**Case for Small Group Discussion**

**Case 6-1 Back to High School**

Because you are known to be a good writer, the director of human resources has asked you to put together a seminar on written communication for employees in your company who think they need help. The seminar would cover basic principles of written communication, letters and memos, and formal business reports. Managers have complained to the HR director that their employees don't write well. They produce as evidence sloppily proofread e-mails. The employees, on the other hand, are grumbling that having to attend a writing seminar would be like going back to high school, where a fussy old English teacher berated them over minor punctuation concerns.

**Questions for Case 6-1**

1. *How would you determine who should attend the seminar?*

Diagnosing writing is slippery. Some bosses think that subordinates' writing style is poor simply because it differs from their own. They may not, however, be practicing the principles of contemporary writing style as described in Chapter 5.

A practical solution is to open the seminar to everyone who is interested in improving. Writing samples can be collected and analyzed before the seminar so the instructor knows what to emphasize during the program.

1. *How would you market it so that participants of the seminar would attend willingly rather than through coercion?*

Participants first need to be convinced of the value of good writing. This can be done through critical incidents such as a customer complaint or a costly error in a company document. Participants who buy into the principles will be more willing to learn in the seminar.

1. *How would you organize the seminar? What materials would you use?*

A brief review of the principles of good business writing is an appropriate starting point. However, professionals do not appreciate long-winded lectures. Rather, the focus should be on practical application, with lots of opportunity to practice composing and revising actual business documents. Liberal use of before-and-after examples helps to make the guidelines more concrete. Warning: Do not use poor writing examples from the samples supplied by participants unless the writers' identities are protected. Instead, use participants' writing samples as good examples whenever possible.

1. *What topics would you address in the seminar?*

Students should list the major concepts in this chapter, including the three stages in the writing process and the eleven principles that guide composition of business documents.

**Bonus Case 6-2. Collaborative Report Writing**

*(This case does not appear in the textbook.)*

Assume you and two other classmates are working for a company that is about to purchase a fleet of 50 cars. The three top contenders are the Ford Taurus, the Honda Accord, and the Toyota Camry. Your group has been given the job of studying these three cars and recommending which to purchase.

**Question for Case 6-2**

*Develop an outline that lists the major factors and subfactors you would consider and note who would do the research and writing of the various parts of the report. This outline should also serve as the table of contents for the report.*

Answers will vary. Students should note the five Ws in contemplating what factors they wish to include in the outline such as who will be driving the cars and what their priorities or the priorities of the organization are. Cost, mileage, gas usage, ease in driving, rates of repair for that model, and comfort will all be areas to consider in reporting on which of the autos will be the best choice. Research and writing should be a group effort as collaboration will more likely provide an unbiased and objective report.

## Exercises for Small Groups

1. *Rewrite the following sentences to eliminate confusing, long words*.
2. Bill received excessive remuneration for his promulgated work according to his professional colleagues.

*His coworkers thought Bill was overpaid.*

1. What form of personal conveyance shall we solicit between the airport and the hotel?

*Want to catch an airport shuttle?*

1. The best operative unit for this interaction is the computer-assisted storage system.

*Email me.*

1. Extrel, the computer company, has an inordinate influence on your purchasing agent.

*Extrel lobbies your buyer.*

1. The company terminated their contract with the city as a consequence of their ineffectual payment procedures.

*The company broke its city contract for nonpayment.*

1. The audience was demonstrating engrossment with the audio-visually mediated presentation.

*The PowerPoint presentation mesmerized the audience.*

1. We received approbation from the executive committee.

*The executive committee approved.*

1. This antiquated procedure could be liquidated with a new word processing system.

*Word would do it better.*

1. Last year’s profits were exorbitant in that division.

*That division made the most money.*

1. Our assets cannot be utilized to the maximum due to the unavailability of trained human resources.

*We need more help.*

1. *Rewrite the following sentences using concrete words*.
2. We received a lot of responses to our survey.

*We received 420 survey responses.*

1. The personnel department has expanded in the last several years.

*Four new positions have been added to the personnel department in the last two years.*

1. Profits are up throughout the industry.

*Profits in the solar energy industry increased 7 percent this year.*

1. If we don’t receive the order pretty soon, we will have to cancel it.

*We will cancel the order if the shipment does not arrive by EOB September 1.*

1. Please send your reply as soon as possible.

*Please reply by e-mail before EOB this Friday.*

1. We would like to receive as many bids as possible.

*We need to receive at least seven bids by EOB this Friday.*

1. We need the shipment by sometime next month.

*We need to receive the shipment in our Dallas office by January 15.*

1. Extel is a large company.

*Extel has six offices in six states in the United States and five offices in China, Japan, and Australia.*

1. Is it possible to meet next week?

*Let me know by EOB Monday if we can meet next Wednesday at 4:00 p.m.*

1. We are expecting a rapid rate of inflation.

*We expect inflation to increase by .5 percent this fiscal year.*

1. *Reduce the length of the following sentences.*
2. Record sales were set by the top division, from $48.2 million to $51.4 million; the home appliance division decreased from $67.2 million to $58.4; the big shock was in the electronic division, which saw a drop from $17.2 million to $14.9 million; but all in all top management was generally pleased.

