

Writing in Organizations

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Lecture 3

MGM202

Writing Routine Business
Correspondence



جامعة الجميع الذكية
EVERYONE'S SMART UNIVERSITY

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Course Outline

Lecture 1: Getting Started: Writing and Your Career.

Lecture 2: The Writing Process and Collaboration at Work.

Lecture 3: Writing Routine Business Correspondence.

Lecture 4: Writing Letters: Some Basics for Communicating with Audiences Worldwide.

Lecture 5: How to Get a Job: Searches, Dossiers, Portfolios, Résumés, Letters, and Interviews.

Lecture 6: Designing Successful Documents, Visuals, and Websites.

Lecture 7: Writing Instructions and Procedures.

Lecture 8: Writing Effective Short Reports.

Lecture 9: Writing Proposals.

Lecture 10: Writing Careful Long Reports.

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Lecture Outline

- 1- What Memos, Faxes, E-Mails, IMs, and Blog Posts Have in Common**
- 2- Memos**
- 3- Sending Memos: E-mail or Hard Copy?**
- 4- Sending Faxes: Some Guidelines**
- 5- E-Mail: Its Importance in the Workplace**
- 6- Instant Messages (IMs) for Business Use**
- 7- Blogs**
- 8- Routine Correspondence: A Final Word**

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1- What Memos, Faxes, E-Mails, IMs, and Blog Posts Have in Common:

Although memos, faxes, e-mails, IMs, and blog posts are very different types of correspondence, **they share the following characteristics:**

1. Each of these types of correspondence is streamlined for the busy world of work. Unlike letters, proposals, or reports, which can be long and detailed and contain formal parts and sections, these routine types of correspondence give writers and readers a particularly fast way to communicate.

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2. **They give busy readers information quickly.** While the messages they contain can be about any topic in the world of work, most often they focus on day-to-day activities and operations at your company—sales and product information, policy and schedule changes, progress reports, orders, troubleshooting problems.

3. **They are informal.** Compared to letters, proposals, and reports, these kinds of routine correspondence are not as formal. They emphasize a conversational, yet professional, style of writing.

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4. Even though they are routine, they still demand a great deal of thought and time. Although memos, e-mails, blogs, and IMs are less formal than, for instance, a letter to a client, they all must be written clearly and with correct grammar and punctuation, even when the correspondence is between two employees in the same department of a company. Always plan and review what you are going to write.

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2- Memos:

Memorandum, usually shortened to memo, is a Latin word for “something to be remembered.” The Latin meaning points to the memo’s chief function: to record information of immediate importance and interest in the busy world of work, as in Figure 3.1. Memos are brief and informal but can contain official announcements that serve a variety of functions, **including:**

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- making an announcement
- providing instructions
- clarifying a policy, procedure, or issue
- changing a policy or procedure
- alerting employees to a problem or issue
- delegating responsibilities
- making a request
- offering suggestions or recommendations
- providing a record of an important matter
- confirming an outcome

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Standard memo format.

Figure 3.1

MEMO

Health Systems Inc
4008 Washington
Reno, NY 89501
www.hsincorp.com

TO: Lucy
FROM: Roger
DATE: November 11, 2011
SUBJECT: Review of Successful Website Seminar

As you know, I attended the "How to Build a Successful Website" seminar on November 7 and learned the "rules and tools" we will need to redesign our own site.

Here is a review of the major topics covered by the presenter, Jackie Chen:

1. Keep your website content-based—identify your target audience.
2. Visualize and "map out" your site ahead of time.
3. Design your website to look the way you envision it—make it aesthetically pleasing.
4. Be sure your site easy to navigate, especially for global readers.
5. Be sure the site easy to find by search engines such as Google for maximum exposure.
6. Create hot links and image maps to move users from page to page.
7. Encourage visitor interaction by soliciting feedback.
8. Complete your site with appropriate sound and animation.
9. Keep your site updated.

Could we meet in the next day or two to discuss recreating our website in light of these guidelines? I would really appreciate your suggestions about this project as well.

Thanks.

