

Problem Set #1

Clear, Concise Writing in E-Mail

The e-mails below are not written as clearly or concisely as they could be. In addition, they may have problems in organization, tone, or mechanical errors. Rewrite each so they are appropriate for the audience and their purpose. Correct mechanical errors. Finally, add a subject line to each.

Example #1

To: Employees of Widget International
From: CEO of Widget International
Subject:

Stop bringing bottled water to work. Its a huge environment problem and the company is ordering a lot of water filters. People don't realize how much wasted energy goes into shipping all that water around, and the cost of plastic bottles is immense, and the plastic never disintegrates, it just sits in landfills. Some water comes from other countries like Fiji and we are taking there water and they wont have enough. Fancy water is a ripoff. New water filters are coming into the company so the water from here will taste better anyway.

Example #2

To: MIT Alumnus
From: Current MIT Sloan MBA Student
Subject:

Wonderful meeting today, didn't you think? I really, really enjoyed learning about the data management business. After seven years, you seem to really know alot. I particularly enjoyed talking about the acquisition of a data management solution provider. The thing is I don't think that our interview was the best showcase of my problem solving skills and so I would really appreciate your comments about my responses as we went through the case. That being said, my experience in business attacking these kinds of problems, thinking about them, working the numbers, and solving them through the analytical rigor Sloan students are well known for has prepared me well to succeed in challenges I would face as a member of the data management industry.

So if you could send me your thoughts, comments, and suggestion for how I could do better in case base interviews in the future, I would really appreciate it. I have interviews set up throughout next week, and I know I could improve how my performance if I had your feedback. In fact, you could reach me at 617-555-1212 any time this afternoon or over the week-end. Thanks very much.

Example #3

To: Staff Working on the Diet Drink Account
From: Supervisor
Subject:

I spent all of last night reading through the report you have written regarding how our Diet Drink client can do a better job of publicizing their product. There was a fair amount of information in the report, but was all of it needed? But before I go into that, be sure you check your formatting because it lacks coherency especially in the way you formatted the tables, but not only that. You should also be on the lookout for inconsistencies in subheads, etc.

O.K. back to the organization of the report. Why go into all that detail about who the Diet Drink drinker is and why they drink the diet drinks they drink? And do we really need to know how cheap Diet Drinks competitors' pricing is? And I didn't follow how that profit potential analysis was performed.

What are our recommendations for Diet Drink? And what data backs up those recommendations? That's what I want to know.

Example #4

To: All Employees
From: Management
Subject:

Our Committee to Improve Inter-Office Communication has decided that there needs to be an update and revision of our policy on emailing messages to and from those who work with us as employees of this company. The following are the results of the committee's decisions, and constitute recommendations for the improvement of every aspect of email communication.

1. Too much wordiness means people have to read the same thing over and over repeatedly, time after time. Eliminating unnecessary words, emails can be made to be shorter and more to the point, making them concise and taking less time to read.
2. What can make things wordy is having a situation in which nouns are often substituted for verbs. Verbs are a good way of describing an action and don't need to be turned into a noun instead of just being themselves—verbs! Acting on this is regarded as an important activity to be undertaken by all of us as soon as possible.
3. Based on a standardized informational sample taken of randomly selected emails, we have found that using stacked nouns makes the reading process time factor much greater, and also makes the clear understanding quotient much lower.

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15.279 Management Communication for Undergraduates
Fall 2012

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