

Instructions

Negative News Email to Peer Team

Learning Goals.

By completing this assignment successfully, you will be able to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of a consulting pitch in response to a business case problem*
- Write a clear, concise, audience-centered business document using the indirect strategy to convey bad news
- Share and respond to peer feedback to reinforce business writing skills

Purpose & Audience

Your email should reflect a thorough understanding of and ability to apply the indirect business message strategy. Members of the other team, your classmates, are the intended readers (audience) for this document.

This is an individual (not team) assignment. There are several steps, so make sure you complete each one in order to receive credit for this assignment.

Step 1:

This assignment is based on the XYZ Company “Quick Pitch” consulting presentations delivered by the teams in our class. Take on the role of XYZ’s CEO and pretend that teams have just pitched their ideas to you. Based on the notes you took during the presentations, identify the strategic idea that you believe is LEAST likely to be successful or viable in helping XYZ Company reach its goals. Do not select your own team!

Step 2:

Use the Indirect strategy to write a **Negative News Email** to the contact person (indicated in Canvas) for the team you identified above, informing the team members that XYZ Company will NOT accept their recommendation. Be sure to provide adequate and appropriate details to support your decision. Be specific about your concerns. For example, you may choose to focus on the presentation content, the supporting slide deck, the team’s responses to classmates’ questions, the team’s confidence in the proposed strategy, or a related issue.

Step 3:

SEND THE EMAIL to the team contact person through our Canvas Messages function. This person will share your email with the rest of the team.

COPY ME on the email to receive credit for submitting this assignment. (It is easy to forget this step – so please DON’T.)

Step 4:

Make sure you read all of the emails your team receives. Do this before our next class. As you read, record your reactions, questions, and general impressions about the effectiveness of the email in conveying the bad news to your team. Bring these notes with you to our next class.

Assignment Evaluation

Please see the Assignment Rubric posted on Canvas. Evaluation areas include:

application of indirect business writing strategy, adequate supporting details and explanations, fluency, flow, and tone of the message, grammar, word choice, sentence structure, and language use/mechanics

**Note about materials to instructors who adopt this assignment: any business case problem can work for the Quick Pitch part of this assignment. We use a live case problem supplied by a client, but any case problem will do. It simply must provide the competitive element for teams to propose their case solutions or recommendations. That is, all teams should respond to the same prompt, trying to propose the best case solution. Teams can also offer their case solutions in a written document, but delivering a presentation is generally more engaging.*

This assignment should also come after course instruction on direct versus indirect business writing strategies. I generally use it about halfway through the semester, after students have had time to bond with their classmates and teams.

Instructions (for feedback day)

Team Response to Negative News Email

Ask students to sit with their teams and to have their notes about the emails they received available.

Have students use a round robin format to visit the team that received their email to discuss the effectiveness of how the bad news was conveyed. This can be a little chaotic, but with ample class time, students manage to connect with one another. Rarely is only one team judged to have the 'worst' idea (thus receiving all of the emails) because every student in the class is making that judgment independently. In my experience, there is always variance, and plenty of opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of various emails. It is important for students to remember that at this point, they are discussing the effectiveness of the email (use of the indirect business writing strategy) rather than the relative quality of the consulting pitch idea.

Full Class Discussion Questions:

What writing techniques contribute to an effective bad news message?

How do these techniques contribute to positive relationships within organizations or with other stakeholders?