Header

Memo parts

*Introduction
gives
background
and tells reader
what memo
will do*

Preview

*Body:
Numbered
list helps
readers follow
information
quickly*

*Conclusion:
Asks for
comments*

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- Memo Format

Memos vary in format and the way they are sent. Some companies use standard, printed forms (Figure 3.1), while others have their names (letterhead) printed on their memos (as in Figures 3.2 and 3.3). You can also create a memo by including the necessary parts in an e-mail.

Figure 3.2 Memo on letterhead with a clear introduction, discussion, and conclusion.

Introduction gives purpose and importance of memo

Discussion states why problem exists and how to solve it

Safety message is boldfaced for emphasis

Conclusion builds goodwill and asks for questions



To: Machine Shop Employees
From: Janet Hempstead, Shop Supervisor *JH*
Date: September 27, 2011
Subject: Cleaning Brake Machines

During the past two weeks I have received several reports that the brake machines are not being cleaned properly after each use. Through this memo I want to emphasize and explain the importance of keeping these machines clean for the safety of all employees.

When the brake machines are used, the cutter chops off small particles of metal from brake drums. These particles settle on the machines and create a potentially hazardous situation for anyone working on or near the machines. If the machines are not cleaned routinely before being used again, these metal particles could easily fly into an individual's face when the brake drum is spinning.

To prevent accidents like this from happening, please make sure you vacuum the brake machines after each use.

You will find two vacuum cleaners for this purpose in the shop—one of them is located in work area 1-A and the other, a reserve model, is in the storage area. Vacuuming brake machines is quick and easy: It should take no more than a few seconds. This is a small amount of time to make the shop safer for all of us.

Thanks for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please call me at Extension 324, e-mail me, or come by my office.

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A memo that uses headings to highlight organization.

Figure 3.3

RAMCO TECHNOLOGIES
Where Technology Shapes Tomorrow
ramco@gem.com http://www.Ramcogem.com



TO: Rachel Mohler, Vice President
FROM: Harrison Fontenot, Public Relations
SUBJECT: Mike Gonzalez
DATE: Ways to Increase Ramco's Community Involvement
March 2, 2012

At our planning session in early February, our division managers stressed the need to generate favorable publicity for our new Ramco facility in Mayfield. Knowing that such publicity will highlight Ramco's visibility in Mayfield, I think the company's image might be enhanced in the following ways.

CREATE A SCHOLARSHIP FUND
Ramco would receive favorable publicity by creating a scholarship at Mayfield Community College for any student interested in a career in technology. A one-year scholarship would cost \$6,800. The scholarship could be awarded by a committee composed of Ramco executives and staff. Such a scholarship would emphasize Ramco's support for technical education at a local college.

OFFER SITE TOURS
Guided tours of the Mayfield facility would introduce the community to Ramco's innovative technology. The tours might be organized for academic, community, and civic groups. Individuals would see the care we take in protecting the environment in our production and equipment choices and the speed with which we ship our products. Of special interest to visitors would be Ramco's use of industrial robots alongside its employees. Since these tours would be scheduled in advance, they should not conflict with our production schedules.

PROVIDE GUEST SPEAKERS
Many of our employees would be excellent guest speakers at civic and educational meetings in the Mayfield area. Possible topics include the technological advances Ramco has made in designing and engineering and how these advances have helped consumers and the local economy.

Thanks for giving me your comments as soon as possible. If we are going to put one or more of these suggestions into practice before the facility opens in mid-April, we'll need to act before the end of the month.

Company logo

Introduction
supplies
background
and rationale

Body offers
concrete
evidence (costs,
personnel,
location) that
plan can work

Headings
reflect
organization

Closing
requests
feedback and
authorization

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- Strategies for Organizing a Memo

Organize your memos so that readers can find information quickly and act on it promptly. For longer, more complex communications, such as the memos in Figures 3.2 and 3.3, your message might be divided into three parts: (1) introduction, (2) body or discussion, and (3) conclusion. Regardless of how short or long your memo is, recall the three P's for success—plan what you are going to say; polish what you wrote before you send it; and proofread everything.

