

Overview

For this assignment, you are asked to write a negative letter to the customers or clients of the company you used for the first or second assignment. You can choose one of the two options below. The audience will be the same for each option, but the purpose and context will be different.

Writing situation

Choose one of the two writing situations below. Whichever you choose, use the company you used in the first or second assignment as your company for this one.

Option 1

Your company is the victim of a ransomware attack, and the attackers are asking for 100 bitcoins (roughly \$2,245,000 — if you use a smaller company for which that amount is unimaginable, you can imagine the ransom is lower). The attackers have not accessed any client/customer personal information, which is kept on a different server. Neither have they accessed the content in the server they are holding hostage; it houses orders and/or schedules made the previous week (whether it is orders, scheduled appointments, or something similar will depend on the company you use). The hackers have made it impossible for your company to access the information about the previous week's orders or the appointments that were made in the past week. This, of course, puts your company at an inconvenience.

Because your company is working with the FBI to track the hackers, it is not paying the ransom to release the information and needs the help of clients/customers to repopulate its order list or appointment schedule. You are in charge of writing a letter that informs your clients/customers of the ransomware attack and asks for their help, letting them know that it will take two or three days for your company to fill any orders or reschedule appointments.

To repopulate the list or schedule, you must ask the clients/customers to send the information about their order or appointment.

Consider the PAC:

P) Purpose

You will need to decide what information about the attack to share with them and what you need them to send and how they should send it to you.

A) Audience

The way you ask and what you ask for will depend on the types of clients/customers you serve.

C) Context

The specific content you need to ask for will depend on the company and the product ordered or services provided.

The letter should be about a page, and the same letter will go to all of the clients/customers on your list—some will not have placed orders or made appointments in the past week, but you have no way of knowing who has or hasn't. In the letter, you need to choose what information to include or omit, how to organize the information, and what tone to create to keep the reader calm and allow the reader to act.

Option 2

Understaffing and supply chain issues mean that your company will not be able to provide the products, services, or same level of assistance for the next three weeks.

Depending on your company, this could mean delayed shipments, rescheduled services, or reduced access to services. You must alert the clients of this problem and give them the information they need to feel as if they can manage the situation, whether that be through monitoring, reordering/rescheduling, or finding alternatives to the required services.

To maintain goodwill and give the readers a way to feel in control, you will need to carefully craft your message and convey that your company is working to minimize this disruption and strengthening procedures to instill confidence moving forward.

Consider the PAC:

P) Purpose

Decide what information they need to know about understaffing and its effects and what actions you would like them to be able to take.

A) Audience

The tone you use, the amount of information you provide, and actions readers can take depend on the types of clients/customers you serve. For example, a medical clinic will probably have an audience concerned about health issues, and a bridal-wear shop will probably have an audience concerned about timelines.

C) Context

The specific actions you ask the reader to take and the amount of information you share will depend on the company you use and the current state of the shortages affecting your company.

The letter should be about a page, and the same letter will go to all of the clients/customers who have orders, services, or appointments affected by the understaffing. In the letter, you need to choose what information to include or omit, how to organize the information, and what tone to create in order to keep the reader calm and allow the reader to act.

Writing Task

For this assignment, your stated purpose is to deliver the bad news and let the reader know of any action to take. Your unstated purpose is to have the reader understand the situation and take the action you suggest. To write this letter, you need to analyze your audience and understand how the context affects them. Knowing that will also help you determine what information to include to achieve your purpose.

Informational Needs

Consider the people who will be receiving this letter: what type of people use your products or services? Think about what they expect from the letter and what they need to know to understand the situation and take the action that you suggest. This will probably include, but not necessarily in this order and is not limited to:

- Bad news
- Dates and deadlines
- Links or phone numbers
- Instructions

Make up any information that is not included on this sheet but that you need to include for the reader to understand the situation and be able to take the action. Each situation will be different, so you will need to consider what the reader needs to know in that situation. This is the challenge of the assignment and why it doesn't provide you with a specific checklist.

Emotional Needs

Consider how the context—the ransomware attack, the general state of the economy/inflation, the political situation, recent news, and the level of need for the product or services you provide—affect your readers or reader. Think about the tone you can create, the background information you can provide, the information you should omit, and how the information can be organized to avoid psychological reactance and encourage the reader to take the action you suggest.

Writing and Revision

Draft the negative message that includes the information, avoids negative reactance, and encourages the reader to accept and act on the situation. Use one of the formats for letters found in our textbook and address the letter to the customers or clients. Because this will go out in a mail-merge (a program that automatically inserts the customers' names and addresses), you need to format the address and salutation in the following way—exactly like this integrated with the letter format:

[Customer Name]
[Customer Street]
[Customer City, State, Zip]

Dear [Customer Name]:

Revise using information from the lectures, textbook, and analysis videos, as well as instructor feedback on your worksheet and peer feedback on your draft. You can also contact your instructor if you'd like additional feedback on your draft.

Checklist for evaluation and revision

To receive a “Complete” on the Negative Letter Assignment, accomplish each of the following tasks:

- Produce a letter of approximately one page in response to either Situation 1 or 2.
- Follow the Business Letter formatting guidelines located in Appendix A of *Essentials of Business Communication*, and include all components of a traditional business letter.
- Display careful consideration of your PAC (see above) and appropriate choices to address that context in your letter.
- Write in response to the negative situation in a way that includes the information, avoids negative reactance, and encourages the reader to accept and act on the situation.
- Produce a letter that is free of grammar and punctuation errors. Address your letter using the proper format for a mail-merge (see above).
- Submit your letter as a PDF file.
- In the comment box of your submission, please include a transmittal, as if you were attaching the PDF letter to an email (see below).

Submission

Submit the PDF of your letter to the assignment on Canvas. In the comment box, include a transmittal, as if you were attaching the PDF letter to an email. The transmittal should include a salutation with [Customer Name], a reference to the attached letter, and a one- or two-sentence summary of the information it contains and its importance.

I look forward to reading your letters and learning about how you adapt your message to the audience and context.

Please submit the rough draft on Canvas by 11:59 pm on **Tuesday, March 28th**.

*Peer review will take place in class on **March 29th**.*

Please submit the final draft on Canvas by 11:59 pm on **Friday, March 31st**.