Lecture 12
Planning Business Messages

In this lecture you will learn to
- Describe the basic tasks in the composition process
- Define both general and specific purposes of your business message
- Test the purpose of your message
- Develop an audience profile
- Analyze the needs of your audience
- Establish the main idea of your message
- Select an appropriate channel or medium for transmitting a particular message to a particular audience

The Composition Process
- The composition process helps you gain control over your message
- The composition process is flexible, not a fixed prescription of sequenced steps.
- The composition process can be viewed as ten separate stages that fall into three simple categories.
  - Planning
  - Composing
  - Revising

  **Planning**
  - Define purpose
  - Analyze Audience
  - Establish main idea
  - Select Channel and medium

  **Composing**
  - Organize message
  - Formulate message

  **Revising**
  - Edit message
  - Rewrite message
  - Produce message
  - Proof message

Sharpening Your Skill
- Sharpening Your Skill (Overcoming the fear of Blank page)
  - Use positive self talk
  - Know your purpose
  - Visualize your audience
  - Create a productive environment
  - Make an outline
  - Just start
  - Write the middle first
  - Push obstacles aside
Technology

• Technology affects the composing process.
  – For example Microsoft Word increases productivity and effectiveness by streamlining the process.

Collaboration

• Collaboration
  – In many organizations the final piece of writing is a team effort, with more than one writer working on a document.

Scheduling

• Scheduling
  – Alloting time properly is very important.
  – Especially when time is short, carefully schedule yourself and stick to it.

Defining your purpose

• The purpose of the document helps you decide whether to proceed, how to proceed, how to respond to the audience, which information to focus on, and which channel or medium to use.

➢ Why do you need to clear a purpose?

Example

• Suppose your boss asks you to write a memo describing the company’s policy on vacation time. This is a fairly broad topic. What should you say? Knowing the purpose of your message will help you make important decision about it.

Decide whether to proceed

• To decide whether to proceed
  – Many business messages have little practical purpose and should not be composed at all.
  – They should be put hold until you have a more practical purpose.

Respond to the audience

• To respond to the audience
  – If you are not certain that your purpose in composing a message is compatible with the audience’s purpose, you are likely to deliver irrelevant material.
Focus on the content

- To focus on the content
  - If you include extra information in your message, you are likely to overload the audience.

Establish a channel and Medium

- To establish the channel and medium
  - The choice of channel and medium has a direct influence on the purpose.
  - For example, writing a message for the whole department would most likely make you e-mail it for ease of distribution.

Common purpose of Business Message

- Business messages have the following general purposes:
  - Inform
  - Persuade
  - Collaborate

Specific Purpose

- Beyond having a general purpose, your message might have a specific purpose.
- To determine the specific purpose, think of how the audience's ideas or behavior should be affected by the message.

Example

- General Purpose
  - To inform
- Specific Purpose
  - To present last month's sales figures to the Vice president of marketing.

- General Purpose
  - To persuade
- Specific Purpose
  - To convince the marketing director of the need to hire more Software Engineers.

- General Purpose
  - To collaborate
- Specific Purpose
  - To help the personnel department develop a training program for new members of a Software Team.
How should you test your purpose?

Test your Purpose

• Is the purpose realistic?
  – If your purpose involves a major/radical change, you better go slow, as most people resist change.
• Is it the right time?
  – Timing matters a lot.
  – An idea is more likely to win approval when the profits are up.
• Is the right person delivering the message?
  – Some people have more leverage in an organization, and hence have a better shot at getting the purpose achieved.
• Is the purpose acceptable to the organization?
  – As a representative of your company you are obligated to work for it's goals.

Analyze the Audience

• Ask your self some key questions about your audience.
  – who are they ?
  – what is their probable reaction to your message ?
  – How much do they already know about the subject ?
  – What is their relationship to you ?
• Determine the Audience Size and Composition
  – Focus on the common interest of the audience, but be alert to their individual concerns.
• Identify primary Audience
  – Try to identify the people who are most important to your purpose.
• Estimate the Audience's probable reaction
  – A gradual approach and plenty of evidence is required to win over a skeptical audience.
• Gauge the audience's level of Understanding
  – If you and your audience share the same general background, you can assume that they will understand the subject without any difficulty.
• Define your relationship with the Audience
  – Are you communicating with people inside or outside your organization?
  – How much credibility do you have?
Satisfy your Audience's information needs
- What does the audience want to know?
- What does the audience need to know?
- Have I provided all the desired and necessary information?
- Is the information accurate?
- Have I emphasized the information of greatest interest?

* What does the audience want to know?*
  - By restating a vague request in more specific terms, you can get the requester to define his or her needs more precisely.

* Anticipate unstated questions*
  - Include any additional information that might be helpful, even though the reader didn't specifically ask for it.

* Have I provided all the desired and necessary information?*
  - Test the completeness of your message by making sure it answers all the important questions:
    - who,
    - what,
    - when,
    - where,
    - why and
    - how.

* Is the information accurate?*
  - Be sure that the information you provide is accurate and that the commitments you make can be kept.

* Have I emphasized the information of greatest interest?*
  - Try to figure out what points will specifically interest your audience; then give these points the most attention.

Make your Message easier to comprehend
- Devices that make your message easier to comprehend include summaries, and overviews, headings, lists, enclosures, appendixes, handouts, charts and graphs.

Establishing the Main Idea
- Establishing the Main Idea
  - The main idea is the 'hook' that sums up why a particular audience should do or think as you suggest.

* Use Brainstorming Techniques*
  - Storyteller's tour
  - Random List
  - FCR worksheet
  - Journalistic Approach
  - Question and Answer Chain
Limit the Scope
– The main idea should be geared to the length of the message.

Select Appropriate Channel and Medium
– Selecting the Appropriate Channel and Medium is very important
– The mediums could be
  – Oral
  – Written
  – Electronic

Oral medium
– Oral medium is best when
  – You want immediate feedback.
  – Your message is relatively simple.
  – You don’t need a permanent record.
  – You can assemble audience easily.
  – You want to encourage interaction.

Written medium
– Written medium is best when
  – You don’t need immediate feedback.
  – Your message is detailed and complex.
  – You need a permanent record.
  – You are trying to reach an audience over large distance.
  – You want minimize the distortion when a message is passed from person to person.

Electronic Message
– Electronic Message is best when
  – You don’t need immediate feedback, but you do need speed.
  – You don’t need a permanent record, but want to overcome time zone barriers.
  – You want to minimize oral distortion.