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Introduction

The introduction of your memo should do the following:

- Tell readers clearly about the issue, policy, or problem that prompted you to write.
- Explain briefly any background information the reader needs to know.
- Be specific about what you are going to solve a problem.

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Body (Discussion)

In the body, or discussion section, of your memo, help readers in these ways:

- State why a problem, procedure, or decision is important; who will be affected by it; and what the consequences are.
- Indicate why and what changes are necessary.
- Give precise dates, times, locations, and costs.

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Conclusion

In your conclusion, state specifically how you want the reader to respond to your memo. To get readers to act appropriately, you can do one or more of the following:

- Ask readers to call you if they have any questions, as in Figure 3.2.
- Request a reply—in writing, over the telephone, via e-mail, or in person—by a specific date, as in Figures 3.1 and 3.3.
- Provide a list of recommendations that readers are to accept, revise, or reject, as in Figure 3.3.

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3- Sending Memos: E-mail or Hard Copy?

A memo can be sent as a printed hard copy, as an e-mail, or in an e-mail attachment. Find out your company's policy. Increasingly, e-mail is replacing printed memos, but there are times when a hard-copy memo is preferred as essential.

Consider the level of official importance and confidentiality of your memo. If your memo is an official document, such as the policy outlined in Figure 3.2, you may not want to send it via e-mail, because it could easily be deleted or altered. Moreover, if your memo is confidential (e.g., an evaluation of a co-worker or vendor, a message containing sensitive financial or medical information), you may not want to send it via e-mail, because it could easily be forwarded or fall victim to hackers.

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4- Sending Faxes: Some Guidelines:

Even though you will use e-mail attachments and scan and send documents via e-mail, faxes are still used in the world of work. A fax is an original document copied and transmitted over telephone or computer lines. Faxes are particularly helpful either when you have only hard copy to send or when you want to send an original signed letter, contract, blueprint, artwork, or other document that you could not send via an e-mail transmission. Faxes demonstrate exactly what original documents look like and allow recipients to obtain a hard copy quickly.

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- Cover Page

When you send a fax, make sure your cover page includes the following information:

1. The name of the sender and his or her fax and phone numbers. The phone number is important because it enables the recipient to report an incomplete transmittal.
2. The name of the recipient and his or her fax and phone number. The recipient's correct fax and phone numbers should be included to ensure delivery of the message.

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3. The total number of pages being faxed. Note that the total number of pages includes the cover page itself.
4. A brief explanatory note that lets the recipient know what the fax is, what its purpose is, and how and when to respond to it.

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- Sending a Document

Follow these four guidelines to fax a clear and complete document:

- 1. Make sure the original documents you send are clear.** An unclear faxed document will be difficult for the recipient to read. For example, penciled comments may be too faint to fax clearly.
- 2. Avoid writing on the top, bottom, or edges of the documents to be faxed.** Any comments written on the outer edges may be cut off or blurred during transmittal.

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3. Do not send overly long faxes. Be careful about sending anything longer than three or four pages because you will tie up both your own and the recipient's fax machines.

4. Respect the recipient's confidentiality. Because faxes may be picked up by other employees in your office, don't assume your message will be confidential, unless, of course, the recipient has a private fax machine.

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5- E-Mail: Its Importance in the Workplace:

