

# Communicating in the Workplace

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## *Administrative Accounting and Bookkeeping Program*

### **Handout 5B: Negative Messages & Bad News**

- Explain clearly and completely.
- Be professional and fair.
- Convey empathy and sympathy.
- Maintain friendly relations.

#### **When to Use the Direct Approach**

- When the bad news is not damaging (e.g., small increase in cost)
- When the receiver may overlook the bad news
- When organizations prefer directness
- When the receiver prefers directness
- When firmness is necessary (e.g., collection letters)

#### **The Direct Approach**

- Bad news in the opening
- Reason(s) for bad news in the body
- Pleasant closing

#### **When to Use the Indirect Approach**

- Used when the message will upset or irritate the audience.
- To save time.
- To show sensitivity.
- Softens the impact of the bad news.

#### **The Indirect Approach**

- Opening Buffer
- Reasons
- Bad News
- Closing

#### **The Opening Buffer**

- Apologize in the buffer:
  - Apologize sincerely.
  - Accept responsibility.
  - Use good judgment.
- Convey understanding and empathy in the buffer.
- Buffer statements may include:

- Any good news.
- A compliment.
- A statement of appreciation/understanding.
- Mention points of agreement.
- A statement of facts.
- A statement to show you understand their feelings.
- An apology.

## Give Reasons

- Explain clearly and cautiously (be specific, if possible).
- Cite plausible audience benefits.
- Explain company policy.
- Use positive words and emphasize what you *can* do.
- Demonstrate fairness.

## Cushion the Bad News

- Position the bad news strategically in the middle of a statement.
- Use the passive voice.
- Suggest a compromise or an alternative (a more suitable position/competition; reapplication).

## Close Pleasantly

- Be forward looking (encourage future relations).
- Suggest follow-up (end letter with follow-through advice).
- Give a special offers, resale or sales promotion if possible.
- Include good wishes.

## Tips for Dealing with Disappointed Customers

- Call the individual involved.
- Describe the problem and apologize.
- Explain why the problem occurred, what your company is doing to resolve it, and how the company will ensure that the problem will not happen again.
- Follow up with a message that documents the phone call and promotes goodwill.

## Tips for Sharing Negative News with Employees

- Deliver the news in person.
- Gather all the relevant information.
- Prepare and rehearse.
- Explain: past, present, future.
- Consider taking a partner.
- Think about timing.
- Be patient with their reaction.