in more concrete terms.
- ✓ If the goal is to inform with factual material, the major points may be based on something physical or financial that is measurable or envision.

- **Provide example and evidence**

- ✓ Use evidence and examples to strengthen the main idea in strong position.

7 **Tutorial Questions**

Question 1

Select the sentence with the best “you” attitude.

- (a) Your letter claims that you sent your check last week, but we have not received it.
- (b) You cannot receive your order until you send us a check for \$199.
- (c) Once we received our check for \$199; you order will be shipped in three working days.
- (d) You continue to owe us \$199. When we receive that check, we will ship your order within three working days.

Question 2

A “you” attitude

- (a) Emphasizes an audience-cantered approach.
- (b) Focuses on your audience’s wishes, interests, and preferences.
- (c) Replaces terms that refer to your company with terms that refer to your audience.
- (d) All the above

Question 3

Select the sentence with the best “you” attitude.

- (a) Because your report was poorly written, we cannot accept it.
- (b) Your report failed to meet company requirements.
- (c) When we receive a report that is professional, we can act on your recommendations.
- (d) Once the report includes the necessary estimates, we can proceed with the project.

Question 4

Select the sentence with the best “you” attitude.

- (a) We cannot allow your credit request.
- (b) Your credit rating is too poor for you to receive a Kris bank Gold credit card.
- (c) Kris bank’s credit policy requires each holder to have steady employment for at least 18 months.
- (d) You are not eligible for a Kris Gold Card because you have not been at your present job for 18 months.

Question 5

Select the sentence with the best “you” attitude.

- (a) You must get approval from the research committee before you can proceed with any test trails on human subjects.
- (b) Your test trial procedures must get approval from the research committee before you can conduct them.
- (c) Any research based on test trials with human subject must be approved by the research committee.
- (d) Do not proceed with research that involves test trial on human subjects until the research committee has approved your procedures.

6 Writing a Short Report

You are an Executive of Meriden Town Council (MTC). The town council is involved in maintenance management and serves as an important tool for fostering a sense of identity and community bonding among the residents. Over the last six months, there has been a sharp increase in the number of disputes among residents. The town council committee is concerned and had appointed you to undertake a survey to determine the state of neighborliness in MTC.

Use the information given in the table to draft a short report in Email format for the Chairperson of MTC, Mr Alan Tay. Your report should have the appropriate sections with subheadings and should be between 1 to 3 pages. You may include your own details where necessary. DO NOT include the table in your report. Your report must include the following:

(a) Discuss the state of neighborliness in MTC with reference to:

- Level of interaction (Q1 & Q2)
- Level of closeness (Q3 & Q4)
- Level of trust (Q5 & Q6)
- Ability to resolve conflicts (Q7)

(b) Recommend specific programs that the town council could organize to increase the state of neighborliness in MTC.

No.	Question	Respond %	
		Yes	No
1	I interact with my neighbors at least once a week.	65	35
2	I visit my neighbor's home during festivities and special occasions.	35	65
3	I tell my neighbors to keep an eye on my home when I am away for holidays.	67	33
4	I know the names and contact phone numbers of all my immediate neighbors.	42	58
5	I can trust my neighbors to look after my kids/elderly if there is an emergency.	25	75
6	If there is an emergency, the first person I turn to for help is my neighbor.	37	63
7	We hardly have any disputes as we settle issues amicably with our neighbors.	27	73

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 6

WRITING BUSINESS MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Identify the four aspects of being sensitive to audience needs.
 2. Explain how to establish credibility and relate to the audience.
 3. Explain how to use a business-like tone and language.
 4. Describe how to select the right words.
 5. Recognize the different types of sentences and their emphases.
 6. Define the key elements of a coherent paragraph.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of adapting to audience by simply being sensitive to audience's needs. Next, we explain how communication can be effective by applying the "You" attitude, maintaining standards of etiquette, emphasizing the positive, and using bias free language. Building a strong relationship with an audience is also addressed, including instruction in establishing credibility.

Effective composition techniques are addressed, including using a conversational tone, using plain English, selecting active or passive voice and choosing strong words. Then we describe the techniques for gathering information and the major classes of media. Finally, we learn why good organization of the message is important.

2. Being Sensitive to Audience's Needs

Generally, audiences are more likely to respond positively to messages that promise to address their concerns. To be sensitive to audience's needs, always adopt the "you" attitude, maintain good standards of etiquette, emphasize the positive, and use bias-free language.

2.1 Adopting the "You" Attitude

Effective communicators adopt the "you" attitude by seeing through the audience's eyes and position thereby focusing on audience's need, speaking, and writing in terms of the audience's interests and preferences.

- Replace words such as *my*, *mine*, and *ours* with words such as *you* and *yours*.
- Avoid overusing the "you" attitude; to reduce risk of appearing awkward and unreal.
- At times, it is better NOT to use "you" to avoid sounding authoritative or accusing.
- The "you" attitude is meant to be truthful, respectful, and sincere.

Specially, **in negative situations, avoid using the word 'you'**; because in doing so, it will cause one to sound overly authoritative, accusing, defensive and laying blame.

Generally, adopting the 'you' attitude is acting in respect and having a real interest in the audience. It is a very similar approach to customer service and being "customer centre".

- Instead of writing: Tuesday is the only day that we can promise quick response to purchase order requests; we are swamped for the rest of the week.
- Adopt this "you" attitude writing: If you need a quick response, please submit your purchase order request on Tuesday.

When writing to a customer, one should think like a customer and imagine how the message would be perceived at the other end of the transaction. (See Table 6.1)

Table 6.1 - Example of Ineffective and Effective Communication

<i>“Hello, how may I help you?”</i>		
ROLE	INEFFECTIVE	EFFECTIVE
Customer		Hi, I tried installing the new router in my apartment but I’m not getting any signal at all.
Agent	OK. Tell me what steps you took, and I I’ll see what you did wrong. <i>(Assumes others are at fault)</i>	I’m sorry you are having trouble. Let’s go through your set-up process and see if we can find the problem. <i>(Empathy)</i>
Customer	What do you mean I did wrong? I followed the instructions exactly. The router is obviously defective. <i>(Becomes defensive)</i>	Great, thanks.
Agent	Well, we’ll see. Did you install the router before connecting the LAN cable, as the manual instructs? <i>(In accusing tone)</i>	First, can you tell me which of the small green lights on the front of the router lit up? <i>(Tone is positive and focused on problem solving)</i>
Customer	Of course, I did. I just told you I followed the instructions. <i>(Argument starts)</i>	Only the power light is on. All the other lights are off.

2.2 Emphasizing the Positive

Always be sensitive to note the difference between delivering negative news and being negative.

1. Do not try to hide negative news; always look for positive points to foster good relationship with the audience.
2. Never start the message with words that might offend the audience, not even if it’s a joke.
3. When persuading the audience to act, highlight how it will benefit from doing so.
 - So instead of writing: It is impossible to repair your laptop today.
 - Try emphasizing the positive by writing: Your computer can be ready by Tuesday.

2.3 Maintaining Standards of Etiquette

Good etiquette demonstrates respect for the audience and helps foster a more successful environment for communication by preventing negative emotional reaction.

Both pen and electronic written communication require more tact than oral communication. During oral communication, non-verbal signals such as tone of voice and facial expressions can be used to soften the message. Also, adjustment to the right approach can be improvised from the feedback received in real time. Whereas in writing, there is no immediate feedback received to react to any situation that requires resolving any issues that may arise along the way. In fact, every often, one may not even know that the writing communication offended the audience.

Depending on the rapport and relationship with the audience, either a diplomacy or less formal approach can be applied. When a good rapport and relationship with audience exist, a less formal approach is appropriate. If communicating with audience who command a higher rank or outside of the organization, added courtesy and diplomacy would be more appropriate.

2.4 Using Bias-Free Language

Using biased language may perpetuate underlying stereotype and prejudices. Avoid using words and phrases that unfairly and unethically categorize audience in ways related to gender, race, ethnicity, age, or disability. Bias can take a variety of forms:

- **Gender bias:** Avoid using the same label for everyone; in business refer to lady as Ms.
- **Racial and ethnic bias:** Avoid identifying audience by race or ethnic origin.
- **Age bias:** Avoid mentioning the age of a person unless it's relevant. Be careful of the context in which used being words. E.g., 'young' can imply youthfulness (positive), however it can also imply inexperience or immaturity (negative).
- **Disability bias:** Avoid mentioning a disability unless it's pertinent; put the person first and the disability second.

3. Building Strong Relationship

To build a strong and positive business relationship with audience; it is vital to establish individual credibility and project the right company image. Credibility is a measure of how reliable and trust is evoked in audience.

3.1 Establishing Credibility

Credibility can be established by emphasizing the following:

- Honesty and integrity will earn respect even though audience may disagree.
- Objectivity to distant from emotional situations and look at all sides of an issue
- Awareness of audience's needs is the ability to know what is important to the audience.
- Performance in getting job done is assurance to audience that one can deliver.
- Confidence, displayed without sounding arrogant, is key to gaining the audience support.
- Sincerity ought to be truthful by bringing out specific qualities that deserve praise.
- Credentials, knowledge, and expertise include all it takes to support the message, such as relevant education, professional certification, special training, past successes.

3.2 Projecting Company's Image

Employees are representing the company when they are communicating outside the organization. It is therefore vital to project the positive company's public image and build relationship with all its stakeholders. The company's interests and reputation should take precedence and priority over one's personal views and individual communication style.

Many companies have specific marketing communication guidelines that show the correct use of the company logo, corporate colours, preferred abbreviation, font type and font size to use in business correspondence.

4 Controlling Style and Tone

Communication style is the choice of expression of words and manner used in sentences to achieve the overall tone and impression in writing. The appropriate tone would depend on the subject matter of the business message and the relationship with audience.

4.1 Creating a Conversational Tone

The tone of business messages can be formal, informal, or conversational. For instance, communicating with superior or in a larger organization will usually be more formal and respectful. The same tone used in a small organization or with a colleague may sound distant and cold. So, one would need to assess the situation and figure out an appropriate tone to use. Ultimately, most business messages should be conversational style that is warm with respect, logical in common sense and fairness in good manner. (See Table 6.2)

Table 6.2 - Business Communication in Conversational Tone.

Dear Mrs Madison,

Here's the information you requested during our phone conversation on phone.

As I mentioned, Goodwill Summer Hospital has the highest-rated doctors and more of them than any other hospital in the State.

In addition, we have vast network of doctors and other health professionals with offices throughout the state. If you need a specialist, they can refer you to the right one. If you would like more information, please call anytime between 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday.

Sincerely,

Nancy Loo

Customer Service

4.2 Using Plain Language

Using plain language is an important way of creating a conversational tone in business message. Plain languages present information in a simple and plain style so that the audience can easily grasp the meaning. This, in turn can make the company more productive and more profitable since people use less time to clarify all unnecessary confusion. However, using too plain English does have some limitations: it sometimes lacks the precision or subtlety necessary for scientific research, legal documents, research and engineering plans, intense feeling, and personal insight.

4.3 Selecting Active or Passive Voice

The choice of active or passive voice affects the tone of your message. (See table 6.3)

- Active voice is strong and direct; it keeps the writing lively and easy to read. When a sentence is written in the active voice, the subject performs the action:” Kay sent the memo.”
- Passive voice is soft and indirect; it softens the message and puts bad news in the background and creates an impersonal tone when needed. When a sentence is written in the passive voice, the subject receives the action: “The memo was sent by Kay.”

Table 6.3 – Choosing Active or Passive Voice	
Dull and indirect in Passive Voice	Lively and Direct in Active Voice
Legal problems are created by this contract.	This contract creates legal problems.
The new procedure was developed by the operations team.	The operations team developed the new procedure.
<i>Avoid passive voice to make your writing lively and direct.</i>	
Accusatory in Active Voice	More Diplomatic in Passive Voice
You lost the shipment.	The shipment was lost.
I recruited seven engineers last month.	Seven engineers were recruited last month.
<i>Nonetheless, passive voice is helpful when you need to be diplomatic or want to focus attention on problems or solutions rather than on people.</i>	

5 Composing Message with Powerful Words

All effective writing starts with first draft of penning down all inspirations in creative thinking. Followed by numerous rounds of reviewing, revising, and refining all words, sentence and visuals before the final message is every ready.

Follow these steps when choosing strong words:

- Pay attention to grammatical correctness, grammatical errors can affect the writer's credibility even if the message is otherwise correct. Poor grammar can imply that writer do not respect the audience enough to get things right.
- Select the most suitable word by using the most effective words and phrase which is often a matter of judgement and experience.

5.1 Balancing Abstract and Concrete Words

Concrete words stand for something we can touch, see, or visualize

Most are anchored in a tangible, material world. Technology continues to generate new words that don't have a physical presence however are nonetheless concrete. E.g. Software, database.

Abstract words express concepts, qualities, or characteristics

They are usually broad which include a category of ideas, and are often intellectual, academic, or philosophical. Therefore, abstraction tends to be 'fuzzy' and can be subject to interpretation depending on the audience and circumstances.

The best way to minimize such problem is a blend of both abstract and concrete terms. E.g., state a concept and provide details expressed in more concrete terms such as "It's a sizable (abstract) loss in the range of \$US40 billion (concrete)."

5.2 Finding Words that Communicate Well

When trying to find words that communicate well, do the following:

- **Choose strong, precise words.** Use words that express thoughts clearly and specifically.
- **Choose words that are familiar to the audience.** Using unfamiliar words to audience can sometimes lead to embarrassing mistakes of misunderstanding in miscommunication.
- **Use of clichés carefully or avoid it totally.** Clichés are terms and phrases so commonly used that they have lost their power to communicate. Clichés can be figurative or literal and are overused.
 - A figurative cliché is “raining cats and dogs”, meaning it is raining heavily.
 - A literal cliché would be “to tell the truth” because you are going to do just that.
 - "In experience comes wisdom and with wisdom comes experience" is not necessarily accurate in every case.
 - “It is better to have loved and lost, then to have never loved at all” is a commonly used cliché, but audience might disagree to it or might not understand at all.
 - Cliché with a hidden meaning is only clear if you know the context, such as “any port in a storm”. The obvious meaning is that, in a bad situation, anything will do. However, this cliché can also be used to say that a man has many friends or lovers.
- **Use of Buzzwords carefully-** Buzzwords are newly coined words often associated with technology, business, or cultural changes. When used in small doses and in the right context, they can be useful because they can signal that you are an ‘insider’, someone in the know. Some of the effective buzzwords are, bottom line, globalize, incentivize, leverage, paradigm shift, proactive, robust, synergy *and* value-added.
- **Use jargon carefully.** Jargon is a specialized language of a profession or industry. Using jargon can be efficient when communicating among specific group of people who share similar interest and understand the terms. Some examples of business jargon are,
 - Due diligence - Putting effort into research before making a business decision.
 - Sweat equity - Getting a stake in the business instead of a salary.
 - Chief cook and bottle-washer - A person who holds many responsibilities.

6 Composing Message with Effective Sentences

All successful messages require careful arrangement of finalised words into effective sentences. It is important to consider the most suitable type of sentence to present and convey each point.

6.1 Choosing the Four Types of Sentences

The four types of sentences are: simple, compound, complex and compound-complex.

6.1.1 A simple sentence has one main point

For example:

- Profit ***increased*** 80 % in the past year.
- (The subject underlined once and the predicate verb bold, italic and underlined)

6.1.2 A compound sentence has two main points

It expresses two or more independent but related points of equal importance, usually joined by “*and, but, or*”.

In effect, a compound sentence is a merger of two or more simple sentences of independent points that are related.

For example:

- Sales ***declined*** by 10%, and staff turnover ***has been higher*** than ever.
- The independent clauses in a compound sentence are always separated by a common or by a semicolon (in which case the conjunction – “and, but, or” is dropped).