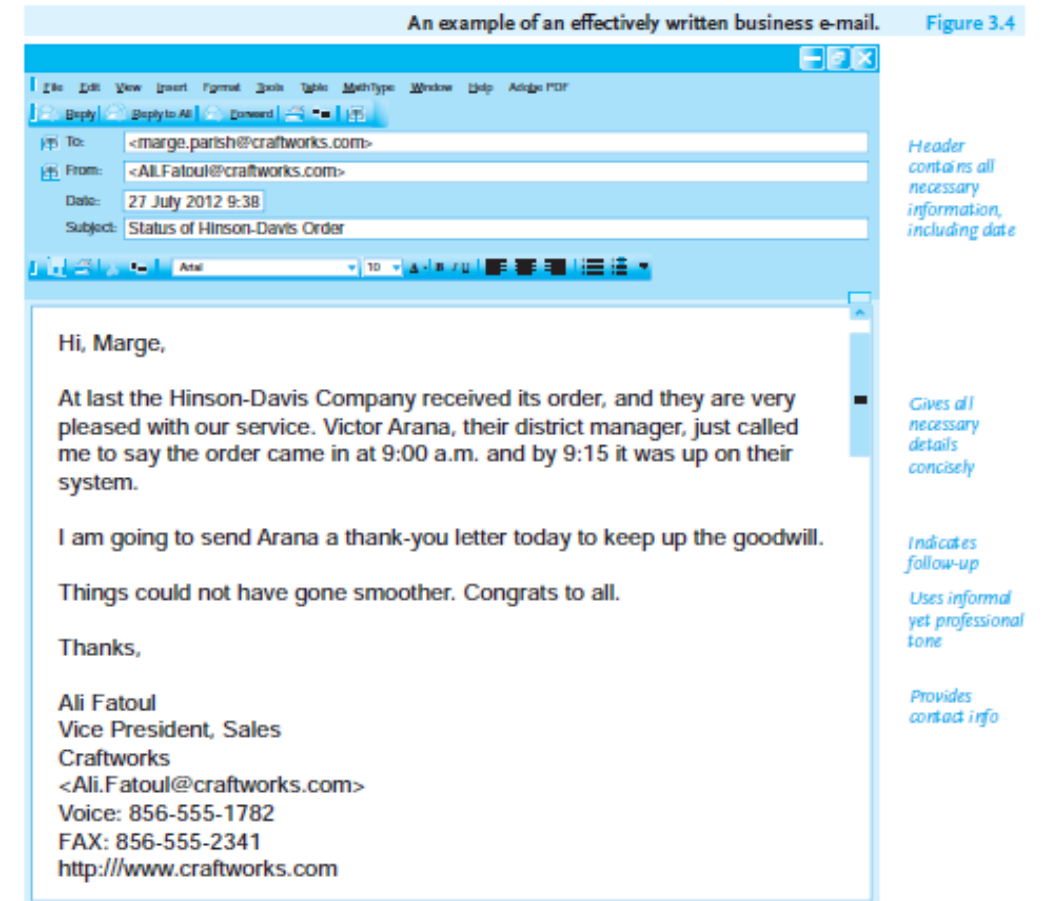
E-mail continues to be one of the most common forms of communication in the workplace. It is the lifeblood of every business or organization because it expedites communications within your firm as well as outside of it. Professionals in the world of work may receive hundreds of e-mails a day from supervisors, colleagues, clients, and vendors. Moreover, these e-mails may contain visuals, soundbites, and tables, lists, and statistical files. As we saw, memos, too, can be sent via e-mail.

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- Business E-Mail Versus Personal E-Mail

E-mail is an informal, relaxed type of business correspondence, far more so than a printed memo, letter, short report, or proposal. (However, e-mail should never be sent in place of a formal letter. Think of business e-mail as a polite, informative, and professional conversation—friendly, to the point, and always accessible, as in **Figure 3.4**.

