

My Favorite Assignment Montreal 2011/BCQ 2012 Business Communication Quarterly Author's Template

1. Title: Choosing communication channels: Get me Sushi—memo with footnotes

2. Genre (e.g. Role Play; Client Communication Plan; In-class exercise, etc.): Individual or group in-class exercise

3. Author's name: Junhua Wang

4. Affiliation: University of Minnesota Duluth

5. Brief overview of assignment (50 to 150 words)

In July 2003, a partner from a New York law firm asked a paralegal to find a better source for sushi. The paralegal responded by conducting research and generating the three-page memo complete with footnotes. The memo became an urban legend after an article about it was published in The New York Times.

The activity can be assigned as an individual or group exercise by following these steps:

1. Ask students to read the memo in 5-10 minutes and answer the following questions:
 - a. Relying on your audience and purpose analysis, describe your thoughts on the memo content and format.
 - b. Explain why a lot of people think the memo is a joke.
 - c. Did the writer choose the best delivery channel for this message?
 - d. When would you use the memo to deliver the sushi option message?
2. In the follow-up discussion, encourage students to share their findings.

6. Target learners (e.g. Year in school; executive education)

Upper-level undergrads

7. Learning objectives (e.g. Two or three maximum of one sentence)

Help students understand the functions of interoffice memos and choose the best communication channel at the workplace. Students also practice audience and purpose analysis skills through creating a scenario to justify the effectiveness of the memo.

8. Time to complete the assignment

5-10 minutes; follow-up discussion 10-15 minutes.

9. Materials, equipment, special considerations (Short list)

Before assigning the exercise, instructors can request students to read related textbook materials on memos.

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10. Evaluating outcomes/grading (Measures of objectives)

This activity does not require grading; however, if the exercise is posted online such as at Moodle, instructors can see students' responses to the questions. During the follow-up discussion, students are encouraged to share their findings with the class. Question No. 4 (see The Assignment part) especially gives students chances to create and analyze a rhetorical context that gives rise to the need for delivering such a memo based on a justified writing purpose and the needs of the intended audience.

11. Author's bio (50 word maximum *not* including the text below)

Previously a Marketing Support Manager at Ericsson China and Operation Support Professional at Accenture Asia Pacific Shared Service Center, Junhua Wang is an assistant professor of business communication at the University of Minnesota Duluth, who received her PhD in Technical Communication and Rhetoric at Texas Tech University. Address correspondence to Junhua Wang, FMIS Department, Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 1318 Kirby Drive, LSBE 335M, Duluth, MN 55812, jwang1@d.umn.edu.

12. Support materials (to be posted on webpage) Check all you'll provide:

X Instructions to students

Stimulus and exercise materials

Slides

Grading rubrics

FAQ's

Sample student work product

X Other _The original sushi memo (pdf document).