6.1.3 A complex sentence expresses one main point (independent) and one or more sub-points (dependent) related to it, often separated by a comma.

Notice that the sub-point, which comes first in the example, could not stand alone.

For example:

- Although you may question Ali's conclusions, you **must admit** that his research is thorough.

6.1.4 A compound-complex sentence has two main clauses, at least one of which contains a subordinate clause:

- Sales **increased** 45% last year, although the company may face long-term challenges, I **agree** that its short-term prospects look promising.

6.1.5 Strive for Variety and Balance Sentence Types

Maintain some variety among the four sentence types to keep the writing from getting choppy or exhausting.

- If too many simple sentences used, there will be a lack of the ability to properly express the relationships among the ideas, and the writing will sound choppy and abrupt.
- If a long series of compound, complex, or compound-complex sentences used, it will be tiring to read.

7 Crafting Coherent Paragraphs

Paragraphs organize sentence related to the same general topic: every paragraph should be unified – focusing on a single topic – and coherent – presenting ideas in a logical connected way.

Careful arrangement of the key elements of each paragraph can help readers grasp the main idea to understand how the support material back up the main idea.

Most paragraphs consist of:

- A topic sentence that reveals the subject of the paragraph
- Related sentences that support and expand the topic
- Transitions that help readers move between sentences and paragraph

7.1 Creating the Elements of a Paragraph

All paragraphs vary widely in length and form.

Most certain contain three elements:

1. Topic sentence
2. Transitional words
3. Phrases.

7.1.1 Topic Sentence

An effective paragraph has a single topic and the sentence that introduces the single topic is called the topic sentence. This is usually placed in the first sentence in the paragraph that provide readers a direct view of the main idea of the paragraph.

For example:

- The sales and marketing division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. (Details on these problems will fill in the rest of the paragraph.)
- To apply for scholarship, please supply us with the following information. (Details of the necessary information will be described in the rest of the paragraph.)

7.1.2 Support Sentence

One or more support sentences will be used to explain, justify, or extend the topic sentence. These sentences must be related to the topic and provide examples, evidence, and clarification.

Example 1:

The sales and marketing division has been troubled for many years by public relations problems. Since 2013, there are 20n articles published with negative messages by the local news agents. We have been accused of everything from abusing laboratory animals to misleading the local consumers. Our plant has been described as a dangerous operation. Our researchers are referred to as “Dishonest Bad Apples” and our revenue are considered “unethical”.

All these support sentences are written with specific information. Each provides one evidence to support the main idea. Also, every sentence is directly linked to the main idea being developed, which then gives the paragraph its unity. A well-developed paragraph contains ample information to make the topic sentence conclusive and resounding. It does not include any unneeded or unrelated sentences.

7.1.3 Transitions

Transitions connect ideas by showing how one idea is linked to another.

The benefits of transitions include:

1. Alerts audience what is to come so that any shifts and changes don't cause confusion.
2. Helps audience understand the connections that the author is trying making.
3. Gives the writing a coherent and even flow.

Subject to the passage content, transitions can be used once or many times throughout the passage. And depending on the specific need of the document, transitional elements can range in length from a single word to an entire paragraph or more.

Transitions can be established in many ways.

Some transitions serve as mood changers, alerting the reader to a change to come. Some announce a total contrast with what's gone on before, some announce a cause-and-effect relationship, and some signal a change in time. (See Table 6.3)

Table 6.3 – List of Common Transitions	
Additional detail	Moreover, furthermore, in addition, besides, first, second, third, finally
Caused-and-effect	therefore, because, accordingly, thus, consequently, hence, as a result, so
Condition	although, it
Illustration	for example, in particular, in this case, for instance
Time sequence	formerly, after, when, meanwhile, sometimes
Intensification	indeed, in fact, in any event
Summary	in brief, in short, to sum up
Repetition	that is, in other words, as I mentioned earlier

7.2 Developing Paragraphs

Table 6.4 summaries the five common of techniques developing paragraphs and it's purposed to convey a specific type of idea.

Table 6.4 – Five Techniques for Developing Paragraphs		
Technique	Description	Example
Illustration	Give examples to demonstrate the general idea	Some of our most popular products are available through local distributors. For example, May & Joe carry our frozen soups and entrees. The Gold Bell carries our full line of seasonings, as well as the frozen soups. Jay's market, also a major distributor carries our new line of frozen desserts.
Comparison or contrast	Use similarities or variances to develop topic	When the company was just a small cafe, the recruiting function could be handled informally, and the cafe manager could screen and hire his own staff. However, as the company has now expanded to 50 cafes serving island wide customers. To hire that many people without disrupting our ongoing operations, the HR team will handle all recruitment.
Cause and effect	Focus on the reasoning	The baby probably cried for one or two reasons; (1) she is hungry or (2) she is uncomfortable as her diaper is wet.
Classification	Break a general idea into specific categories	The MISA students' profile generally falls into three groups. The largest group by far consist of locals. The next largest group comes from Southeast Asia region. Finally, we offer scholarship for students with outstanding results.
Problem and solution	Present the problem and then discuss the solution	Buying a house for Kim to stay in Singapore is impossible as the property price is very expensive. However, if we rent a place that is near his university, we can find a safe and comfortable room. In addition, we can also engage cleaning, laundry, and cooked meal service at a very affordable price.

8. Tutorial Questions

Question 1

Words such as liberty, love, motivation, or happiness are examples of _____.

- (a) strong word
- (b) clichés
- (c) concrete words
- (d) abstract words

Question 2

To minimize problems of a message being subject to multiple interpretations or being boring, you should _____.

- (a) use only strong words and verbs that are powerful in your message.
- (b) use jargon that is familiar to your audience.
- (c) blend abstract terms with concrete terms.
- (d) minimize the use of adjectives and adverbs.

Question 3

The word “sizable loss” used in a message would be less effective than _____.

- (a) large deficit
- (b) considerable expense
- (c) loss of \$32,000
- (d) serious problem

Question 4

All the following are techniques for selecting the best words except _____.

- (a) choose formal and unfamiliar words.
- (b) blend abstract and concrete words
- (c) avoid jargon
- (d) avoid clichés

Writing Practice

A) Revise the following sentences to emphasize the perspective of the audience and the “you” attitude.

1. We will reimburse you for all travel expenses.
2. I give my permission for you to attend the two-day workshop.
3. For just \$300 per person, we have arranged a three-day trip to Las Vegas that includes deluxe accommodation, the “City Lights” show, and selected meals.
4. So that we may bring our customer records up to date and eliminate the expense of duplicate mailings, we are asking you to complete the enclosed card.
5. We’re requesting all employees to complete the enclosed questionnaire so that we may develop a master schedule for summer vacations.
6. I think my background and my education match the description of the manager trainee position you advertised.
7. We are offering an in-house training program for employees who want to improve their writing skills.
8. We are pleased to announce an arrangement with Compaq that allows us to offer discounted computers in the student bookstore.
9. We have approved your application for credit, and the account may be used immediately.
10. We are pleased to announce that we have selected you to join our management trainee program.

B) Revise the following sentences to make the tone conversational yet professional.

1. He didn't have the guts to badmouth her to her face.
2. Pursuant to your letter of the 12th, please be advised that your shipment was sent 9 June 2008.
3. She was pretty ticked off because the manager accused her of ripping off office supplies.
4. Kindly be informed that your vehicle has been determined to require corrective work.
5. As per your recent request, the undersigned is happy to inform you that we are sending you forthwith the brochures you requested.

C) Revise the following sentences to make them more positive

1. We will withhold payment until you complete the job satisfactorily.
2. In the message you left at our Web site, you claim that you returned a defective headset.
3. We can't process your application since you neglected to insert your social security number.
4. Construction cannot begin until the building plans are approved.
5. It is impossible to move forward without community support.

D) Revise the following sentences to eliminate terms that are considered sexist or that suggest stereotypes.

1. Every employee is entitled to see his personnel file.
2. Any applicant for the position of fireman must submit a medical report signed by his doctor.
3. All conference participants and their wives are invited to the banquet.
4. At most hospitals in the area, a nurse must provide her own uniform.
5. Representing the community are a businessman, a policeman, and a foreman.

E) Revise the following sentences to use plain English and more familiar words.

1. Please ascertain whether we must perpetuate our current contract despite perplexing profits.
2. He hypothesized that the vehicle was not operational because of a malfunctioning gasket.
3. Because we cannot monitor all cash payments, we must terminate the contract.

F) Rewrite each sentence to reflect the component/s of effective writing as indicated in the brackets.

1. We do not offer exchange for purchases without receipts. (Courtesy)
2. Mr. Tan wrote a poem while flying from China to India on the back of an envelope. (Clarity)
3. To me it appears that Mr Wong did not give attention whatsoever to the suggestions that had been recommended by the Safety Officer. (Concise)
4. Do come to our store as soon as possible because we are offering extraordinary discounts on knives, forks, and spoons. (Concrete)
5. The commemorative plaques have been received by the participating companies from the Minister of Manpower. (Active voice)
6. First and foremost, please get to the bottom of the glitch that caused our computer program to crash yesterday. (Clichés & Jargon)
7. To prevent us from possibly losing large sums of money, our bank now requires verification of cheques presented for immediate payment. ('You' attitude; Reader's benefit)
8. Profits are on the wane because our green marketing executives are indolent to do door-to-door sales. (Simple & Familiar language)
9. You will not be entitled to a refund or a replacement if you bring the item to the store after seven days from the date of purchase. (Positive language)
10. The market for industrial goods includes manufacturers, contractors and those who are involved in the wholesale and retail sectors. (Parallel construction)

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 7

COMPLETING BUSINESS MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Describe steps to revise and evaluate first draft and work done by others.
 2. Describe techniques to improve the readability of messages.
 3. Write clearly and concisely.
 4. Describe principles of effective design of documents.
 5. Explain the importance of and steps in proofreading.
 6. Explain how to distribute messages.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the third step of the three steps writing process. This involves steps to revise, produce and proofread business messages. Next, we discuss the nine techniques to improve the readability of the message by writing clearly, concisely varying sentence length and keeping the paragraph short.

Then we describe the principles of effective design of documents using list and bullets and adding appropriate headings and subheadings. Finally, we learn the importance of proofreading and how to adapt the proof-reading process as well as the various ways to distribute messages.

2. Evaluating the First Draft

Careful revision of the first draft improves the effectiveness of your messages and sends a strong signal to the audience that you respect their time and care for their opinions. When you begin the revision process, focus on content, organization, and tonality.

- First poor-quality messages create an impression of poor-quality thinking, and even minor errors can cause confusion, frustration, and costly delays.
- Second, assume that anything you write for digital channels will be stored forever and could be distributed far beyond your audience.
- For important messages, schedule time to put the draft for a day or two before you begin the revision process. This will allow you to approach the material with a fresh eye.
- Careful revision makes a message more effective and easier to read.

3. Revising to Improve Readability

After confirming the content, organizing and tonality of the message; revise to improve readability. Busy professionals who are overloaded with information would appreciate every effort made to the documents easier to read and to skim for highlights of key points without reading in depth.

The four powerful techniques to improve readability are:

1. Vary sentence length
2. Keep paragraph short
3. Use lists and bullets to clarify and emphasise
4. Add headings and subheadings

3.1 Vary Sentence Length

This is an effective way to keep audience's interest and emphasize all major and minor points.

Too many short sentences in a row can make your writing choppy and disconnected. Medium sentences lack the punch of short sentences and the informative power of long sentences. Long sentence is usually harder to understand because they are loaded with information. They are also harder to skim because the reader can only absorb a few words at a time. Hence, to keep interest and improve readability, look for ways to combine sentences of varying length.

- Short sentences (up to 15 words) are quickly processed,
- Medium sentences (15–25 words) are useful for showing the relationship among ideas,
- Long sentences (more than 25 words) are the best way to convey complex ideas, list multiple related points, or summarize or preview information.

3.2 Keep Paragraph Short

Most of the audience can be intimidated by the large blocks of lengthy paragraphs. Visually, it can be a formidable task to absorb and almost straining to eyes on screen.

On the contrary, short paragraphs appeal to audience as very inviting and very easy to read. Business message can be effectively communicated to audience by isolating one key idea, at one time, in a forceful yet short paragraph of less than 100 words. The goal here is to maintain a smooth and clear flow of information that is written in a concise and coherent manner.

In addition, be cautious to use one-sentence paragraphs only occasionally and only for emphasis. If you need to divide a subject into several parts to keep the paragraphs short, be sure to use plenty of transitional words.

3.3 Use Lists and Bullets to Clarify and Emphasize

Lists and bullets are effective writing tools for highlighting and simplifying for material.

In general, bullets are used over numbers, unless the list is in some logical sequence or ranking or specific list items will be referred to later. Make the list easy to read by making all the items parallel and keep each item as short as possible. For example:

When using list and bullets in writing, the audience enjoy the following benefits.

- Highlight main points
- Showcase the sequence of ideas
- Highlight the impact visually
- Enable skimming for busy audience
- Helps to simplify complex subjects

Table 7.1 illustrates the two approaches to the same information you can offer to audience.

Discuss, in comparison, which of these two, the narrative approach or the list approach, would be appealing to busy audience as easy to read.

Table 7.1 illustrates the two approaches to the same information you can offer to audience	
Narrative	List
Owning your own business has many potential advantages. One is the opportunity to pursue your own personal passion. Another advantage is the satisfaction of working for yourself. As a sole proprietor, you also have the advantage of privacy because you do not have to reveal your financial information or plans to anyone.	Owning your own business has three advantages: • Opportunity to pursue personal passion • Satisfaction of working for yourself • Financial privacy

3.4 Add Headings and Subheadings

Lead the audience along as they read the document by using a heading that is a brief title that tells audience about the content of the section that follows. For complex documents, the use of several levels of subheadings is even helpful as it indicates subsections within a major section.

In short, use headings to grab the reader's attention and organize material into short sections.

Headings and subheadings are helpful in three important ways:

- Show audience at a glance how the material is organized,
- Call attention to important points, and
- Highlight connections and transitions between ideas.

There are two ways of writing headings and subheadings

- Descriptive headings, such as “Cost Consideration”, simply identify a topic without suggesting anything more.
- Informative headings, such as “Redesigning Material Flow to Cut Production Cost” offer the audience the context of the message and may indicate conclusion or recommendations of that section.

Well-written headings are informative and self-contained, which means audience can skim through and understand without going into the details of the document.

In generally, Informative headings are more helpful than descriptive headings. But whatever types of headings is selected, it is necessary to keep it brief and grammatically parallel.

4 Editing for Clarity and Conciseness

Once review and revise the message for readability, the next essential step to take is to ensure that the message is edited to be as clear and concise as possible. This vital step is needed to get your message across to audience most accurately and efficiently.

4.1 Editing for Clarity

The goal in editing for clarity is to ensure that audience understand the intended message without being confused or having to read the message more than once. To achieve clarity, relook at the paragraph organization, sentence structure, word choice and then follow the tips listed below:

- ✓ **Break up overly long sentences** - Review your work for overly long sentences.
- ✓ **Rewrite hedging sentences** – The goal is to make clear and direct statement.
- ✓ **Impose parallelism** – It is easy to read when two or more ideas are expressed in similar grammatical structure. Audience can relate and understand they are of similar importance.
- ✓ **Clarify awkward references** – Use specific pointer such as “as defined in the third paragraph on page 77.” Avoid all vague references such as *the, the above-mentioned, as mentioned above, the former, the latter, and respectively*.
- ✓ **Reword long noun sequences** – Putting too many nouns together makes a sentence difficult to read. It can be clearer by putting some of the nouns in a modifying phrase.

For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
The air condition installation company will give us a quote by Monday.	The company that installs the air condition will give us a quote by Monday.

- ✓ **Correct dangling modifiers** – Do not leave modifying phrases dangling. Do ensure that modifier phrases are connected to the subject of the sentence.