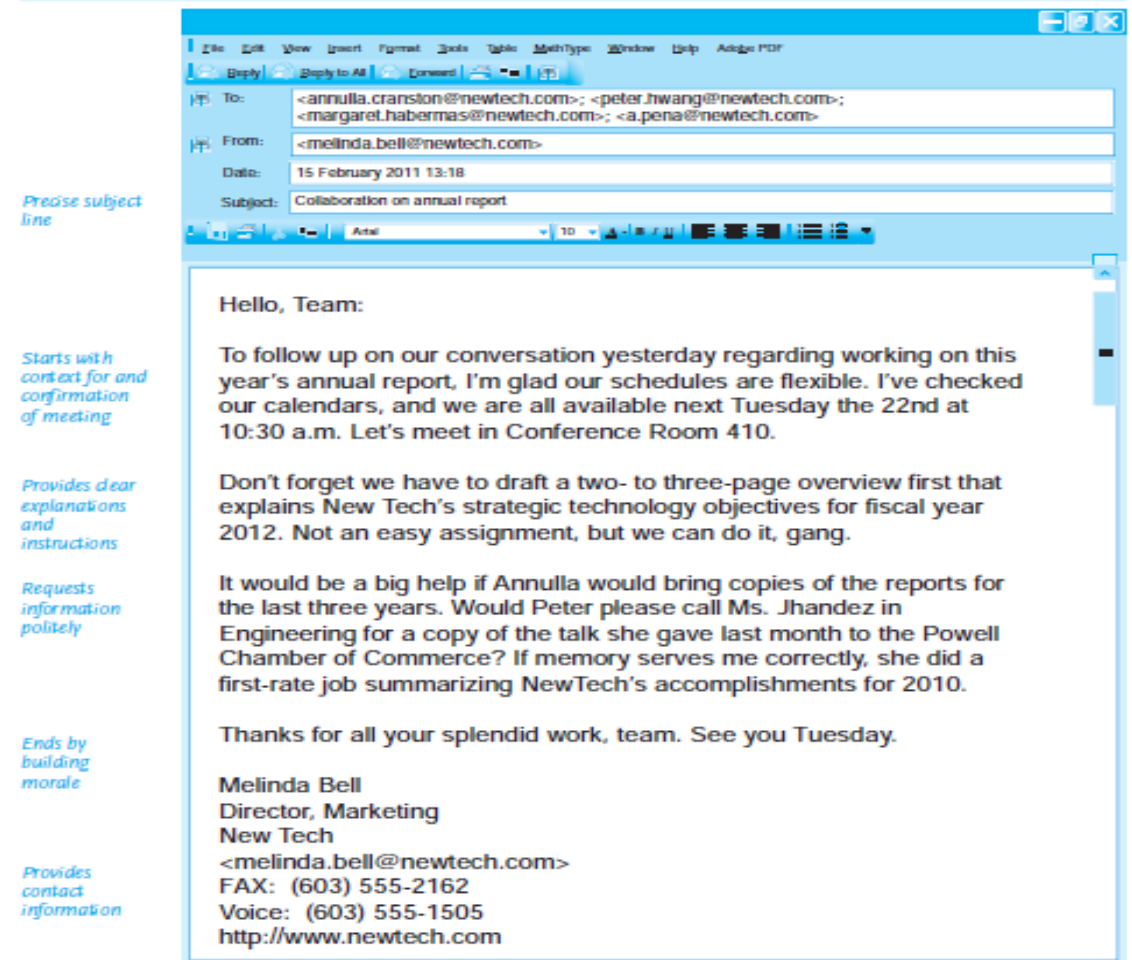


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Yet even though business e-mail is basically informal and casual, sending it does not mean you can forget about your responsibilities as an informed, cautious, and courteous employee and co-worker. **Figure 3.5** exemplifies an e-mail used as a diplomatic yet informal way of communicating with a collaborative team.

Figure 3.5 E-mail sent to a distribution list of co-workers.



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- Guidelines for Using E-Mail on the Job

When you prepare and organize your e-mail message, always consider your reader's specific needs as well as those of your company. Following the guidelines below will help you to write effective business e-mails.

1. Make sure your e-mail is confidential and ethical.
2. Make your e-mails easy to read.
3. Observe the rules of netiquette (Internet + etiquette).
4. Adopt a professional style.
5. Ensure that your e-mail is safe and secure.

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6- Instant Messages (IMs) for Business Use:

IMs are streamlined textual conversations online and sent close to real time. Think of a professional IM as somewhere between a phone call and an e-mail, or a chat with a colleague in the hallway. IM conversations are almost as instantaneous as phone conversations, but at the same time they provide written records of communications, just as e-mails do. Keep in mind, though, that IMs are not just for communications with your friends; they play a vital role in workplace correspondence.

