Professional/Business Communications

Objectives

- Why Professional Communications?
- Business Writing Tips
- Avoiding Common Mistakes
- E-mail etiquette

Business Writing Tips

- Text messages – the worst thing to happen to written communication
- R U going tonite?
- Were r we going tomoro
Why Professional Communications?

- Awareness
- Professionalism
- Image
- Respect
- Transition to lead, supervisor or manager position
- Liaison between customer (internal and external) and MDs

Business Writing Tips

- Types of Written Communication
  - Letters
  - Memos
  - Counseling forms
  - And of course ...
    - E-mail

Business Writing Tips

- Know your audience
  - Tailor your writing style and message to your audience
  - How familiar are they with the subject matter?
  - How much information should you include to meet your audiences needs?
    - Put your self in their shoes. What questions will they ask?
Business Writing Tips

- Present the most important points first
  - Not a murder mystery ... shouldn't have to guess the conclusion
- Journalistic Triangle
  - People scan headline and first part of message
  - Answer the readers' most important question at the beginning

Business Writing Tips

- Be clear and concise
  - Eliminate unnecessary information
    - Step away, re-read, be objective
    - What is really necessary information?
  - Use short sentences and paragraphs
    - Keep sentences between 20 – 25 words
    - No paragraph should include more than one or two ideas
    - Paragraph – no more than 6 sentences or 10-12 lines
    - Break up sentences and paragraphs at logical point
  - Eliminate unnecessary words or phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Replace</th>
<th>With</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A majority of</td>
<td>Most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A majority of the time</td>
<td>Usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At your earliest convenience</td>
<td>Soon ... by x date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close proximity to</td>
<td>near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due to the fact that</td>
<td>Because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In spite of the fact that</td>
<td>Although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of a confidential nature</td>
<td>Confidential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal opinion</td>
<td>Opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This particular instance</td>
<td>This instance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Business Writing Tips

- Use simple, specific language
  - Sound important ... sound intelligent
  - In reality, it only *obscures* the point or makes them look *pretentious*

- Avoid jargon
  - Jargon is vocabulary that is specific to an industry
  - Technical terms
- Don't hedge
  - Don't use wishy-washy language because you fear people will disagree with you
  - Probably, somewhat, I imagine, for the most part, to the best of my recollection, under the circumstance ...

- Use active rather than passive voice
  - *Active voice*: Marilyn mailed the letter.
  - *Passive voice*: The letter was mailed by Marilyn.
Business Writing Tips

- Use strong endings
  - Don't go on and on and weaken your point
  - Restate your major points or call for action
- Let it sit for a while
- Don't rely on spell-check
- **Proofread, proofread, proofread!!!!!**

Composing Office Documents

- Know why you’re writing
- Organize your document
  - Chronological order
  - Compare-and-contrast format
  - Problem-solution format
  - Cause-to-effect format
- Make it easy on the eyes
  - Use wide margins and plenty of white space
  - Left justify
  - Indent lists

Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Grammar
  - a/an … an option, an hourly wage, a used book
  - Apostrophe … the boy's toy, the boys' toy, dress' collar
  - Comma … only when necessary … not too many
  - Run-on sentence – two or more sentences without punctuation separating them
  - Subject/verb agreement
    - The staff is … not the staff are …
    - The group of patients is … not the group of patients are …
Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Acronyms – use sparingly and make sure your audience knows the acronym (jargon)
  - HIPAA (not HIPPA) … TJC (not JCAHO)
- a.m. / p.m. – lowercase with periods
  - Note that 6 p.m. in the evening is redundant
- Either ... or, neither ... nor
- email vs. e-mail – experts disagree
  - Be consistent
- First, second, third ... not firstly, secondly ...

Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Numbers – spell out numbers of ten or less; use numerals for numbers over ten
  - Exceptions: , time of day, dates, fractions, and page numbers
- Healthcare vs. health care – follow company convention or pick one and be consistent

Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Frequently misused terms, cont.
  - Conscious vs. conscience
  - Follow up vs. follow-up
  - In regard to ... not in regards to
  - Irregardless ... not a word: use regardless
  - Moral vs. morale
  - Personal vs. personnel
  - Principle vs. principal
Avoiding Common Mistakes

- Frequently misused terms, cont.
  - To vs. too vs. two
  - Their vs. there vs. they're
  - Your vs. you're
  - Its vs. it's
  - Whose vs. who's

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.

~Aristotle

E-mail etiquette

- Use informative subject lines
- Keep message short
- Give context
  - Don't just reply – yes or no
  - Keep message history or thread
- Break up paragraphs
- Be professional
- Assume your email will be forwarded
E-mail etiquette

- Assume your email will be forwarded
  - Imagine the consequences
    - Offending others or hurting feelings
    - Insubordination
    - Secrets
    - Lawsuits
    - Company Policy … forwards
- Be careful of reply to all, forwards, and adding new people to thread … re-read history

E-mail etiquette

- Write your message …
  - For sensitive, complex or high-stakes situations
    - Should you use e-mail?
    - Use Word to draft message or don’t add recipients
    - Let friend or co-worker read it first
    - PROOFREAD
  - Use clear, concise, active, specific language
  - Be sure to put your main point at the beginning
  - Don’t add extra information

E-mail etiquette

- Caution …
  - Check tone – don’t be abrupt
  - Casual vs. professional
  - Don’t use all caps or all lowercase letters
  - To vs. CC vs. BCC
Hello Mrs. Smith,

Dear Dr. Johnson and Debra,

Bob,

Mark, Amanda and Jennifer,

Team,

Hi all:

Closings

Formal – Sincerely, regards, Yours truly

Less formal – Best wishes, Warm regards, Thank you

Casual – Thanks, See you soon

Signatures

Consider who you are sending message to

• Your full name
• Your title or position
• Your company name
• Mailing address
• Direct phone number (cell # or pager #)

Pilot checks all of the instruments before the plane takes off ... do that with your e-mail

• Do a final check before you put in the address
• Re-read the message
• Make sure the subject line is appropriate
• Make sure the attachments are attached
• Make sure you've included the proper salutation, closing and signature
• Run spell check
The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.

– Benjamin Franklin