For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
After a 3-week decline, we increased sales.	After a 3-week decline, sales increased.

- ✓ **Replace camouflaged verbs** – Be careful of words that end with ion, tion, ing, ment, ant, ent, ence, ance and ency. Most of them camouflage a verb by changing it into a noun or an adjective, which requires you to add another verb to complete your sentence.

- ✓ For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
The manager undertook implementation of the policy	The manager implemented the policy.

- ✓ **Clarify sentence structure** - To help readers follow your meaning more easily, clarify sentence structure: that is, keep the subject and predicate of a sentence as close together as possible so that readers don't have to read the sentence twice to figure out who did what. Similarly, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases usually make the most sense when they're placed as close as possible to the words they modify.

For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
A 10% loss in share value caused by poor quality and an aggressive sales campaign	The major problem was a loss of 10% in share value caused by poor quality and an

by Ammex, the market leader in Southeast Asia, was the major problem in 2012.	aggressive sales campaign by Ammex, the market leader in Southeast Asia.
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4.2 Editing for Conciseness

Editing for conciseness is almost the final stage of completing your message. The main objective is to achieve writing efficiency by eliminating all unnecessary words, phrases, and sentences. Concentrate on how each word contributes to an effective sentence and on how each sentence helps to develop a coherent paragraph. Refer to Table 7.2 to replace the list of ineffective words and phrases to eliminate with the effective alternatives. Then follow the tips below to tighten the document for conciseness.

- ✓ **Delete unnecessary words, phrases, and sentences** - Examine every word you put on paper and eliminate words that aren't essential. To test if a text is essential, remove it and see whether the meaning is still clear. If the meaning does not change, we should leave the words out. For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
Employees who are driving to work should park in the spaces that are marked 'Staff'.	Employees driving to work should park in the spaces marked 'Staff'.

- ✓ **Shorten long words and phrases** – Use short and simple words and phrases. They are more vivid and easier to read. For example:

Do not write...	Do write...
If you want to be successful as a singer, you must work hard.	To be a successful singer, you must work hard.

- ✓ **Eliminate redundancies** – Look out for word combinations that say the same thing. For example, “visible to the eye” is redundant because *visible* is enough to convey your meaning.

Do not write...	Do write...
modern, up-to-date equipment	modern equipment

- ✓ **Recast “It is/There are” starters** – Sentences that start with ‘It is’ or ‘There are’ can be shortened and more active. For example, “We believe...” is a stronger opening than “It is believed that...”

Table 7.2 – Revising for Conciseness		
Issues to Review	Ineffective	Effective
Using wordy phrase	For the sum of In the event that Prior to the start of In the near future At this point in time Because Until such time With reference to	For If Before Soon Now Because When About
Using too many relative pronouns	Employees who are driving to work should park in the underground garage.	Employees should park in the underground garage.
Long Words and Phrases	During the preceding year, the company accelerated productive operations.	Last year the company sped up operations.
Using wordy phrases rather than infinitives	If you want success as a writer, you must work hard. He went to the library for the purpose of studying.	To succeed as a writer, you must work hard. He went to library to study.
Redundancies	Absolutely complete Follow after Repeat again Return back Actual truth Final outcome Uniquely unusual	Complete Follow Repeat Return Truth Outcome Unique

Starting sentence with 'it' or 'there'	It would be appreciated if you would sign the lease today. There are five employees in this division who were late to work today.	Please sign the lease today. Five employees in the division were late to work today.
---	--	---

5 Producing the Message

The quality of the document design, both on paper and on screen, affects readability and audience perceptions. An inviting, simple, and polished design can make your document easier to read and convey to the audience a sense of professionalism and importance.

5.1 Designing for Readability

Design affects readability in two ways:

1. Design elements can either increase or decrease the effectiveness of your message. Thoughtful, read-focused design makes messages easier to read, whereas poorly chosen design elements can act as barriers that impede communication.
2. The visual design sends a nonverbal message that will influence the audience's perceptions of the communication before they read a single word.

For effective design, pay attention to:

- **Consistency** – Throughout the entire message, be consistent in the use of margins, typeface, font size, spacing, colour, lines, and position.
- **Balance** – To a balance is important but can be a subjective design issue. Like the tone of the language, visual balance can be too formal or too informal for a given message.
- **Restraint** - Strive for simplicity. There is no need to clutter your message with too many design elements, too many colours, or too many decorative touches.
- **Detail** - Pay attention to details that affect your design and thus your message. For instance, extremely wide columns of text can be difficult to read in many cases is better solution is to

split the text into two narrower columns.

Finally, make good use of the key design elements such as white space, margins, and line justification to make printed message more efficiency.

6 Proofreading the Message

Proofreading is the final quality check in completing your message because it is your last chance to ensure the quality of your documents—and to protect or enhance your reputation as a thinker and writer. Your credibility is affected by your attention to the details of mechanics and form. The types of details to look for when proofreading include language errors, missing material, design errors, and typographical errors.

6.1 When proofreading, look for two types of problems

- Undetected mistakes from the writing, design, format, and layout
 - Review format, layout guidelines, handbook on grammar
- Mistakes that crept in during production
 - Review anything from missing font to broken web links to printing ink.

6.2 Methodical procedure to identify specific problems

1. Make multiple passes – Go through the document focusing on specific different aspect one at a time. For example, look for content errors the first time and layout errors the second.
 2. Use perceptual tricks - Reading pages backwards to catch things you might miss by:
 - (a) Placing your finger under each word and read it silently or
 - (b) Covering everything except the line you are reading, or
 - (c) Reading the document aloud.
- Focus on high priority items – Check accuracy on anything that could cause grief if incorrect.

- Get some distance – Take a break to refresh your brain. Do not proofread immediately.
- Stay focused and vigilant - Blocking out all distractions to stay focus when proofreading.
- Take your time – Too quick proofreading is not careful proofreading.

7 **Distributing the Message**

When distributing your message consider the following factors:

- **Cost to reproduce the document**

For multiple copies of lengthy reports or multi-media productions, cost can be a concern. You need to weigh the cost and benefits before you decide. Do consider the non-verbal message you may be sending regarding your cost of production. For example, using full colour print on high quality paper for the entire length reports plus overnight delivery may be responsive in one instance and a waste of money in another.

- **Convenience of the audience to access the document**

Do ensure your audience can easily access the material you send. For example, sending huge files may work for a fast office network but receiving it could be difficult for remote colleagues who would need to download them over a slower wireless network.

- **Time**

Consider how soon your message needs to reach your audience. It would be a waste of money to send by overnight delivery if your reader will not read it for a week.

- **Security and privacy issues surrounding distribution of the message**

You need to weigh the convenience of electronic communication against the need for security and privacy. For the most sensitive information, your company will probably restrict recipients hence the distribution channels. Besides, most computer users are wary of opening attachments these days.

Therefore, instead of sending files in word document which are vulnerable to viruses and other risk, you can convert them into PDF files. For more information on message distribution using technology, do visit <http://realtimeupdates.com/bce5>.

8 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

When revising a document, _____.

- (a) first read through it quickly to evaluate overall effectiveness.
- (b) first look carefully for grammatical errors.
- (c) read just one time to finish quickly.
- (d) pay closest attention to the document's spelling.

Question 2

The main tasks in completing a business message consist of all the following except

- (a) Proofreading
- (b) Revising
- (c) Forecasting
- (d) Producing

Question 3

The opening statement of a document should _____.

- (a) summarize the main idea.
- (b) list all the points and ideas that are in the documents.
- (c) be short and to the point.
- (d) be relevant and interesting.

Question 4

A conclusion should _____.

- (a) summarize the main idea.
- (b) bring up any additional point that you forgot to include in the message.
- (c) leave a position impression.
- (d) all the above
- (e) only a and c

Question 5

To shorten sentences, _____.

- (a) avoid putting dissimilar thoughts into the same sentence
- (b) avoid using commas
- (c) use passive voice
- (d) all the above

Question 6

Use the word can instead of the phrase *you have the capability of* to avoid _____.

- (a) redundancy
- (b) “you” statements
- (c) wordy phrases
- (d) using too many pronounce

Question 7

When trying to make a message more concise, _____.

- (a) examine every word
- (b) replace long words with shorter ones
- (c) remove adverbs that don’t add to the meaning
- (d) all the above

Question 8

All the following phrases are redundant *except* _____.

- (a) round in shape
- (b) free gift
- (c) return home
- (d) follows after

Question 9

Which of the following suggestions will *not* make your message more concise?

- (a) shorten long words and phrases.
- (b) eliminate redundancies.
- (c) being sentences with short phrases *like it is* or *there are*.
- (d) delete unnecessary words.

Question 10

To help make your writing more concise, do all the following *except* _____.

- (a) eliminate redundancies
- (b) avoid using wordy phrases
- (c) avoid using “you” statements
- (d) avoid the clutter of too many pronouns like *who*, *that*, or *which*

Exercise on Conciseness and Clarity

1. Rewrite the following sentence to improve clarity and to avoid the long noun sequence:

The financial estimates and accounting consulting firm will be closed next week.

2. Rewrite the sentence to avoid camouflaged verbs:

The manager will make a determination about when to issue the refund.

3. Rewrite the sentence to keep the subject and predicate close together and improve clarity:

This report will help our employees with an easy-to-read format and organization.

Exercise on Conciseness and Clarity cont.

4. Remove the awkward references to improve clarity:

Of the inventory and marketing departments, we announced that only the former will undergo a review this year, while the latter will undergo a review next spring.

5. Rewrite the following sentence to avoid excessive enthusiasm:

We are thrilled to announce the very important merger of our extraordinarily effective accounting department with our very highly efficient finance department.

6. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating the unnecessary phrases:

In view of the fact that the customer service department is closed, we do not have the capability of offering refunds until such a time as they reopen.

7. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating the unnecessary phrases:

Due to the fact that there has been a decline in revenues, layoffs of employees are likely to occur until such a time as the economy improves.

8. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating excessive relative pronouns and articles:

If the system is not shut down correctly, it may accidentally delete the documents that have not been saved.

9. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by using an infinitive phrase:
If you want clarity in your writing, you must revise carefully.

Exercise on Conciseness and Clarity cont.

10. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by using short, simple words:
During the preceding month, company managers became cognizant of the fact that an increase in low employee morale was a direct causation of the decrease in sales.

11. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by using short, simple words:
Effective immediately, all employees need to terminate their excessive utilization of the office duplication machine for personal endeavors.

12. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating redundancies:
The engineers collaborated together in order to produce the uniquely original final outcomes of their research.

13. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating the “there are” starter:
There are three new tenants who are moving in today.

14. Rewrite the following sentence in a more concise way by eliminating the “it is” starter:
It is my pleasure to introduce our new director of marketing, Taylor Smith.

Short Structured Questions

15. Explain how the four design elements work together to create an effective message.
16. List and explain the four techniques for making documents more concise.
17. Explain the importance and process of proofreading.
18. List at least three tips for effective proofreading.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 8

PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Apply the Three-step writing process to persuasive messages.
 2. Describe a strategy for developing the messages.
 3. Identify the categories of persuasive business messages.
 4. Describe a strategy for developing sales and marketing messages.
 5. Identify steps to avoid ethical lapses in marketing and sales messages.
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1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of persuasion and the application of the Three-step writing process to effective persuasive messages. Next, we discuss ADIA strategy, an intense effective plan, for developing the persuasive messages that go beyond the indirect approach. Using the AIDA model would help grab the audience's attention and proceeds to develop interest and desire before the action close motivates the audience to act. Audience also learn how to distinguish between emotional and logical appeals and how to balance them in their writing.

Then four common mistakes in persuasive writing are also discussed; whether the employee needs to write a persuasive request for persuasive claim for adjustment, as well as the delicacy of

developing and writing the conversation marketing and sales message. Finally, learn the strategies for maintaining high ethical and legal standards in persuasive and marketing messages.

2. Using the Three-Steps Writing Process for Persuasive Messages

Persuasion is the effort made to change your audience's attitudes, beliefs, or actions. Successful persuasion message is about letting audience know they have choices and presenting your offering in the best possible light. Persuasive messages require audiences to give something of value (money in exchange for a product, for example) or take substantial action (such as changing a corporate policy), they are more challenging to write than routine messages. Take note that persuasion is not about trickery or getting people to act against their own best interests.

2.1 Step 1: Planning Persuasive Messages

Writing successful persuasive messages requires careful attention starting from the planning step to clarifying your purpose and getting an insightful analysis of your audience. The outcome of the planning stage would further enable you to write in a convincing and compelling manner that will motivate changes in audience's attitudes, beliefs, or actions.

2.1.1 Analysing the Situation

You need to have a clear purpose of what exactly you want to achieve to effectively write the best persuasive message that will connect to your audience's desires and interests.

When planning your message, consider these important questions:

- Who is my audience?
- What are my audience members' needs?
- What do I want them to do? How might they resist?

- Are there alternative positions I need to examine?
- What does the decision maker consider to be the most important issue?
- How might the organization's culture influence my strategy?

To understand and categorize audience needs, you can refer to specific information:

- Demographics - age, gender, occupation, income, education, and other characteristics.
- Psychographics - personality, attitude, lifestyle, and other psychological characteristics.
- Cultural – the expectations and practices.

2.1.2 Gathering Information

When you finish analysing the situation, the next step is to gather the information that will close the gap between what your audience knows, believes, or feels right now and what you want them to know, believe, or feel because of receiving your message as discussed in session 4.

2.1.3 Selecting the Right Medium

There are many communication mediums such as instant messages, radio podcasts and newspaper or TV advertisements. Choosing the right medium to maximise the chance of getting through to your audience is an important decision. As such, it is a common practice that advertising agencies employ media specialists whose only job is to analyse the media options available and select the most cost-efficient combination for each client and each advertising campaign.

2.1.4 Organizing the Information

The choice of approach to organize your information is influenced by your expertise, power, and authority in the organization. Most persuasive messages use an indirect approach which is to

give reasons and build interest before asking for a decision and action, or even before revealing your main intention. If you have a close relationship with your audience and the messages is welcome, the direct approach can be effective.

2.2 Step 2: Writing Persuasive Messages

Applying the ‘you’ attitude is crucial in persuasive messages. Keeping the writing simple and straightforward can avoid unfavourable audience respond from the over-the-top language.

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2.2.1 Encouraging Positive Respond to persuasive messages

Follow these guidelines to encourage a positive respond to your persuasive message:

- Use positive and polite language.
- Understand and respect cultural differences.
- Be sensitive to organizational cultures.
- Take steps establish your credibility.

2.2.2 Establishing Credibility to convince sceptical audience

Use these techniques to establish credibility and to convince sceptical or hostile audience:

- Use simple language to avoid high pressure emotional manipulation.
- Be objective to persuade with logic and evidence and avoid “hard-sell” tactics.
- Identify your sources of information and provide objective evidence for the claims.
- Establish common ground with audience and display your willingness to keep your audience’s best interests at heart.

2.3 Step 3: Completing Persuasive Messages

Finally, complete by revising and proofreading for clarity and conciseness by:

- Evaluate content objectively and try not to overestimate your credibility.
- Carefully match the purpose and organization to audience needs.

- Ask an experience colleague who knows your audience well to review your draft.
- All design elements must complement, not detract from, your argument.
- Ensure distribution methods fit your audience's expectations as well as your purpose.

3. Developing Persuasive Messages

One's success in business is related to an ability to convince others to accept new ideas, change old habits, or act on your recommendations. Developing persuasive messages involve the following four strategies to elicit a preferred response for the audience:

1. Framing your arguments
2. Balancing emotional and logical appeals
3. Reinforcing your position
4. Anticipating objections

3.1 Framing Argument

When framing a persuasive argument, the indirect AIDA model (attention, interest, desire, and action) is an effective and popular approach:

- **Attention.** Establish common ground to catch the audience's eyes and ears such that they pay attention to your main idea of your problem, idea, or new product.
- **Interest.** Provide concise details that prompt audience to imagine how the main idea is the solution that can meet their needs.
- **Desire.** Move audience from "I'm interested" to "I want this" by helping audience to embrace the idea how the change will benefit them and answering potential objections.

