

Public Speaking and Strategic Narratives for Leaders

Negative Message Exercise (Answer Guide)

Work with a partner to craft a suitable message or favour request for one of the following scenarios. You can use the work area on the other side of the sheet to make notes. You'll then have three or four minutes to deliver your message to the class and try to persuade them.

SCENARIO ONE

You are a department head at a medium size company and must refuse a vacation request from one of your reports. They want a week off to visit family over the Victoria Day Weekend. They have worked for the company for a little over two years and have been a good, reliable employee. However, another employee with seniority has already requested vacation for the same week, and you can't leave the department so short staffed during what is usually a busy sales period. This will have to be handled delicately as you know that family is important to this person and they live some distance away, limiting their chances to visit.

SCENARIO TWO

You are a marketing officer in a large-ish enterprise and have been asked to speak to the HR department about the pioneering work you've been doing in strategic market segmentation. This is just a nice-to-have for HR as they don't do marketing, and you have a golf game scheduled for that afternoon that you'd rather attend. Perhaps someone else in marketing could speak to them, or they could change to another day?

SCENARIO THREE

You are a sales representative at a camera store and a customer is claiming that their broken camera should be repaired under warranty. It has clearly been immersed completely in water, and the malfunction is caused by water damage. The warranty for this camera explicitly says the camera isn't waterproof, and water damage isn't covered. However, this customer has been a regular client for many years and has bought a lot of equipment at your store. You'd like to retain their goodwill, if possible.

NOTE: The following solution (in italic) is only a suggestion; there are many possible strategies you could use in answer to this exercise.

Solution One (Scenario One)	<p>Opening Buffer Apologize, show empathy.</p>	<p><i>Hello [NAME]. I received your vacation request for the week leading up to Victoria Day and gave it a lot of thought. We really appreciate the good work you've been doing here, and I know you've been wanting to visit your family.</i></p>
	<p>Reasons Be clear and professional.</p>	<p><i>As you know, that's a busy sales time for us. And [NAME] has already asked for vacation that week.</i></p>
	<p>Bad News Use passive voice and position strategically.</p>	<p><i>He/she submitted their request in before you, and we can't have the branch so short-staffed for the whole week. However, there may be a solution. If you'd be willing to work remotely for the week, I'd be able to arrange that.</i></p>
	<p>Closing Be forward looking.</p>	<p><i>You'd still be working, but you would be able to see your family. I hope that works for you. Let me know; it's your choice.</i></p>
Solution Two	<p>Opening Buffer Apologize, show empathy.</p>	
	<p>Reasons Be clear and professional.</p>	
	<p>Bad News Use passive voice and position strategically</p>	
	<p>Closing Be forward looking.</p>	