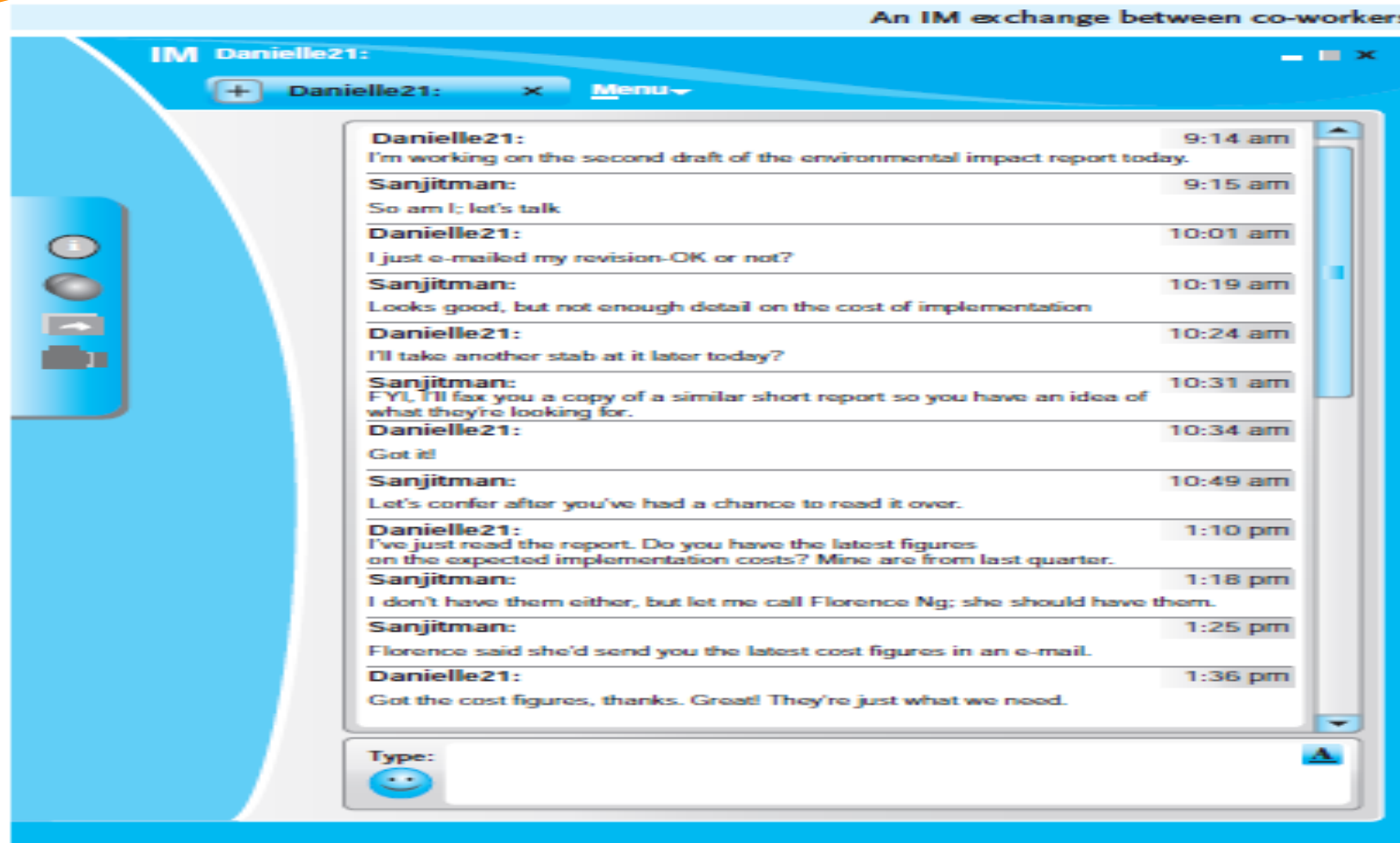
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In fact, researchers estimate that 90 percent of all businesses have or will use IMs for routine workplace correspondence. IMs allow you to communicate with co-workers and managers in the same office, at remote sites, or around the globe. Crossing time zones, IMs give you access to anyone around the world who is online and connected to the same service. Figure 3.8 is an example of a workplace IM conversation.