- **Action.** Motivate audience to take specific action by indicating the specific action to take including a deadline, contact person and contact number when applicable.

Limitations of AIDA approach include:

- It essentially talks at audiences, not with them,
- It focuses on one-time events, not long-term relationships.

3.2 Balancing Emotional and Logical Appeals

An emotional appeal calls on feelings or audience sympathies. Remember that people need to find rational support for an attitude they've already embraced emotionally; therefore, to be truly effective, emotional appeals should be accompanied by logical appeals.

A logical appeal uses one of three types of reasoning:

- Analogy: Reasoning from specific evidence to specific evidence
- Induction: Reasoning from specific evidence to a general conclusion
- Deduction: Reasoning from a generalization to a specific conclusion

To avoid misuse of the logical appeal, follow the guidelines:

- Avoid hasty generalizations
 - Use plenty of evidence before drawing conclusions.
- Avoid circular reasoning
 - Do not support your claim by restating it in different words.
- Avoid attacking an opponent
 - Attack the argument of the opponent is making, not your opponent's character.
- Avoid oversimplifying a complex issue
 - Do not reduce a complex issue to simple statement when the situation is not at all simple or clear cut.
- Avoid mistaken assumptions of cause and effect
 - Do not assume the cause of whatever the problem and issue of discussion.
 - Always isolate the impact of a specific factor.
- Avoid faulty analogies

- Ensure that the two objects or situations being compared are similar enough to hold the analogy.
- Explaining that an Internet firewall is like a prison wall is a poor analogy, because a firewall keeps things out, whereas a prison wall keeps things in.

3.3 Reinforcing the Position

After the basic elements are complete, reinforce the position to trigger the desired responses.

- Choose to use vivid language and abstractions carefully and honestly.
- Consider using believable evidence, powerful words, audience benefits, metaphors, and stories.

3.4 Anticipating the Objections

Writers of powerful persuasive messages have anticipated many objections and addressed them before audiences see their message. Anticipating objections allows you:

- To get the issues out of the way sooner
- Demonstrate a broad appreciation of the issue
- Imply confidence in your message.

If you're addressing a hostile audience, be sure to present all sides of the situation and present other options before your own. Try to involve your audience in the design of your solution.

3.5 Avoiding Common Mistakes in Persuasive Communication

When developing your persuasive message, avoid these four common mistakes:

- **Using “hard sell”.** No one likes to be push into making a decision. A calm and rational persuasive “soft sell” may be more comfortable and effective.

- **Resisting compromise.** Successful business negotiation takes place on a ‘give and take’ approach on budget and investment.
- **Relying solely on great arguments.** Connecting with the audience on the right emotional level and communication through vivid language are important. At times, a well-crafted story can be even more compelling than dry logic.
- **Assuming that persuasion is a one-shot effort.** Persuasion is a long process that requires connecting with audience a small step at a time.

4 Common Examples of Persuasive Business Messages

This section identifies the three most common categories of persuasive business messages:

1. Persuasive request for action
2. Persuasive presentation for ideas
3. Persuasive claims and requests for adjustments

4.1 Persuasive Requests for Action

A major part of business writing involves requests for action:

- Use a direct approach when it is an anticipated request.
- Use the indirect approach when the request is not anticipated.
 - The AIDA model is ideal to reveal your intention indirectly to the audience.
 - Begin with an attention-getting device by showing the audience that you are aware of their concerns thereby establishing common ground.
 - Give facts, explain benefits, and enhance audience’s interest and desire.
 - Gain credibility for you and your request.
 - Convince your audience that helping you will help solve a significant problem.
 - Close with a request for some specific action.

4.2 Persuasive Presentation of Ideas

At times, you may want to change attitudes or beliefs immediately without asking the audience to decide or do anything. When this is the case, begin by asking your audience to re-examine long-held opinions or admit the possibility of new ways of thinking.

4.3 Persuasive Claims and Request for Adjustments

When writing a claims and request for adjustments, take note that people generally respond more favourably to requests that are calm and reasonable.

The key ingredients to a good persuasive claim are:

- A complete and specific review of the facts relating to the matter.
- Confident and positive tone on customer's right to be satisfied with every transaction.
- Outline the problem and continue by reviewing what has been done about it so far.
- Be clear, calm, and complete when presenting your case.
- Be specific about how you would like to see the situation resolved.
- Give your reader a good reason for granting our claim.
- Show how the individual or organization is responsible for the problem.
- Appeal to the audience's sense of fair play, goodwill, and moral responsibility.
- Explain how you feel about the problem, but do not make threats.
- Close on a respectful note that reflects how a successful resolution of the situation will repair or maintain beneficial working relationship.

5 Developing Marketing and Sales Messages

Generally, most marketing and sales messages in organization are created and delivered by:

- In large companies - professionals and specialist in marketing and advertising agents. However, business executive may be required to review the work of these specialists.
- In smaller companies – senior staff or managers in the sales and marketing team.

Having a good understanding of the vital difference between a marketing and sales messages work will help you be a more effective manager. (See table 8.1)

Table 8.1 – Important Differences between Marketing and Sales Messages	
Marketing Messages	Sales Messages
Usher potential buyers: • Through the purchasing process without asking them to make an instant decision.	Take over from marketing messages: • Encourage potential buyer to make an immediate purchase decision.
Focus on: • Introducing new brands to the public • Providing competitive comparisons • Encouraging customers to visit websites for more information • Reminding buyers that a product or service is available	Make a specific request for: • People to place an order for a product or service.

5.1 Planning Sales and Marketing Messages

Understanding the audience's needs, the potential buyer, decision from his/her perspective is an important step in planning effective sales and marketing messages.

Consider the basic strategies when framing the sales and marketing messages:

- **Assessing customer needs**

- Conduct relevant assessment related to the products and the target market to understand audience needs.
- Considerations can range from a few functional factors of weight, size, colour, to a complicated mix of emotional, cultural, and logical issues

- **Analysing competition**

- Be knowledgeable about competitor's campaigns; and by staying close to the competitor's move, you can avoid themes, writing styles, creative approaches or even schedule marketing program that are like those of competitors.

- **Determining key selling points and benefits:**

- There is vital difference between selling points and benefits. (See table 8.2)

Table 8.2 - Differences between Selling points and Benefits	
Selling Points	Benefits
<u>Focus on:</u> • The Product • What the product does • The features of the products	<u>Focus on:</u> • The Audience the user • The advantages of purchase • The practical and the emotional

- **Anticipating purchase objections**

Effective marketing and sales messages anticipate objections and identify these objections up front and address proactively.

Common objections can range from:

- high price
- low quality to a lack of compatibility with existing products
- Perceived risk involved with the product.

By identifying potential objections up front, you can craft your promotional messages in ways that address those concerns:

- If price is a likely objection, for instance, you can look for ways to increase the perceived value of the purchase and decrease the perception of high cost.
- Any attempts to minimize perceptions of price or other potential negatives must be done ethically.

5.2 Writing Conventional Marketing and Sales Messages

The AIDA model is most commonly used to write conventional marketing and sales messages. Here are some key points of applying the AIDA model:

In the Attention section

- Offer a piece of genuine new and established a common ground with audience.
- Advertisers uses headlines that offer an exciting product benefit, a piece of interesting news, an appeal to audience's emotions or sense of financial value
- Marketers uses images, music, animation, or video on different medium and channels.

In the Interest section

- Highlight the product's central selling point to build up the sales message.
- To build interest, expand on and support the promises in the attention getting opening.

In the Desire section

- Intensify the audience's desire by expanding important information of benefits.
- Think carefully about the sequences of support points to achieve a convincing flow.
- Use headers, sub-headers, hyperlinks, and video demonstration to guide audience.
- Add details and audience benefits to increase desire for the product or service.
- Convince audience by focusing on their practical and emotional needs.
- Cite statistics from scientific studies of the product's performance or survey results.
- Minimise doubt by including testimonials from satisfied customers.
- Provide articles written by industry experts, competitive comparisons.

- Prevent resistance by offering free samples or demonstrations,

In the Action section

- Finally, a direct sales message to persuade audience to take immediate action.
- Encourage audience to pick up the phone or go online to place an order.
- Make the sale proceeds easy, fast, clear, risk free for audience to purchase.

5.5 Maintaining High Ethical and Legal Standards

The ethical businesspeople use persuasion as a positive opportunity to align their interests with what the best for their audience by:

- Providing information and aiding understanding.
- Allowing the audience, the freedom to choose.
- Persuading without manipulating.

However, the concept of *persuasion* is often associated with dishonesty and unethical practices; so, you must strive for high ethical standards to overcome this stigma.

Pay close attention to the following legal aspects of marketing and sales communication:

- Marketing and sales messages must be truthful and non-deceptive.
- Back up all claims with evidence.
- “Bait and switch” advertising is illegal.
- Marketing messages and websites aimed at children are subject to special rules.
- Marketing and sales messages can be considered as binding contracts.
- Do not use a person’s name, photograph, or other identifying without permission.

Before launching a marketing or sales campaign, make sure you are up to date on the latest law and regulations that restrict promotional messages such as spamming as unsolicited bulk mail, customer privacy, and data security.

6 TUTORIAL

Writing Persuasive Messages

Exercise 1

Read the message.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the message
2. Analyse how the document is revised

Dear Tech Star Computing:

I'm writing to you because of my disappointment with my new multimedia PC display. The display part works all right, but the audio volume is set too high, and the volume knob doesn't turn it down. It's driving me crazy!

I can't believe you would sell a product like this without testing it first. I depend on my computer to run my small business. I want to know what you are going to do about it.

Every time I buy electronic equipment from your store, something is always wrong. I thought quality was supposed to be important, but I guess not.

Anyway, I need this fixed right away.

Exercise 2

Read the message.

1. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the message
 2. Analyse how the document is revised
-

At Goodwill Auto Repair, we have been in business for over 25 years. We stay in business by always taking into account what the customer wants. That's why we are writing.

We want to know your opinions to be able to better conduct our business.

Take a moment now and fill out the enclosed questionnaire.

We know everyone is busy, but we must make sure that our people do their job correctly.

We are happy you chose Goodwill Auto Repair.

We want to take care of your auto needs.

Exercise 3

Short Answers Questions

To build and increase desire, marketing professionals use several techniques to overcome resistance and boost credibility. Imagine you are Russell/Regina Wong, the marketing manager of a dance school. Think of three techniques which you can use to overcome customers' resistance and build desire.

Exercise 4

Gaining attention in sales letter is one of the critical elements. Identify some of the techniques commonly used in opening paragraph to attract an audience's attention.

No.	Examples	Techniques
1	Discount up to 50% for the latest electronic goods.	
2	Want to look good and feel great? Come to down to our spa for a luxurious pampering session.	
3	Long battery life. Light weight. Water resistant. Compact.	
4	Learn how to play golf just like a pro! Sign up for our golf clinic and our professional coaches will teach you tips and tricks.	
5	SOLARTEX heating system uses of solar energy which is renewal and non-pollutive.	

Exercise 5

Writing a sales letter

You are the owner of an online boutique specializing clothes for young women in their early 20s and 30s. You have a new fashion collection featuring the latest design from Korea. Using AIDA model, write a sales pitch targeting your regular and potential customers. Your message is to appeal to young fashion-conscious women's desire to look like K-pop stars.

Exercise 6

Writing a Sales Promotional Letter

You are the owner of a newly start-up ScrubaDub Car Care specializing on car care services for car owners residing in Northeast and Central Singapore. You are to design a sales promotional letter to market the ScrubaDub Car Care services available. Using AIDA model, write an effective persuasive to appeal to your regular and potential car customers.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 9

ROUTINE AND POSITIVE MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Describe an effective strategy for writing routine business requests.
 2. Describe the three common types of routine requests.
 3. Outline an effective strategy for writing routine replies and positive messages.
 4. Describe six common types of routine replies and positive messages.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of the effective strategy for writing routine requests by applying the three-step writing process. Next, we describe the three common types of routine requests and positive message, including routine requests for information or action, replies on routine business matters, and positive messages such as good news announcements and goodwill messages from product operation hints and technical support to refunds and order glitches.

Then we outline an effective strategy for writing routine replies and positive messages. Using the proper tone and assessing the use of direct approach can help create an effective message that the audience will accept and understand. Finally, we learn the six common types of routine replies and positive messages and provide illustrations as well as suggestions for writing effective for business requests, replies and goodwill message.

2. Strategy for Routine Requests

Making requests is a routine part of business. By applying a clear strategy and tailoring your approach to each situation, you'll be able to generate effective requests quickly. All business routine requests have three parts: an opening, a body, and a close. Using the direct approach, open with your main idea, which is a clear statement of your request. Use the body to give details and justify your request, then close by requesting specific action.

2.1 State the Request Up Front

Begin effective business communication with an opening stating the request or the main idea up front. Ensure the content in the first paragraph include:

- **Special attention to tone** – Use *Please* and *I would appreciate* to convey respect.
- **Assume audience comply** – Most reasonable business routine requests will be complied.
- **Be Specific** – Indicate clearly is the request. E.g., if you request for the latest market data from the research team, be specific to mention if you want a 1-page summary or 100 pages of raw data.

2.2 Explain and Justify Request

Use the body to make the explanation a smooth and logical outgrowth of your opening remarks. Be sure to mention if complying with the request could be beneficial to the audience. If there are multiple requests or questions, start with the most important one and deal only one topic per question. If you have an unusual or complex request, break it down into specific, individual questions so that the audience can address each one separately.

2.3 Close with a Cordial Request for Specific Action

Close with a cordial request for specific action including any relevant information and deadline. Give contact information such as email address or phone numbers so that audience know how you can be reach for future contact via emails or phone call and future contact. Conclude your message with a sincere expression of appreciation.

3. Common Examples of Routine Requests

The three common types of routine messages are asking for information or action, asking for recommendation, and making claims and requesting adjustments. Examples of such routine requests can be product operation hints and technical support to refunds and order glitches.

3.1 Asking for Information or Action

Routine requests can be handled with simple, straightforward messages, but more complicated requests can require additional justification and explanation.

When asking for simple and straight forward information and action, use the direct approach to get the job done in the most efficient way.

For complicated requests and situations, provide more justifications of why you are making such requests and more extensive reason as to what you want to know or what you want audience to do for the request.

If applicable, in both simple and complicated requests, point out any benefits to the audience of complying with the request. Ultimately, be sure to adapt your request to your audience and the specific situation.

3.2 Asking for Recommendations

It is common that before awarding a job or scholarships companies will ask applicants to supply references who can vouch for their ability, skills, integrity, character, and fitness for the job. Always ask for permission before using someone as a reference.

The requests for recommendations and references are routine, using the direct approach would be most appropriate and efficient strategy. Begin your message by clearly stating the reasons for asking the recommendations in either a call phone reference check or a written reference letter. Do refresh the memory of any potential reference you haven't been in touch with for a while.

3.3 Making Claims and Requesting Adjustments

No matter how unhappy, frustrated, and angry one can be, it is important to maintain a professional tone in all business communication. This includes situations such as making complains and claims or requesting for an adjustment in a settlement of claims.

Follow the helpful guidelines when writing a claim or requesting an adjustment:

- Open with a clear and calm statement of the problem along with the request.
- In the body, give a complete, specific explanation of the details.
- In the close, politely request specific action or convey a sincere desire to find a solution.
- State exactly what you expect from the company, such as exchanging incorrectly shipped merchandise for the right item or issuing a refund if the item is out of stock.
- Supply email or phone information so that the company can contact you to follow up.
- Document any claims you make with a company, make copies, and keep the original.