*Top management was pleased by record sales in the top division. The home appliance and electronic divisions saw decreased sales. Details are shown in the table below.*

1. Management attributed the decline to several significant business environment economic factor conditions including higher borrowing interest rates.

*Management attributed the decline to*

* *Increased interest rates*
* *Other economic conditions*

1. At this point in time pursuant to your request we find it difficult to meet your stated requests as made in your letter.

*We cannot meet your requests now.*

1. The task force has been given the special responsibilities to accomplish the goals as stated in the letter sent yesterday by the executive vice-president to the task force chairperson who was assigned the position.

*The executive vice president gave the task force’s chair its goals.*

1. On the grounds that this action could be completely finished in a period of one year, it was not seen as a totally practical action to take.

*This action will take a year.*

1. The past history of the new innovations indicates that the product innovation department should be terminated and ended.

*Let’s eliminate the innovation department.*

1. We received your recent inquiry of last week regarding our new products we just came out with.

*Thanks for asking about our new products.*

1. For the reason that all the information was not completely available, no immediate decision could be made then.

*We will decide when we have all the information.*

1. *Rewrite the following sentences to eliminate trite expressions and improve clarity*.
2. Enclosed please find a check in the amount of $40.

*Here’s my $40 check.*

1. Please be advised that your order will be shipped within a short period of time.

*Your order will arrive shortly.*

1. I enclose herewith an order to which you will please give your earliest attention and forward, with as little delay as possible, as per shipping instructions attached.

*Here is my order. Please ship it according to these instructions.*

1. Your letter dated July 25 has been duly received and noted.

*I received your letter.*

1. Referring to your letter of the fifth, we wish to state that there has been an error in your statement.

*Thank you for alerting us to the error in your statement.*

1. With reference to your letter of the tenth, permit me to state that there will be no interference with the affairs of your department.

*We will not interfere with your departmental affairs.*

1. *Change the negative tone and use more courteous words in the following sentences*.
2. We cannot deliver all 100 units by Friday, March 6.

*We will deliver all 100 units on Monday, March 9.*

1. We don’t provide second mortgages.

*We provide first mortgages.*

1. We are sorry that your total deposit on the trip cannot be refunded.

*We are happy to provide a partial refund of your deposit.*

1. No. An extension will not be permitted.

*Your deadline remains May 1.*

1. We do not feel that you qualify for the excessive request that you made.

*We will be happy to comply with your request when you have fulfilled the following requirements:*

1. You are not qualified for this position.

*This position requires a college degree in business.*

1. The competition provided a much more favorable bid, and they have a reputation for fine service.

*We are confident that we have selected the best bid for our needs.*

Sorry, but the product you requested is no longer available.

*Let us suggest the following product.*

1. We are turning down your request for an extended vacation.

*All vacations are scheduled for one week.*

1. *Clarify the following message by using paragraphs and transitions and by generally following the guidelines presented in this chapter.*

Most managers would agree that there are advantages to both the telephone and letters. Letters are more effective in some situations whereas the use of the telephone is best in others. So now the question is, “What are the advantages of each?” The telephone has the advantages of speed, immediate feedback, consuming less time, and cost. The advantage of the business letter is that a hard copy is available. Also, future reference can be made to it for legal reference. Also, enclosures can be included. One of the disadvantages of the telephone is that the conversation cannot be filed for future reference. Another advantage of the letter is that it can be circulated to other people who may be involved with the topic involved. Another disadvantage of the telephone is that you may not know if you are disturbing the receiver at a busy time during the day. The letter can be read when the receiver is ready to read it. All of these advantages and disadvantages must be considered when strategically determining the most effective communication tool. The greatest mistake may be to communicate via the most “convenient” media without considering the alternatives. Analysis of the situations is required to assure that the most effective technique is used.

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*So we can see that letters are more effective in some situations, whereas the use of the telephone is best in others. Next we consider disadvantages of the telephone and letters.*

*One of the disadvantages of the telephone is that the conversation cannot be filed for future reference. Another disadvantage of the telephone is that you may not know if you are disturbing the receiver at a busy time during the day. Disadvantages of the letter are that it lacks immediacy and discourages feedback.*

*All of these advantages and disadvantages must be considered when strategically determining the most effective communication tool.*