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An IM exchange between co-workers

Figure 3.8

IM user names are informal but appropriate

Messages are kept to one to two lines each

Message exchange sticks to a single topic

Writers keep in contact about ongoing discussion

Time stamp accompanies each message

Style is informal but polite

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- When to Use IMs Versus E-Mails

Like e-mails, IMs promote collaboration, provide a written record, and further global communication. But they are used for very different kinds of messages. E-mails are more detailed than IMs. By answering the following questions, you will be better able to determine when to send an IM or an e-mail.

1. How quickly does my message need to be sent/received? If you need information right away, use IM rather than an e-mail because recipients will most likely reply at once if they are online.

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- 2. How long or complex is my message?** If you need to transmit a message that, say, is more than a line or two (e.g., even extending to a paragraph or more) or contains multiple points, send an e-mail.
- 3.** If your message requires more time than a few brief back-and-forth communications, start an e-mail exchange that can extend over several hours or days.

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- Guidelines on Using IMs in the Workplace

observe these safe rules for your IMs.

- 1. Stay connected.** Indicate your messenger status—"Away," "Busy," "Offline."
- 2. Keep your messages short.** Get to the point right away. A line or two at most is enough for your IMs.
- 3. Write about one topic at a time.** Don't include information about two or three different topics in one IM exchange.

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4. **Avoid unfamiliar abbreviations.** As in an e-mail, commonly understood abbreviations such as “FYI” or “ASAP” are fine—even encouraged—in IMs.
5. **Make sure your message is professional.** Even though IMs are the most informal business messages you can send, don’t disregard professional courtesy and ethics.
6. **Organize your contact (buddy) lists into separate groups,** such as business, co-workers, friends/family, etc.

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7. **Don't use IMs to send sensitive/confidential information** about personnel, financial, hiring, or medical/legal issues.
8. **Watch for viruses.** Be careful about sharing files or opening attachments via IMs.
9. **Safeguard the privacy of your contact lists** as well as the contents of any IM attachments.

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7- Blogs:

Like e-mails and IMs, blogs (an abbreviation of “Web logs”) are important tools for e-correspondence for employees, managers, and customers. A blog is more than just a casual journal or diary in the world of work. Think of a business blog as an evolving website or daily business newspaper for which employees and management write regular columns, or posts.

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- Internal/External Blogs

Blogs can be either internal or external, depending on the intended audience. **Internal blogs** are designed exclusively for employee readers. Employees can interact by posting their comments and asking questions, express their views on new policies, announce events and introduce new staff, and communicate up and down the corporate ladder.

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External blogs allow companies to express their side of the story—their interpretation of events and their clarification of the issues—quickly and publicly. But besides being a forum for the company's viewpoints, external blogs are a fast way to get the information out about new or updated product and services, expanded locations, changes in technology, product recalls, efforts at greening an environment, community service, or just about anything related to a company's mission and activities.

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- Guidelines for Writing a Business Blog:

Following the guidelines below will help you write an effective (external) business blog.

- 1. Respect your company's protocols.** Don't post anything discriminatory or confidential about an employer, co-workers, product, or service.
- 2. Positively project your company's image.** Keep your company's history, mission, and reputation in mind when you prepare your blog.
- 3. Avoid making your company liable for false or misleading information.**
- 4. Target your audience.** Try to reach current and potential customers by anticipating their questions and needs.

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5. **Date every blog posting so readers can follow a conversation.** Update your blog to make sure your information is current.
6. **Write an attention-grabbing headline.**
7. **Share your story.** Draw from your experiences. Offer your own perspectives.
8. **Adopt a casual, conversational style.** Be upbeat and succinct. Emphasize how and why your comments will help readers.
9. **Structure your blog.** so that your first paragraph comes to the point at once and tells readers what you are blogging about and why.