4 Strategy for Routine Replies and Positive Messages

Use the direct approach for routine replies and positive messages to communicate information or good news, to answer questions, to provide required details and most importantly, leave audience with a good impression of the writer and the firm.

Begin by placing the main idea in delivering the positive reply or the good news in the opening. Use the body to explain all the relevant details, and close cordially to promote goodwill or perhaps highlighting a benefit to your audience.

4.1 Starting with the Main Idea

The best way to write a good opening is to be as clear and concise as possible. Opening with the main idea or good news, prepares audience for the details that follow. For example: “The Royal Park Hotel has accepted your proposal to provide training to the sales staff.”

4.2 Providing Necessary Details and Explanation

Use the body to expand on the opening message and provide information that the audience need or anticipated. Maintain the positive and supportive tone that is established in the opening.

For example:

“Your educational background and internship have impressed us, and we believe you would be an invaluable addition to Royal Park Hotel. As discussed during the interview, your salary will be \$2,800 per month, plus benefits. Please meet our Human Resource Manager, Ms Taylor Swift at 9am on Monday, 1 March 2015. She will assist you very swiftly with all the necessary paperwork and arrange various orientation activities to help you acclimate to our company.”

4.3 Ending with a Courteous Close

The close of routine replies and positive messages is usually short and simple. Often, a simple thank you is all you need. You may highlight a benefit to the audience or by expressing appreciation or goodwill. However, if follow up action is required or expected, use the close to identify who will do what and when that action will take place.

5. Six Categories of Routine Replies and Positive Messages

Common examples of routine and positive messages fall into six categories:

1. Answers to routine requests
2. Grants of claims and requests for adjustment
3. Recommendations
4. Routine informational messages
5. Good-news announcements
6. Goodwill messages.

5.1 Answering Requests for Information or Action

It is very common that most professionals are required to respond to requests for information and action on daily basis. The most efficient and effective business reply is to use direct approach to answer a simple or straight forward request for information or action. Do answer all requests promptly, graciously, and thoroughly will positively influence the audience's impression on you and your organization.

5.2 Granting Claims and Requests for Adjustment

Communication about a claim is a delicate matter when the audience is clearly at fault; and effective business communication is to maintain a professional demeanour. Your specific response to a customer complaint depends on your company's policies for resolving such issues and your assessment of whether the company, the customer, or some third party is at fault.

Every mistake is an opportunity to improve a relationship. Therefore, responding to mistakes in a courteous, audience - focused way helps repair important business relationships. To grant a claim when the customer is a fault, try to discourage future mistakes without insulting or offending the audience.

If you choose to grant the claim, open with that good news. However, the body needs special attention because you want to discourage similar claims in the future. Close in a courteous manner that expresses your appreciation for the customer's business.

In general, take the following steps:

- Acknowledge receipt of the customer's claim or complaint.
- Sympathize with the customer's inconvenience or frustration.
- Take or assign personal responsibility for setting matters straight.
- Explain precisely how you have resolved, or plan to resolve, the situation.
- Take steps to repair the relationship.
- Follow up to verify that your response was correct.

5.3 Providing Recommendations and References

Recommendation letters are vulnerable to legal complications, so consult your company's legal department before writing one.

5.4 Sharing Routine Information

When sharing routine information, state the purpose in the beginning and briefly mention the nature of the information you are providing. Then provide the necessary details. And finally end with a courteous close.

5.5 Announcing Good News

Business good news can be announced in the form of press release or new product launch. Usually, these are good news messages design to a disclose company information with the news media, and the public on a routine periodic schedule. Normally, they are handled by the marketing communication department and the messages are carefully written with the customers and other stakeholders in mind.

5.6 Fostering Goodwill

Business employees can enhance their relationships with customers, colleagues, and other business associates by sending unexpected notes containing goodwill messages. Effective goodwill messages are sincere and honest. Goodwill messages include letters of congratulations, appreciation, and condolences.

5.6.1 Sending Congratulations

Taking note of major events in someone's personal life helps foster the business relationship. These are opportunities for sending goodwill messages to congratulate individuals or companies for milestone achievements such as promotion, hitting new product sales record, weddings, birthday, and graduations. Writing a short, simple, sincere, and personal tone is appropriate for sending messages of congratulations.

5.6.2 Sending Letters of Appreciation

Part of an important leadership quality is the ability to recognize the contributions of employees, suppliers, and other business associates. The appreciation letter generally makes the audience feel good and propels further excellence. An effective letter of appreciation writes of a person's contributions and may become an important part of someone's personnel file, so do provide specific information wherever possible. For example:

“Thank you and everyone on your team for the heroic efforts you took to bring our servers back up after last Friday's flood. We could restore business right on schedule first thing Monday morning. You went far beyond the level of contractual service in restoring our data centre within 16 hours. I would especially like to highlight the contribution of our networking specialist, Tom Cruise, who worked for 12 straight hours to reconnect our internet service. If I can serve a reference in your future sales activities, please do not hesitate to ask.”

5.6.3 Offering Condolences

Condolence letters are the most personal business messages you may ever have to write, so they require the utmost in care and respect for your audience. The goal of condolence message is to convey that you and the organization you represent care about the audience's loss. Keep the message simple, short, and sincere to achieve the right tone. Do make it a personal expression of sympathy; be careful not to offer life advice and do not bring religion into the discussion unless you have a close personal relationship with the audience and religion is already a part of it.

6 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

When writing a routine request, which of the following is an appropriate action?

- (a) Soften your request with words such as please.
- (b) State precisely what you want.
- (c) Assume your audience will comply.
- (d) Do all the above.

Question 2

If you list a series of questions in a minute request, better _____.

- (a) ask the least important question first.
- (b) ask the important question first.
- (c) include two to three topics in one question to keep your message short.
- (d) use no question marks since this is a business message.

Question 3

When writing a routine letter requesting information and action, _____.

- (a) close with a justification of your request.
- (b) close with a clear statement of your reason for writing.
- (c) close with a specific account of what you expect and a deadline.
- (d) do none of the above.

Exercise - Active and Passive Voice

The following statements are written in a negative tone and in passive voice.

Rewrite them in a positive tone and in active voice.

1. The matter cannot be fully investigated until all the details are supplied.
2. A copy of our catalogue cannot be sent to you because we do not have stock now.
3. Staff are reminded not to litter and wet the pantry whenever they use it.
4. Before your insurance policy can be reinstated, a report must be submitted to prove you are not medically unfit.
5. A refund to customers who return goods sold after 14 days will not be provided by the company.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
SESSION 10

NEGATIVE MESSAGES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Apply the three-step writing process to negative messages.
 2. Explain how to convey negative news.
 3. Explain the indirect but ethical approach to convey negative news.
 4. Describe strategies for sending negative messages.
 5. Identify when to convey negative organizational news.
 6. Explain how to respond to negative information in a social media environment.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the application of the three-step writing process to negative messages. Next, we explain how to convey negative news, whether they are response to requests, goodwill, or negative messages with the indirect but ethical approach. This can be achieved by using the proper tone and approach can help create an effective message that the audience will accept and understand. Then we describe the strategy for negative messages and identify when to convey negative organizational news. Finally, we learn how to respond to negative information in a social media environment.

2. Using the Three-Step Writing Process for Negative Messages

Communicating negative messages is not always easy and careful planning is necessary to avoid alienating your audience. Using the proper tone and approach can help create an effective message that the audience will accept and understand.

There are five main goals when delivering negative messages:

- Convey the bad news
- Gain acceptance
- Maintain goodwill
- Uphold the organization's good image
- Reduce the need for future liaison on the matter

We apply the **THREE – STEP WRITING PROCESS** to produce effective negative messages.

2.1 Step 1: Planning Negative Messages

Nobody welcomes negative messages; therefore, careful planning is needed to minimize the damage to business relationships and to encourage the acceptance of your message.

Plan with the following guidelines to encourage acceptance of the negative messages:

2.1.1 Clear purpose with audience's need in mind

With a clear purpose and your audience's needs in mind, identify, and gather the information your audience will need to understand and accept your message.

2.1.2 The selection of the right medium and channel is critical

This is a critical stage and should not be overlooked. For instance, it would be inappropriate for managers to use email or other digital media to convey negative messages to employees. Bad news for employees should be delivered in person whenever possible. This is to show respect for the employees and to give them an opportunity to ask question.

2.1.3 The organization of the negative messages

Careful planning from the choice of using the right word to the content and the organizational flow of the entire negative message can help audience accept the negative messages. One of the most critical planning decisions is choosing whether to use the direct or indirect approach in conveying negative messages.

A direct approach opens with the bad news with reasons to justify for the situation or decision. Next, it offers any additional information that may help the audience's understanding and acceptance, and finally ends with a positive statement aimed at maintaining a good relationship with the audience. Whereas the indirect approach opens with a buffer then builds up the reasons behind the bad news before presenting the bad news itself. (See Figure 10.1)

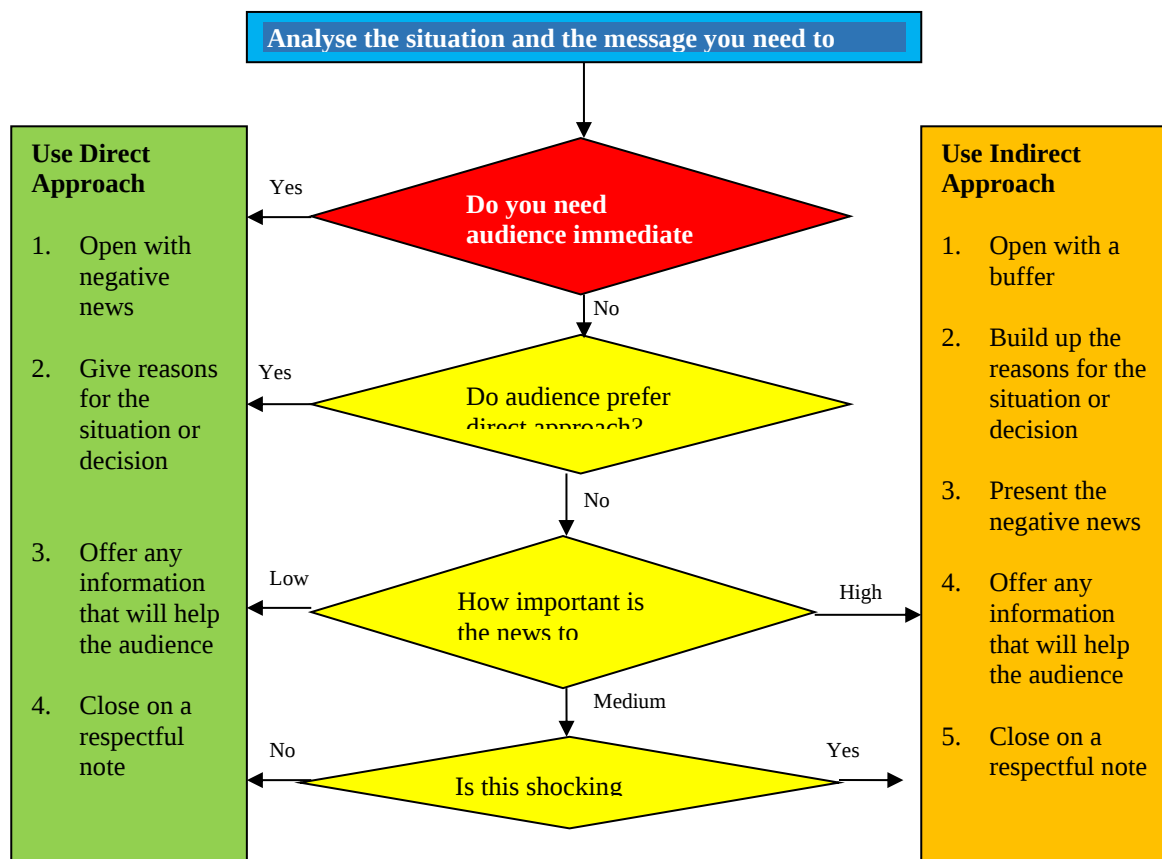


Figure 10.1 – Choosing the Direct or Indirect Approach

2.2 Step 2: Writing Negative Messages

It is highly important to observe the Communication Etiquette when delivering negative messages. Writing clear and sensitive messages, you can take some of the sting out of bad news and help your audience accept the decision and move on.

When writing negative messages, do make special care and efforts to:

- Avoid your audience from doubting your authority or ability.
- Establish your credibility and lay out your qualifications, expertise, and experiences.
- Protect audience pride, use language that conveys respect and avoids accusing tone.
- Ease audience's disappointment use positive words and avoid negative and counter-productive words. (See Table 10.1)

Table 10.1 – Choosing Positive Words	
Examples of Negative Phrasings	Positive Alternatives
Your request doesn't make any sense.	Please clarify your request.
The damage won't be fixed in a week.	The item will be repaired next week.
I was shocked to learn that you're unhappy.	Thank you for sharing your concerns.
The statement is wrong.	Please verify the statement and provide a correct copy.

2.3 Step 3: Completing Negative Messages

To produce clean, professional documents; continue to pay careful attention to all details in every revision of the content until the entire message is clear, coherent, and concise.

Once the final proofreading is completed, be sure to deliver negative messages without delay.

Any withholding or delaying of the bad news can be considered unethical and, in some cases, it can be illegal.

3. Using Direct Approach for Negative Messages

Direct approach makes a shorter message and allows audience to reach the main idea in less time. It opens with the bad news with reasons to justify for the situation or decision, offers additional information that may help the audience's understanding and acceptance, and always ends with a positive statement aimed to maintain a good relationship. At times, subject to the situation, may offer alternatives or a plan of action to fix the situation under discussion.

3.1 Opening with a Clear Statement of the Bad News

When using direct approach to convey negative message:

- Open with a clear statement by sharing the information at the introductory paragraph.
- Or can prevent being overly blunt by first using positive statement to establish common ground with the reader, then transition into the news.
- Maintain a professional and calm tone that focusses on the news and not on individual.

3.2 Providing Reasons and Additional Information

Follow the guidelines to work the level of information or reasons to apply in different situations:

- To rebuild relationships, use a straightforward, sincere apology.
- To preserve a longstanding relationship, a detailed explanation would be necessary.
- To address a mistake or accident, express sympathy promptly, and offer help.
- To be safe on legal perspective, seek the advice of your company's lawyer before elaborating especially when there are some situations in which explaining negative news is neither appropriate nor helpful, such as when the reasons are confidential, excessively complicated, or irrelevant to the audience.

3.3 Closing with a Respectful Note

After delivering the negative news, follow these helpful guidelines to end the message tactfully:

- Respects of the impact of the negative news is likely to have on the audience.
- Close on a positive note aimed at maintaining a good relationship.
- Consider offering your readers an alternative solution if you can.
- Describe the actions being taken to avoid similar mistakes in the future.

4 Using Indirect Approach for Negative Messages

Indirect approach is a good example of audience-oriented communication crafted with attention to both ethics and etiquette. It is used to ease the blow and help audience of the news. It is not used to delay or cover up bad news, limit responsibility, or being disrespectful and unethical.

4.1 Opening with a Buffer

Start with a buffer that is closely related to the point of the message. (See Table 10.2)

A good buffer:

- Establish common ground with your audience
- Express your appreciation for being considered
- Assure the audience of your attention to the request
- Indicate your understanding of the audience's needs
- Introduce the general subject matter
- Is relevant and sincere

Table 10.2 – Types of Buffers

Buffer Types	Strategy	Example
Agreement	Find a point on which you and the reader share similar views.	We both know how hard it is to make a profit in this industry.
Appreciation	Express sincere thanks for receiving something.	Your cheque for \$200 arrived today. Thank you.
Cooperation	Convey your willingness to help in any way you realistically can.	Employee Services is here to assist all associates with their health insurance, retirement planning, and continuing education needs.
Fairness	Assure the reader that you've closely examined and carefully considered the problem or mention an appropriate action that has already been taken.	For the past week, we have had our bandwidth monitoring tools running around the clock to track your actual upload and download speeds.
Good news	Start with the part of your message that is favourable.	We have credited your account in the amount of \$20 to cover the cost of return shipping.
Praise	Find an attribute or an achievement to compliment.	The Shine Group clearly has an impressive record of accomplishment in helping clients resolve financial reporting problems.
Resale	Favourably discuss the product or company related to the subject of the letter.	With their heavy-duty, full-suspension hardware and fine veneers, the desks and file cabinets in our King Albert line have long been popular with value-conscious professionals.
Understanding	Demonstrate that you understand the reader's goals and needs.	So that you can easily find the printer with the features you need, we are enclosing a brochure that describe all the Epson printers currently available.

