

Memorandum

To: Dr. Liu

From: Student A

Date: Mar 2, 2023

Subject: Critique of Melissa Jackson's Claim Letter from Exercise 4 p. 387

The purpose of this memo is to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of Melissa Jackson's claim letter.

Summary

In class on Tuesday, we read this claim letter in small groups and briefly discussed the strengths and weaknesses present in the letter. Melissa created a claim letter to review a Corona ME smartphone created by Star-Tel. Her claim letter focused on issues she has had with the device even after having the phone replaced. The strength of her letter is that she tried to explain the issue and get a resolution, but the weaknesses were the emotional tone of the letter and the unclear explanation of the situation that does not address the possibility of user error, and the lack of "you" attitude.

Discussion

The strengths of the claim letter are that she does explain her problem with the product and makes a request for a refund. Jackson describes the problem like this, "two days into using it, I saw the back of the phone starting to smoke and the battery caught fire." Additionally, she makes this request of the company, "I think you owe me – and everyone who's bought your defective phone – a refund!" The format of the claim letter does look different that a formal letter would because it is an email, but the major elements of a claim letter are present.

The first weakness I want to discuss is the emotional tone of the letter. Jackson states, "Clearly it is not just the battery but something to do with the phone." In this example, the reader can see that the writer uses a sarcastic tone meant to accuse the company of a faulty product. Another example of this tone is demonstrated through the repetitive use of exclamation marks and emotionally charged words, "Star-Tel, your new Corona ME smartphone is the worst I've ever purchased!" This use of an exclamation mark can be interpreted by the reader as anger and can even signify yelling. When Jackson says "worst," it makes the tone sound very accusatory.

Another weakness is how the narration does not address the possibility of user error. This is important in a claim letter because it demonstrates that the problem is not the user's fault. It is integral to include this information in the narration because it can be the deciding factor for the company in deciding to give the buyer a replacement product or a refund. If this is not addressed, it is easier for the company to say that the issue is likely caused by user error.

The last weakness I want to address is the lack of "you" attitude in the claim letter. Since the writer does not approach the situation with a "you" attitude, it contributes to the other problems in the letter like emotional language and missing information. The writer should have taken her audience into consideration because it could have helped improve the outcome of the situation. It is essential to use "you" attitude in claim letters because it helps the writer seem more friendly

and approachable in difficult situations. A way this can be demonstrated is by including contact information at the end of the letter or e-mail, and by placing the next action in the hands of the reader instead of demanding a refund.

Recommendation

After completing this exercise, I gained a better understanding of the mechanics of claim letters. When I write claim letters in the future, I will write a strong letter by using a professional tone, writing the letter when not in a highly emotional state, providing a narration that is thorough and addresses user error, and focusing on using “you” attitude when writing.

This exercise was beneficial in helping develop my understanding of both claim letters and memos. I recommend that you include more assignments like this in your future technical writing classes as it provides necessary practice that boosts student understanding.