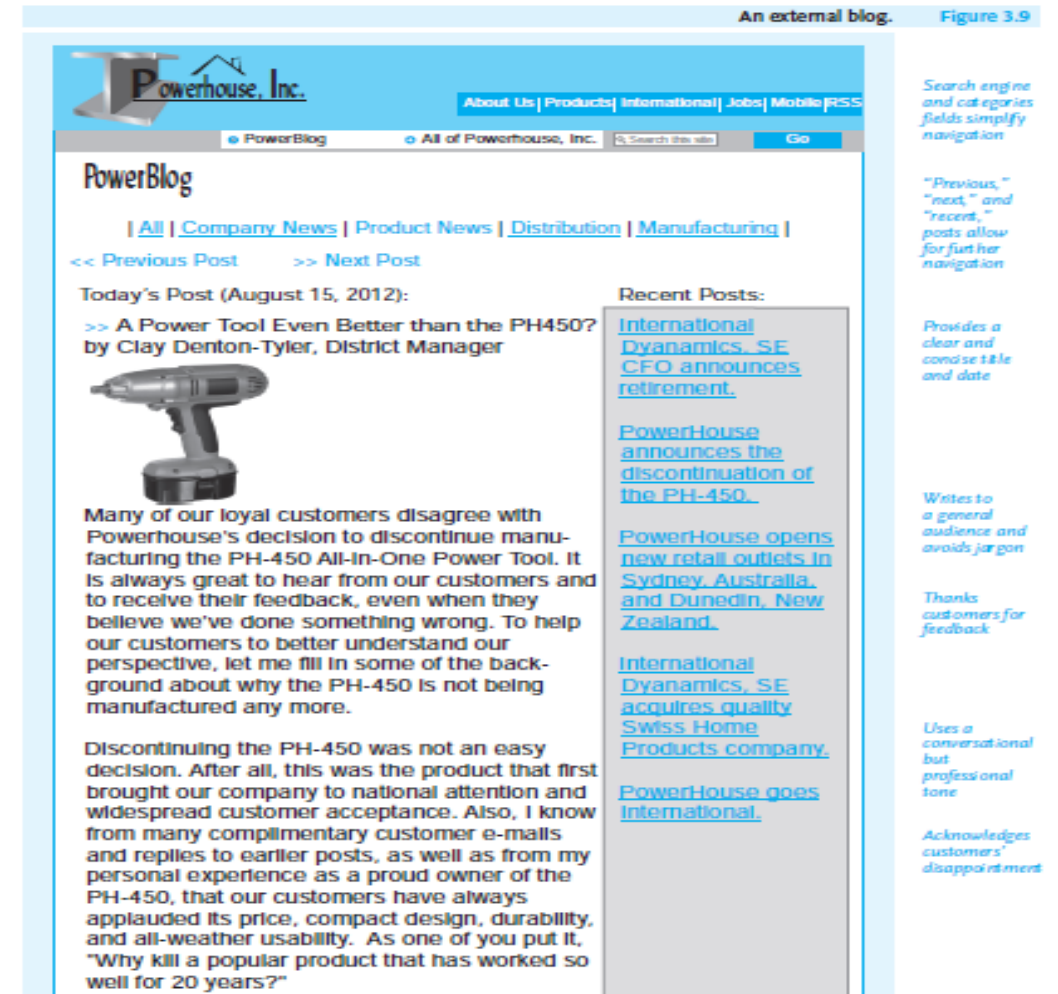
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10. Make it easy for readers to respond to your posting. Tell them where and how to reply.

11. Document your sources. If you use someone else's statistic, surveys, illustrations, or ideas, first get permission from the individual or the company that owns the copyright.

12. Include relevant visuals. The blog in Figure 3.9 clearly shows what the new model looks like.



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8- Routine Correspondence: A Final Word:

In today's global marketplace, you can expect to write the types of correspondence discussed in this chapter as a regular and vital part of your job. They are quick, brief, to-the-point, and informal, the workhorses of the business world. Always remember, though, that they are professional business communications that represent your company and should portray you as a proficient and ethical employee. As this chapter has stressed, to write successful memos, faxes, e-mails, IMs, and company blogs, follow these essential guidelines:

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- (1) Plan your correspondence—don't just write and click.
- (2) Politely address your reader's questions and problems.
- (3) Make sure your information is accurate and up-to-date.
- (4) Adhere to your company security/privacy rules.
- (5) Proofread for spelling, grammar, punctuation, style, and tone.

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Resources:

Successful Writing at Work, Concise
Third Edition,

By: Philip C. Kolin

University of Southern Mississippi

Chapter 3