4.2 Providing Reasons and Additional Information

Build the reasoning in a way that signals the negative news ahead.

Well written reasons are:

- Detailed – provide enough detail for audience to understand your reasons.
- Tactful – convince the audience that the decision is justified, fair and logical.
- Personalized – avoid using ‘company policy’ as convenient excuse.
- Unapologetic – be a skilled and sympathetic communicator without feeling guilty or sorry if the writer is not at fault.
- Positive - Close on a positive note aimed at maintaining a good relationship.

4.3 Continuing with a Clear Statement of the Bad News

Table 10.3 provides examples of clear statement of bad news. To convey bad news carefully:

- Deemphasize the bad news visually and grammatically
- Use a conditional (if or when) statement to imply that audience might someday receive a favourable answer. For example, “When you have more management experience, you are welcome to re-apply.”
- State what you did, can, or will do (not what you didn’t, can’t, or won’t do).
- Avoid overly blunt statements and focus on positive language.

Table 10.3 – Examples of Clear Statements of Bad News	
Instead of	Write this
We must deny your position.	The position has been filled.
I am unable to grant your request.	Contact us again when you have established.
We cannot afford to continue the program.	The program will conclude on Dec 31.
We must turn down your extension request.	Please send in your payment by June 14.

4.4 Closing with a Respectful Note

Close with a positive, forward-looking statement that is sincere and limits the need for future correspondence. The four principles to take note when writing the conclusion are:

1. **Avoid an uncertain conclusion.** For example, when decision is final; avoid stating “I trust our decision is satisfactory.” This would imply that the matter is still open for negotiation.
2. **Limit future correspondence.** For example, if you are unwilling to discuss your decision further; avoid stating “If you need further clarifications, please contact me.”
3. **Express optimism.** If you expect the situation to improve in the future, then share that with the audience if it is relevant.
4. **Be sincere.** Avoid cliché that are insincere and if you can’t help; do not state “If we can be of any help, please contact us.”

5 Sending Negative Messages on Routine Business Matters

Responding to routine negative responses and messages promptly and effectively yet graciously is an important and essential skill for every business professional.

When refusing requests for information, you may use either the direct or the indirect approach, depending on your audience.

- The direct approach will work best for most routine negative messages.
- The indirect approach works better when the risks are high for you or the audience, when there is an established valuable client relationship, or when you’ve to decline a request that you might have said yes to in the past.

5.1 Making Negative Announcement on Routine Business Matter

For unexpected negative announcement of a negative nature, such as company downsizing, the indirect approach is more appropriate.

Follow the steps outlined for indirect messages:

- Open with a buffer that establishes some mutual ground with the audience,
- Advance your reasoning,
- Announce the change, and
- Close with positive information and sentiment as appropriate under the circumstances.

5.2 Rejecting Suggestions and Proposals

Managers regularly receive many solicited and unsolicited suggestions and proposals from both internal and external sources.

Use the general guidelines when rejecting the suggestions and proposals:

- For an unsolicited proposal from an external source
 - No need to respond if there is no working relationship with the sender.
- For solicited proposal from either internal or external source
 - There is a need to respond as you do owe the sender an explanation.
 - Use an indirect approach since the respond would be an unexpected message.
 - Special care is needed to craft a tactful response to maintain a positive working relationship.

5.3 Refusing Routine Requests

When refusing routine requests, in general:

- Use the direct approach for negative responses because it is simpler and more efficient.
- Use the indirect approach when there is high risk in damaging the established working relationship between the company and the person making the request.

5.4 Handling Bad News about Transactions

An element of apology is appropriate when the company failed to deliver the established customer expectations. When handling bad news about transactions, you may aim to:

- Modify the customer's expectations regarding the transaction.
- Explain how you plan to resolve the situation.
- Repair whatever damage might have been done to the business relationship.
- Offer discounts, vouchers, free merchandise to encourage repeat business.
- Rebuild customer's confidence in the company with every modest effort.

5.5 Refusing Claims and Requests for Adjustment

Use indirect approach when refusing claims and requests for adjustment and follow these guidelines when writing refusal on claims and adjustments:

- Avoid abusive language – Pay special attention to the tone of your letter, do not let anger or malice control your messages, avoid abusive language.
- Provide accurate information and stick to the facts - Avoid accepting responsibility for the situation but do not blame the customer.
- Demonstrate that you understand and have considered the complaint - Rationally explain why you're refusing the request.
- Emphasize a desire for a good relationship in the future - End the letter on a respectful and action-oriented note.

6 Sending Negative Organizational News

Negative organizational announcements such as losing a major contract, a project or product cancelations, news of workforce reductions and crisis communication regarding environment incidents, workplace accidents or other traumatic situations often require extensive planning as they have the potential to negatively affect many audiences.

When marking negative announcements, follow the guidelines:

- **Match your approach to the situation.** E.g., In an emergency of product failure, use direct approach to get to the point immediately to all affected parties.
- **Consider the unique needs of each group.** E.g., In a company closure, staffs need time to find new jobs, customers may need to find new suppliers, and community leaders may need to be prepared to help people who have lost their jobs.
- **Minimize the element of surprise.** Give audience ample time prepare and respond.
- **Be prepared to plan and manage a response.** Have answers for anticipate questions.
- **Look for positive angles but don't exude false optimism.** E.g., News of workforce reduction, the best is to thank staff for their past support and wish them well in the future.
- **Seek expert advice.** Ask for help, especially on important technical, financial, or legal elements that require the expertise of lawyers, accountants, or other specialists.
- **Use multiple channels to reach out to affected audiences.** Use of company website, Face-book page, and Twitter account, or another social media landscape.
- **Be open and be transparent.** Communicate honestly and be sincere.

Negative situation provides you with the opportunity to excel as an effective business communicator. Many senior executives in corporate management would size such situations as opportunities to reshape the organization, and they offer encouragement and outlook to employees, suppliers, business partners and stakeholders.

7 **Responding to Negative Information in a Social Media Environment**

The social media and other communication technologies offers customers and competitors to use the public exposure as leverage. This in turn created a major new challenge: responding to online rumours, false information, complaints, and attacks on a company's reputation.

Responding effectively to rumours and negative information in social media requires continual engagement with stakeholders and careful decision making about which messages should get a response. Positive reputation is an important company asset and need to be diligently guarded and defended. Follow these guidelines to achieve an effective respond:

1. **Engage early, engage often.** Engage with stakeholders as long-term strategy. Companies that have active, mutually beneficial relationships with customers and stakeholders are unlikely to be attacked unfairly online and more likely to survive each attack if any. In fact, they have successfully established credibility and fostered long term relationships within their physical and online communities.
2. **Monitor the conversation.** Use automated reputation analysis and other technologies to listen to what people are blogging, tweeting, podcasting, posting videos, writing on Facebook walls, and otherwise sharing their opinions.
3. **Evaluate negative messages.** Some companies use complaints and feedback to evaluate, enhance and improve companies' product and service offerings. They would evaluate the source, the tone, and the content of the message to choose a response that fits the situation.
4. **Respond appropriately.** Based on the company's overall public relations plan. For example, taking legal action against critics, even if technically justified, can rally people to their defence and create a public relations nightmare. In some instances, the best response can simply be to contact a critic privately (through direct messaging on Twitter, for example) to attempt a resolution away from the public forum.

Sample Block Letter Format

Society of Real-Estate Appraisers
414 Somerset Drive
Singapore 8888
Tel: 65-8123-4567 Fax: 65-9123-4567

25 June 2012

Wendell J. Homes, Ph.D.
Oregon State University
College of Business
Albany, OR 97445

Dear Dr Homes,

Invitation to be our feature speaker

Your recent article, "Are Appraisers Taking Themselves Too Seriously?" which appeared in the July 2011 issue of *Appraisal Monthly* rang a familiar note with our group. We, at the Society of Real-Estate Appraisers, agree with the important messages of your article and heartily concur that "appraisers must closely monitor our colleagues and must protect against an attitude of righteous self-importance."

We have often felt the need for more information in self-monitoring, especially from the point of view of an expert such as yourself. Shortly after the first of the year, about 200 members will be attending our annual meeting, whose theme this year is "Self-Appraisal." We would be gratified if you could meet with us and make the keynote address. By accepting our invitation to be our featured speaker, you'll be able to assist the appraisal profession and make your message heard on a personal level.

The annual meeting will be held on January 18 and 19, 2013 in Singapore in Orchard Hotel. We would love to have you and your wife as our guests for the entire weekend. We can promise warm weather and an attentive, receptive audience. We would appreciate hearing your acceptance by 6 July, so we can schedule your flights and accommodations as soon as possible. If you need further clarification, please contact me at 96789012.

We hope to hear from you soon. Thank you.

Sincerely,
James Long
President

Sample Email Format

To: Mrs Smith <SMITH@yahoo.com>

From: Ms Linda Poon <POO_nyp.edu.sg>

Cc:

Date: 12 Nov 2012 (date can be written as 12/11/2012)

Subject: Change in Timetable

Hi Mrs Smith,

There's been a change in the timetable for tutorial group BC.

Your tutorials for Principles of Management have been re-scheduled from Mon 2 -5pm to Tues 9-12pm. The new venue is at C310. The change will come into effect from 1 Dec 2015.

If you need any clarifications, please e-mail, or call me at 65501111.

Warm regards, (you can end the e-mail with "Cheers"; Best regards; Regards)

Linda Poon

Senior Program Executive

Ngee Yang Polytechnic

8 Tutorial Questions

Question 1

When sending routine replies, how should you handle slightly negative information?

- (a) Leave it out so that the letter contains only good news.
- (b) Embed it in a positive context.
- (c) State the negative directly, but only in the first paragraph.
- (d) State the negative directly, but only in the last paragraph.

Question 2

Which of the following is *not* a goal of negative messages?

- (a) To give the bad news.
- (b) To maintain the reader's goodwill.
- (c) To limit future correspondence on the matter.
- (d) To hold the bad news until the very end of the message.

Question 3

When refusing a claim, be sure to:

- (a) Demonstrate your understanding of the complaint
- (b) Explain your refusal
- (c) Suggest alternative action
- (d) Do all the above

Question 4

To write an effective buffer, make it _____.

- (a) lengthy to get your reader's attention.
- (b) misleading.
- (c) relevant.
- (d) controversial.

Question 5

Follow a buffer with reasons that are _____.

- (a) detailed.
- (b) unapologetic
- (c) positive
- (d) all the above.

Question 6

In which of the following messages should you use the direct approach?

- (a) An announcement telling employees there will be no annual bonus this year.
- (b) A message containing minor bad news that will cause little disappointment.
- (c) A negative performance review.
- (d) A message containing bad news that does not affect your company.

Question 7

Which of the following would be an effective buffer in a letter turning down a reader's request to use some of your company's copyright material?

- (a) I am sorry, but we cannot allow you to use the material you requested.
- (b) We appreciate your interest in our recent white paper on banking regulations.
- (c) I am writing to inform you that we received your request.
- (d) None of the above is effective buffers.

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
SESSION 11
DEVELOPING ORAL PRESENTATIONS

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of business presentations.
 2. Describe the steps to developing a presentation.
 3. Explain how to enhance your presentation with effective visuals.
 4. Identify special tasks in completing a presentation.
 5. Identify aspects of an effective presentation in a social media environment.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to highlight the importance of oral presentations in the executive business career path and analyse the purpose of the presentation as well as the profiling of the audience will be discussed.

Next, we guide students through the steps of organizing and composing effective presentations, including layout such elements as the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of using visual aids will also be discussed. Guidelines for designing visual aids to enhance any oral presentation will also be provided.

Then we identify the special tasks in completing a presentation and discuss the effective delivery techniques for oral presentations, including tips for getting ready to speak, overcoming anxiety, presenting visuals effectively, and handling audience questions.

Finally, we learn the various aspects of an effective presentation in a social media environment.

2. Planning a Presentation

Employers are constantly on the lookout for talented employees with great presentation skills that can demonstrate good communication skills, strong ability to think on the feet, grasp complex business issues, and handle challenging situations. Presentations, whether delivered in person or online, offer the platform to showcase such attributes towards a promising career path.

Developing presentations include research, planning, writing, visual design and interpersonal and nonverbal communication. First analyse the situation, gather information, and select the best media and channel, and organize the information. (See Table 11.1)

Step 1: Plan	Step 2: Write	Step 3: Complete
Analysis the Situation (set the purpose & develop a profile of your audience including emotional states & languages preference)	Adapt to Your Audience (with “You” attitude, politeness, positive emphasis, and bias-free language)	Revise the Message (Proofreading content)
Gather Information (determine & satisfy audience needs)		Master Your Delivery (Practise, practise, practise)
Choose Medium and Channel (Identify the best options for audience, message and situations including any other support materials)	Compose Your Presentation (Outlining an attention getting Introduction, body and close, prepare supporting visuals and speaking notes)	Prepare to Speak (Check facilities, equipment, online connections, and software setup)
Organize Information (Define main idea, limit your scope, and verify timing, select direct or indirect approach and outline content)		Overcome Anxiety (Take deep breath and feel confident)

Table 11.1: The Three Step Process to Developing Oral and Online Presentation

And finally, preparing a professional-quality business presentation can take a considerable amount of time. The general rule of thumb for one-hour presentation, allow 50 to 100 hours or a week or two, to research, conceive, create, and practice.

2.1 Analysing the Situation

Analysing the situation involves defining your purpose and developing an audience profile.

The purpose of most business presentations will be to inform or persuade. Minimise distractions by considering the settings of the environment and the circumstances of the presentation. Many variables such as seating arrangement, size of the audience, can in fact influence the style and the content of your presentation.

2.2 Selecting the Best Medium and Channels

Technology these days offers an array of presentation mode, ranging from live, in-person presentation to webcasts (online presentations that people either view live or download later from the web), screen casts (recording of activity on computer displays with audio voiceover) or webinars (the use of twitter as a back channel for real-time conversation during a web-based seminar).

2.3 Organizing a Presentation

2.3.1 Defining Main Idea

A successful presentation starts with a clear statement of the main idea to share with audience. Start by composing a one-sentence summary that lines the key concept of the subject matter and the purpose to the audience's interests. Here are some examples:

1. Convince management that reorganizing the technical support department will improve customer service and reduce employee turnover.
2. Convince the board of directors that we should build a new plant in Jurong Island to eliminate manufacturing bottlenecks and improve production quality.

3. Address employee concerns regarding a new health-care plan by showing how the plan will reduce costs and improve the quality of their health care.

2.3.2 Limiting the Scope

Limiting the scope ensures the presentation fits the allotted time and the most essential content meets audience needs and expectations.

2.3.3 Choosing the Approach

If your purpose is to analyse, persuade or collaborate, organize your material around conclusions and recommendations or around a logical argument. Use the direct approach if the audience is receptive and the indirect approach if you expect resistance.

1. Use **direct approach** when organizing short speeches on routine or good news; and when the purpose is to motivate or to inform along with a structure suggested by the subject in terms of comparison, importance, sequence, chronology, geography, or category.
2. Use **indirect approach** when trying to persuade or delivering bad news.
3. Use **storytelling model** as a great way to capture and hold the audience's attention.

2.3.4 Preparing the Outline

An outline helps organize the message and serves as the basis for delivering speech.

It is helpful to prepare the outline in several stages:

- State the purpose and main idea, use it to guide the presentation planning.
- Organize the major points and sub points in logical order.
- Express each major point in a single complete sentence.
- Identify major points in body and outline the introduction and close.
- Identify transitions between major points or sections.
- Write these transitions in full sentence form.
- Prepare your bibliography or source notes.
- Highlight those sources you want to identify by name during the presentation.

- Choose a brief, compelling and action-oriented title that focus on the audience's benefits.

3 **Developing a Presentation**

The audience, the venue (whether in person or online), the subject and purpose, and the time and budget available for preparation all influence the style and delivery of the presentation. The following tasks are recommended as a guide to help enhance the situation and personal style.

3.1 **Adapting to Audience**

- **When speaking to a small group**, especially to familiar faces, a causal style will encourage audience participation. A small conference room, with audience seated around a table, may be appropriate. Use simple visual and invite audience to interject comments. Deliver your remarks in a conversational tone, using notes to jog your memory if necessary.
- **When addressing a large audience or important event**, establish a formal atmosphere. During formal presentations, speakers are often on a stage or platform, standing behind a lectern and using a microphone so that their remarks can be heard throughout the room or captured for broadcasting and webcasting.

3.2 **Crafting Oral Presentation**

Like written documents, oral presentation is composed of distinctive elements: the introduction, the body, and the close.

3.2.1 **Presenting the Introduction**

A good, strong, and effective introduction not only fires up audiences' interest but establishes credibility and prepares the audience for the actual content of the presentation.

A. Six Techniques to Getting the Audience's Attention

- Unit the audience around a common goal
- Tell a compelling story that illustrates an important and relevant point
- Pass around a sample that appeal to audiences' senses

- Ask a question that get audience to think about the key message
- Share an intriguing, unexpected, shocking detail
- Relate humorous yet relevant remarks on yourself and will offend audience

B. Building Credibility

It is important to establish the speaker's credibility as quickly at the introduction.

This is essential to earn audiences' trust in deciding the speaker is worth listening to.

- If introducing someone else – he or she can present the speaker's credentials.
- If speaker is making a self-introduction, be brief and bold to mention accomplishment.

Here's an example of speaker establishing credibility at introduction:

Good morning, ladies, and gentlemen,

I'm Jolene May, a research analyst with Bloomberg Intelligence. For the past five years, I've specialized in studying nanotechnology market. It is my pleasure that your R&D director, Mr. Elton Smith, invited me to share with you about the future trend in nanotechnology so that you'll have an insight on how to direct your R&D efforts.

Take notice that Ms Jolene establishes credibility by tying her credentials to the purpose of her presentation. By mentioning her company's name, her specialization and position, and the name of the audience's boss, she lets her audiences know instantly that she is qualified to tell them something they need to know.

C. Previewing the Message

Offer a preview to help your audience understand the importance, the structure, and the content of your message. Give audience the framework of the message will also help them process the information to be shared over the entire period of presentation.

The preview should:

- Summarize the main idea of your presentation
- Identify major supporting points and
- Indicate the order in which you will develop those points.

3.2.2 Presenting the Body

The bulk of the presentation is dedicated to the body which is the main point of your outline. It is vital to ensure that the organization is clear to successfully hold the audience's attention.

A. Connecting Ideas

For oral presentation, spoken words are used to link various parts and ideas.

- To link sentences and paragraphs, use one or two transitional words: *therefore, in addition, in contrast, moreover, consequently, nevertheless, or finally.*
- To link major sections of a presentation, use complete sentences or paragraph, such as *"Now that we've reviewed the problem, let's take a look at some solutions."*
- Whenever there is a topic shift, be sure to stress the connection between ideas by summarising what's been said and previewing what's to come.
- Transitions are especially important to the longer presentation. Audience need clear transitions to guide them to the most important point; and they will appreciate the interim summaries to pick up any ideas they may have missed.

B. Holding Audience's Attention

The most important way to hold an audience's attention is to show how your message relates to their individual needs and concerns. Here are some helpful tips:

- Keep relating the subject matter to your audience needs.
- Anticipate and answer likely questions as you move along.
- Use clear, vivid language and throw in some variety.
- Encourage participant by asking for comments or questions.
- Use visual illustrations to enliven the message.

3.2.3 Presenting the Close

A brilliant and successful close will leave your audience with a clear summary the main idea.

A. Reinstating the Main Points

Emphasise on what audience to do or think by repeating the main idea in the close.

For example, to close a presentation on your company's executive compensation program, you could repeat your specific recommendations and then conclude with a memorable statement to motivate your audience to act:

We can all be proud of the way our company has grown. However, if we want to continue that growth, we need to take four steps to ensure that our best people don't start looking for opportunities elsewhere:

- *First, increase the overall level of compensation*
- *Second, establish a cash bonus program*
- *Third, offer a variety of stock-based incentives*
- *Fourth, improve our health insurance and pension benefits*
- *By taking these steps, we can ensure that our company retains the management talent it needs to face our industry largest competitors.*

B. Ending with Clarity and Confidence

Plan the final statement to end with a strong and positive ground that confirms expectations about any actions and decisions that will follow presentation. Ensure the final remarks are memorable and have the right emotional tone. For example, if the presentation is a persuasive request for project funding, you might emphasize the importance of this project and your team's ability to complete it on schedule and within budget. Expressing confident optimism will send the message that you believe in the ability to perform.

4 Enhancing Presentation with Effective Visuals

Presentation slides are practically universal in business today. Thoughtfully designed visuals create interest, illustrate complex points in the message, add variety, and help the audience absorb and remember information. The key is to keep the presentation simple and authentic.

Most business presentation visuals are created using Microsoft PowerPoint, Apple Keynote, or Google Documents for linear presentation and Prezi for non-linear presentation. These slides are easy to edit and update with options to add sound, photos, video, and animation. They can also be incorporated into online meetings, webcasts, and webinars, and be used as recorded self-running presentation at trade shows and websites.

4.1 Structured versus Free Form Slides

A. Structured Slides are usually:

- The best choice for project updates and routine information presentation.
- Based on templates that give all the slides the same look and involves lots of bullet points.

B. Free form slides are typically:

- Much less rigid and emphasize visual appeal.
- Often have less content per slide than structured designed.
- Require more skills and time to create.
- Well designed to help viewers understand, process, and remember the speaker's message.
- Put more demands on the speaker during the presentation.

4.2 Five Major Design and Writing Tasks for Effective Slides

Rather than packing the slides with sufficient information to make them readable as standalone documents, compliment well-designed slides with printed handouts. Therefore, the ideal solution is to create an effective slide set and a separate handout that provides additional detail and supporting information. Here are the five design and writing tasks for effective slides.

A. Designing Slides around a Key Visual

- Organizing the slides around a key visual help the audience grasp how ideas are related.

B. Writing Readable Content

- Effective text slides supplement the words and help the audience follow the flow of ideas.
- Use text to highlight key points, summarize and preview your message, signal major shifts in thoughts, illustrate concepts, or help create interest in the spoken message.

C. Creating Charts and Table for Slides

- Charts and tables for presentations need to be simpler than visuals for printed documents.
- Keep the level of detail to a minimum, eliminating anything that is not essential.
- If necessary, break information into more than one chart or table.
- It may be useful to provide the detailed versions of the charts and tables in a handout.

D. Adding Animation and Multimedia

- Sound, animation, video clips, transition effects and hyperlinks help liven slides.
- **Functional animation** is a great way to demonstrate sequences and procedures. It involves motion that is directly related to the message, such as a highlight arrow that moves around the screen to emphasize specific points in a technical diagram.
- **Decorative animation**, such as the zooming and panning capabilities in Prezi in ways that don't enhance audience understanding needs to be incorporated with care. These effects don't add any functional value, and they easily distract audiences.

E. Selecting Design Element

- Colour increases audiences' willingness to read. It is powerful and may have different meaning for different cultural. Colour is a critical design element that can grab attention, emphasize important ideas, create contrast, influence acceptance for ideas, improve retention, and stimulate a variety of emotion (see Table 3.2.)

Colour	Emotional Associates	Best Uses
White	Neutral, innocent, pure, wise	Font colour for dark background
Blue	Peaceful, soothing, tranquil, trusting	Use as Background, safe & conservative
Yellow	Warm, bright, cheerful, enthusiastic	Text and subheadings with dark background
Red	Passionate, dangerous, active, painful	For promoting action or stimulating audience
Green	Assertive, prosperous, envious, relaxed	For highlighting and emphasizing

Table 3.2: Colour and Emotion

5. Completing a Presentation

Complete the production efforts by finalizing the slides, creating handouts, choosing presentation method, and practising the presentation delivery.

5.1 Finalising Your Slides

At this final editing and revision process, the goal is to help audience follow the flow of the presentation by creating slides for the title, agenda and program details, and navigation:

- **Title slide(s)** – this is the equivalent of the document report's cover and title page.
- **Agenda or program details**– communicate the agenda and any additional information.
- **Navigation slides** – help audience to keep track of what the presenter already covered and what is next to come. A simple way is to repeat the agenda slide at the start of each major section in the presentation, with the upcoming section highlighted in some way.

5.2 Creating Effective Handout

An integral part of presentation strategy is the use of handout materials to support the points made in the presentation and to offer the audiences additional information on the topic.

Handouts can include detailed charts and tables, case studies, research results, magazine articles, and anything else that supports the main idea of the presentation.

- **Presentation slides** should paint the big picture, convey, and connect major ideas, set the emotional tone, and rouse the audience to action.
- **Handouts** carry the information load, providing the supporting details audience can consume at their own speed and time.

5.3 Choosing Your Presentation Method

- **Speaking from notes** - in most cases, it is the most effective delivery mode. It gives the presenter something to refer while still allowing plenty of eye contact, a natural speaking flow, interaction with the audience, and improvisation in response to audience feedback.
- **Reading a speech** – is use only in rare cases such as delivering legal or policy statements. However, for all other business presentations, reading is a poor choice because it limits your interaction with the audience and lacks the fresh, dynamics feel of natural speaking.
- **Memorising a quotation** – in an opening statement or concluding remarks can bolster the speaker's confident and strengthen the delivery.
- **Reciting the speech from memory** – is nearly always a bad idea. Even if the presenter can memorize the entire presentation, the presenter will sound stiff and overly formal because the presenter will be “delivering lines”, rather than talking to the audience.
- **Preparing the venue is important** - carefully consider the seating for the audience, the speaker's position in the room and the lighting. For instance, dimming the lights is common practice for many presenters, but dimming them too far can hamper the nonverbal communication between speaker and audience and therefore limit opportunities for interaction.

5.4 Practising Delivery

Practising the presentation is essential. Practise boost the speaker's confident and give a more professional demeanour, and let the speaker verify the operation of the visuals and equipment. A test audience can tell if the slides are understandable and whether the delivery is effective. If the audience doesn't speak your language, consider using an interpreter. Send the interpreter a copy of the speech and visuals way in advance. If the audience include persons with hearing impairments, team up with a sign-language interpreter as well. When delivering a presentation to people from other cultures, it is important to consider of any cultural differences in appearance, mannerisms, and other customs.

6 Delivering a Presentation

This section offers practical advice on four important aspects of delivering a presentation.

6.1 Overcoming Anxiety

Preparation with these techniques can help convert anxiety into positive energy:

- **Stop worrying about being prefect** – focus on making an authentic connection with audience, never try to deliver a note-perfect presentation.
- **Know your subject** – a speaker who is familiar with the material will not panic.
- **Practice, Practice, practice** – rehearse bring forth confidence.
- **Visual success** – visualise standing in front of the audience, feeling confident, prepared, and able to successfully handle any situation that might arise.
- **Remember to breathe** – take slow and deep breath to maintain calm and confidence.
- **Be ready with your opening line** – good to have the first sentence memorized.
- **Be comfortable** – dress appropriately and comfortably.
- **Take a three-second break** – if your heart starts to race, pause, and arrange your notes or perform some other small tasks while taking several deep breaths. Then start again at normal pace.
- **Concentrate on message and audience** – focus on the audience help to forget all fear.

6.2 Handling Questions Responsively

Questions are often one the most important parts of a presentation. They give a chance to obtain important information, to emphasize the main idea and supporting points, and to build enthusiasm for the speaker's point of view. Be on guard for audience member who use questions to make impromptu speeches or take control of the presentation. Without offending anyone, find a way to stay in control. It is alright to admit that there are differing opinions and offer to get back to questioner after more research being done.

When speaking to high-ranking executives in the company, the question and answer (Q&A) period will often consume most of the time allotted for the presentation. So never leave the Q&A period to chance. Anticipate potential questions and think through the answers. If there is no available complex answer to an important question, offer to provide after the presentation. When faced with hostile questions, respond honestly and directly while keeping your cool.

6.3 Embracing the Backchannel

Twitter and other social media are changing business presentations by making it easy for all audience members to participate in the backchannel, which presents both risks and rewards for the presenters.

On the negative side, the backchannel gives contrary audience member more leverage, which can lead to presentations spinning out of control.

On the plus side, audience who are excited about your message can build support for it, expand on it, and spread it to a much larger audience in a very short time frame. The speaker can get very valuable feedback during and after presentations.

Presenter can follow these tips to embrace the powerful force to great advantages:

- **Integrate social media into the presentation process** - Create a website for the presentation so that audience can access relevant resources during or after the presentation, create a Twitter hashtag that everyone can use when sending tweets, or display the Twitter stream during Q&A so that everyone can see the questions and comments on the backchannel.
- **Monitor and ask for feedback** - Use TweetDeck, a free service, which organizes tweets by hashtag and other variables to monitor comments from people in the audience.
- **Review comments point by point to improve your presentation** – Speaker can review comments on audience members Twitter account and blogs to review effectiveness on the overall presentation as well as to gain an insight of area for improvement.
- **Automatically tweet key points from your presentation while you speak** – Add-ons for presentation software can send out pre-written tweets as you show specific slides during a presentation. By making the key points readily available, it is easier for audience to retweet and comment on the presentation spontaneously.
- **Establish expectations with the audience** – to ensure a positive experience for everyone, comments should be civil, relevant, and productive.

6.4 Giving Presentations Online

Online presentations offer an excellent opportunity to reach across geographically dispersed audience at a fraction of the travel cost, and the ability for a regional project team or the global firm to meet at a short notice.

However, they require special presentations and skills. And it's often difficult to tell whether audience members are bored or confused, because your view of them is usually confirmed to small video images.

The following are some tips to ensure successful online presentations:

- **Send preview materials ahead of time** – to allow audience to be familiarize themselves with important background information. Some presenters do not agree as giving away the entire message will leave no incentive for audience to show up for online presentation.
- **Keep presentation simple** – break complicated slides into multiple slides if necessary and keep the direction of the discussion clear so that no one gets lost.
- **Ask for feedback frequently** – Many online audiences are non-attention seeking and reluctant to interrupt presenter for clarification. Setting up a backchannel via Twitter as part of online meet system will help in this regard.
- **Consider audience's online viewing experience** – webcast video is typically displayed in a small window on-screen, so audience may miss some important information.
- **Build in extra set up time** – to allow audience to connected and ready to start.

7 Tutorial Questions

True-False

1. The tasks in planning oral presentation are vastly different than other business messages.
2. Limiting the scope is especially important when it comes to making presentation in business.
3. A good closing arouses audience interest and establishes your credibility.
4. To effectively gain the attention of audience members, you can tell a story that illustrates an important point.
5. Visual aids are distracting to an audience and should only be used when you need to fill time in your oral presentation.
6. If you wish to excite your audience, add tones of blue to your slides.
7. When designing slides, you should key slide next in all capitals, to make the materials easier for the audience to read.
8. Memorizing your speech is the safest delivery method.

Question 9

When organizing your presentation, which of the following should you do?

- (a) Define the main idea
- (b) Limit the scope
- (c) Choose your approach
- (d) All the above

Question 10

Which of the following is important in a good introduction?

- (a) Preview your presentation
- (b) Connect your ideas
- (c) Leave a strong and lasting impression
- (d) None of the above is important in a good introduction.

Question 11

Which visual would be the best choice for recording points made during small group brainstorming session?

- (a) Overhead transparencies
- (b) Electronic presentation
- (c) Flipchart or whiteboard
- (d) None of the above

Question 12

Which of the following best describe the advantages of using electronic slides in a presentation?

- (a) They are simple to use, requiring no extra equipment to show.
- (b) They can be altered during the presentation.
- (c) The speaker can add animation, sound, hyperlink, and other multimedia effects.
- (d) They are fragile and bulky to transport.

Question 13

To become a more confident speaker

- (a) Prepare more material than necessary.
- (b) Rehearse
- (c) Visualise your success
- (d) Do all the above

BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

SESSION 12

MEETING & MINUTES

At the end of the session, students should be able to:

1. Define 'meeting'.
 2. Discuss the purpose of meetings.
 3. Describe the preparations for a meeting.
 4. Discuss the roles and responsibilities of a chairperson and participants.
 5. Delineate steps to make meetings more effective.
 6. Write an effective agenda and minutes of meeting using appropriate vocabulary, language, and convention.
-

1. Introduction

In this session, we begin with an introduction to the definition of the business meeting and understand the purpose of meetings. Next, we discuss the preparations of a meeting and the delineate steps to make meetings more effective. Then we discuss the roles and responsibilities of chairperson and participants. Finally, we learn to write an effective agenda and minutes of meeting using appropriate vocabulary, language, and convention.

2. **Definition of Meeting**

A meeting is the gathering of two or more people for any kind of purposeful coming together to carry out formal discussion of the business of an organization.

3. **Purpose of Meeting**

The unique values of meeting are:

- It allows intercommunication between all present in the form of two-way communication and face to face communication.
- It allows communication between large numbers at the same time, it can be highly efficient in time and effort if properly conducted.

3.1 **Reasons to Call for Meeting.**

1. **Decision-making** - Provides participants with an opportunity to express opinions which temper the final decision. It is important for such a meeting to arrive at a consensus.
2. **Communication** - Information that might be open to broad interpretation or misinterpretation should always be presented in a meeting so that clarification can be made.
3. **Creativity** – Brainstorming meeting is called when new ideas or concepts are needed. The participants are asked to address a problem and let their ideas run free - contributing whatever comes into their minds.
4. **Negotiation** – When two or more parties seek to arrive at a mutually acceptable conclusion.
5. **Team building** - Relationships are formed and nourished, individuals' strong points are used, weaknesses are eliminated, and loyalties are formed.

4. Preparation for Meeting

4.1 Identify your purpose

Having too many goals can easily cause a meeting to go off track. Each meeting should preferably have only one purpose. If you have several decisions to be made or steps to complete, break your meeting down into phases or components and have a few short well-focused meetings rather than one long confused marathon session. The purpose of the meeting must be clear and clearly communicated to all participants.

The purpose/s of the meeting could be one or more of the followings:

- dissemination of information
- coordination of action
- persuasion
- analysis
- problem solving

4.2 Select Participants for Meeting

Depending on the purpose of the meeting, identify the right participants for the meeting.

For example, not every employee in the organization would be involved in a decision-making meeting, therefore only those who are able to help the meeting reach its objective would be selected. In addition, participants need to know why they will be at the meeting. If a participant has a reason for attending and that reason is beneficial, they will be an active responsive participant rather than a resentful one.

4.3 Choose the Time and Facility

The meeting logistics is another important factor in the preparation. This includes the physical arrangements such as the venue or location, venue size or space, proper ventilation, facilities, proper amenities and equipment, and the use of visual aids.

The meeting room must have enough chairs and tables to accommodate the members. Make sure that the lighting is adequate for reading. Include the dimmer switches as well for audiovisual presentations. If certain technical or audiovisual equipment is needed, make sure these are checked and tested prior to the meeting proper to avoid technical difficulties that may affect the course of your meeting.

4.4 Set the Agenda

The agenda is a very important tool that contains the structural framework of the entire meeting process. It answers three key questions:

- What do we need to do in this meeting to accomplish our goals?
- What issues will be of greatest importance to all participants?
- What information must be available to discuss these issues?

Besides improving productivity, this level of agenda detail shows respect for participants and the other demands on their time.

5. Roles of Chairperson in Business Meetings

5.1 Responsibility of the Chairperson

- To ensure the purpose meeting is discussed and reason for the meeting is known.
- To be familiar with and enforce the rules of procedure appropriate to the meeting.
- To rule on disputed matters concerning procedure which arise during the meeting.
- To maintain the policy of the organization.
- To prevent irrelevant discussion and keep the meeting to the agenda.
- To preserve order in the meeting.
- To create an atmosphere that everyone can make contribution to the discussion.
- To help the group reach a decision.

5.2 Common Styles of Chairmanship

a) Referee

- To keep order.
- To ensure that the rules governing the meeting are complied with.
- To ensure that everyone in the meeting is treated fairly.

b) Leader

- To think through a problem by himself/herself and deciding on a solution.
- To get the meeting to adopt his/her solution or modification of it.

c) Helper

- To draw out ideas and views from the meeting.
- To help the meeting to come to a decision by reaching common point of view.

5.3 When to Meet

When deciding when to hold a meeting, the readiness of the participants is often an important consideration. Remember to:

- Meet when the participants are at their best.
- Avoid surprise meetings.

5.4 Opening a Meeting

The good meeting leader opens with a brief statement of the purpose of the meeting.

5.5 General Techniques for Leading a Meeting

They are:

- Ask open – ended questions that can't be answered with a 'yes' and 'no'
- Reinforce on-target
- Use relevant examples
- Ignore off-target remarks
- Restate relevant points
- Firmly put down dominating participants
- When an off-the-track-subject enters the discussion, ask the meeting whether to add it to the agenda
- Offer quick summaries

5.6 Techniques for Handling Difficult Participants

- **The non-participating member**
 - Ask this person a question he/she can answer by a simple “yes” or “no”.
- **The “Know-It –All” member**
 - Ask him/her to justify every statement he/she makes.
- **The long-winded member**
 - Thank this member when he/she is at the end of a sentence, and then recognize someone else.
- **The erroneous member**
 - Be tactful and remember ‘When praising people, single them out; when criticizing them, put them in a group.’
- **The member who shows personal animosity**
 - Show an attitude of calm understanding.

5.7 How to Close Meeting

The leader must recognize the right time to bring a meeting to a close.

For example, the meeting could close when all items on an agenda have been covered.

6. Role of Participants in Business Meetings

6.1 Basic Responsibilities

- **Organize your contributions.** Think before you speak. In an active discussion, one needs to be mentally alert to keep up and add insightful contributions. Organize your thoughts by jotting notes or mentally structuring a contribution.
- **Make one point at a time.** Present one coherent thought at a time.
- **Speak clearly and firmly.** Speak directly to the point.
- **Support your ideas with valid evidence.** Make assertions with specific facts or research data.
- **Listen actively to all aspect of the discussion.** Good participants should keep alert to the entire discussion.
- **Monitor your own nonverbal signals.** Attempt to project a generally positive facial response and appropriate body posture.

6.2 Roles Participants Can Play

- **Clarifier.** As a clarifier, points out misunderstandings and clarify complex or foggy ideas.
- **Energizer.** As an energizer, keeps the discussion moving, stimulates the members to reach their goals when gloom, or frustration has set in.
- **Mediator.** As a mediator seek to find a middle ground, seek to restructure positions that are acceptable to the opposing parties.
- **Helper of others.** As a helper, seeks to help those who feel inadequate or frustrated, giving them the feeling of being accepted.

7. Write Effective Agenda and Minute of Meeting

Every meeting has goals and the common objective of all the participants, whether as chairperson or member, is to achieve these objectives successfully at the end of the meeting.

A key to conducting a successful meeting is to plan it thoroughly.

7.1 Definition of Agenda

An agenda is a plan for the flow of business or discussion. The purpose of the agenda is to guide the chairperson through the meeting and to give prior indications of what is to be discussed at the meeting to those attending. The agenda should be distributed at least a week before the meeting.

7.2 Contents of an Agenda

- (a) Objectives of meeting
- (b) Discussion issues
- (c) Who is involved?
- (d) Date, time, venue
- (e) Confirmation of minutes
- (f) AOB

Example of a Memo with an Agenda

MEMORANDUM

To: Eileen Lam (EL) Business Development Manager

Badariah Ghaffar (BG) Reservations Manager

Song Lee Ling (SLL) IT Manager

Santokh Singh (SS) Publicity Manager

Suleen Tan (ST) Tour Consultant

From: James D Silva (JDS) Managing Director

Date: 31 March 2009

Subject: Notice of Work-in-Progress Meeting

Notice of Meeting

Date: Monday, 7 April 2009

Time: 2 pm

Venue: Conference Room, Tour & Travel Centre

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Confirmation of Minutes of the Last Meeting
3. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting
4. Update on Details of New Tour Products
5. Discussion on Publicity ideas for the Launch
6. Status Report on Reservations Team (Manpower Situation)
7. Status Report on IT System Capabilities
8. Any Other Business

8. Definition of Minutes

Minutes reflect and record the outcome of a meeting and decisions reached.

8.1 Function of Minutes

- a) Minutes serve as a written record of what took place at a meeting.
- b) Minutes are a blueprint for action.

8.2 Format of Minutes

- a) Date, venue and type of meeting.
- b) The attendees and absentees at the top.
- c) Apologies and Confirmation of last minutes & matters arising (if any) as first items.
- d) Record of discussion issues.
- e) Names of those committed to action.
- f) All discussions should be subtitled.
- g) Names of those committed to action.
- h) AOB (if any) should be left as the last item.
- i) The date, time and venue of next meeting.
- j) Person who recorded and the person who vetted should be featured at signoff
- k) Distribution list.

8.3 Tone of Minutes

Discussion is summarized in the narrative form. The result is recorded, as also are the tasks and those to whom they are allotted. The tone used in minutes is impartial and authoritative.

8.4 Language of Minutes

- a) The language of minutes is usually formal, and the third person is used.
- b) The past tense is used to relate what was said or happened at the meeting.
- c) As minutes are a record of what had transpired at a meeting, the manner of speech should be in the indirect. Expressions of time and place must also be changed.

8.5 After the Meeting

- (a) The minutes are usually produced and vetted within 48 hours after the meeting. Copies should be distributed out to all participants.
- (b) In summary, minutes are:
 - a summarized record.
 - written in the third person.
 - Written in indirect speech of what was said and took place at a meeting.

Unit 12 Reference

- We've Got to Start Meeting Like This by Mosvick & Nelson
- How To Make Meetings Work by Peel
- The Business Communication Handbook by Dwyer
- Improving Business Communication Skills by Deborah Britt Roebuck

Sample Minutes of Meetings

Minutes of Work-In-Progress Meeting held on 7 April 2009, 2 pm at the Conference Room, Tour & Travel Centre

Present: James D Silva (JDS) Managing Director
 Eileen Lam (EL) Business Development Manager
 Badariah Ghaffar (BG) Reservations Manager
 Song Lee Ling (SLL) IT Manager
 Santokh Singh (SS) Publicity Manager

Absent: Suleen Tan (ST) Tour Consultant

The Chairperson (JDS) opened the meeting at 2.05 pm.

1	Apologies for Absence ST was on medical leave.	Action
2	Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting EL pointed out that item 4.1 that stated that the new tour products would be launched on April 25 at the SIA Travel Fair was recorded incorrectly. She clarified that the decision had been made to launch the products on May 2 at the NATAS Holiday Fair. JDS requested that SLL amended item 4.1 to read: "The new products would be launched on May 2 during the NATAS Holiday Fair." With the above amendments, the minutes were confirmed by SS and seconded by BG.	SLL
3	Matters Arising There were none.	

4	Update on Details of New Tour Products EL highlighted that the news products were jointly developed with Discovery Travel. The new tours would trail the itineraries of celebrity travelers such as Ian Wright. Each packaged tour would also be given a theme and a catchy name. The first two packages were "Explore Spain on your Stomach" and "See Mongolia on the back of a Camel." She explained that the two packages would be launched during the NATAS Holiday Fair to tap into the large public turnout expected. Discovery Travel would also provide support by setting up a booth. This would allow us to leverage off their popularity. EL reported that her team had produced three brochures for the new products. Each new package would have a newly designed brochure. There would also be a general brochure which was done with Discovery Travel. A total of 10000 pieces of each of the brochures had been printed. They would be distributed at the Fair and our outlets.	
5	Discussion of Publicity Ideas for Launch SS reported that he was working with Discovery Travel to bring Ian Wright for some promotional activities. It was suggested that some tele match-type of games be organized where the winners could get Discovery Travel premiums. Another suggestion was to hold a contest with Discovery Travel where the top prize would be a tour package for two either to Spain or Mongolia. As these were still under discussion, SS would provide more details later. He highlighted those advertisements would be placed in the Classified Travel section. In addition, banners would be hung outside our outlets. SS was also trying to get the new packages featured in the NATAS Holiday Fair Special featured by The Straits Times.	SS
6	Status Report on Reservations Team (Manpower Situation) BG reported that her team of 8 would be down by two in the beginning of May. This was because 1 staff member would be on maternity leave and the other would be taking time off for part-time diploma examinations.	

	She explained that although she could ask the rest to do more overtime, she would still need part-timers to handle the administrative aspect of the work. JDS instructed BG to work out the number of part-timers that she needed and how much it would cost. She was asked to prepare a requisition form for the part-timers and forward it to JDS by April 11. JDS would check the budget and revert with a firm answer by April 14. BG offered to prepare a tentative duty roster for the Fair so that JDS could justify the need for part-timers.	BG JDS BG
7	Status Report on IT System Capabilities SLL reported that she had configured the reservations system to accept and confirm bookings for the new tour packages during the NATAS Holiday Fair. A total of 8 computers would be set up at the Fair. She highlighted that the server would not be able to support bookings from the outlets during the 3-day Fair. This was not an issue as all the outlets would be closed and staff deployed at the Fair.	
8	Any Other Business There was no other business. The next meeting would be held on Monday, 21 April 2009, 2 pm, at the Conference Room. SLL was tasked to book the venue. There being no other matters, the meeting ended at 5.45 pm.	SLL

Confirmed by Mr. James D Silva
Managing Director)

Date

Recorded by: _____

Name: Song Lee Ling

Date: 9 April 2009

8 Tutorial Questions

True/False Questions

1. Before you call a meeting, you should determine the purpose of the meeting and plan to invite only those people whose presence is essential. (T / F)
2. Meeting agenda should be distributed prior to the meeting. (T / F)
3. The main role of the meeting chairperson is to let others speak without interference. (T / F)
4. When solving a problem or deciding, the more people in the group the better. (T / F)
5. Unproductive meetings are rare in today's business environment. (T / F)

Question 6

When conducting and attending meetings, the leader should do which of the following to help ensure a successful meeting?

- (a) Keep the meeting on track.
- (b) Follow the agenda closely.
- (c) Encourage participation.
- (d) All the above

Question 7

Meeting minutes should be generally include _____.

- (a) A list of those present for the meeting.
- (b) The times the meeting started and ended.
- (c) Descriptions of all major decisions reached at the meeting.
- (d) All the above

Question 8

The key to productive meetings is careful planning that addresses _____.

- (a) purpose
- (b) participants
- (c) location and agenda
- (d) all the above

Question 9

A meeting agenda _____.

- (a) is a formality that most groups skip these days?
- (b) Should be circulated before the meeting, giving participants with ample time to prepare.
- (c) Should be general rather than specific.
- (d) Is only a guideline, and deviations are common and expected.

END