

CHAPTER 2

SOLUTIONS

Planning Business Messages

Note: Solutions to Chapter Review questions 1-10 appear in the Annotated Instructor's Edition.

Critical Thinking Discussion Guide

- 11. The use of digital communication has overtaken face-to-face and voice-to-voice communication in the workplace. How has this shift changed the fundamental process of communication? (L.O. 1)**

The authors of this text argue that the basic elements of communication have not changed as a result of digital transmission. More messages are being transmitted faster, farther, and more cheaply than ever. Successful communication still requires the transmission of meaning from sender to receiver. However, others might contend that communication has profoundly changed as a result of new technologies. In response, everyone acknowledges that e-mail and micromessaging media have shortened messages and response times. In addition, the communication process has changed from unidirectional to multidirectional. Yet, to be successful, communication still requires that meaning be transferred effectively—regardless of the media involved.

- 12. Is it necessary to follow a writing process when preparing a short message? A long message? Why or why not? (L.O. 2)**

Following a writing process is helpful for any size message. Although short messages take less time, following a systematic process helps you avoid writer's block and the necessity of starting over once you get to the end of the message and realize what you were trying to say. Analyzing your purpose, thinking about your audience, collecting information, organizing your ideas, composing carefully, and revising a message before sending it will always result in an improved product. Following the process also saves time in the long run.

- 13. In their e-mails, writers sometimes use abbreviations such as FYI (“for your information”) and ASAP (“as soon as possible”). Others sometimes use LOL (“laughing out loud”), 4 u (“for you”), and gr8 (“great”). What’s the difference between these abbreviations, and how do they contribute to one’s professional image? (L.O. 4)**

The first two abbreviations (FYI and ASAP) are acceptable in e-mails because most business writers understand their meaning. The last three are informal, and many consider them unprofessional. When business writers rely on shortcuts such as B4 (“before”), they may be perceived as ignorant, lazy, or adolescent. Using such abbreviations in messages to friends, of course, is perfectly acceptable. But in the workplace, it's more professional to stick to accepted abbreviations.

14. **A grocery clerk helps a customer with purchases to her car, and the clerk says No problem or Not a problem when thanked. What’s the problem with these expressions? What could be said instead? Why do you think some people are now adopting these expressions instead of the conventional You’re welcome?**

The problem is that No problem sounds negative and may be inappropriate, as in this instance. A number of alternatives can work as well: You are very welcome, My pleasure, Happy to help, We are happy to serve you, We aim to please, Certainly, and Enjoy. People may be switching to Not a problem or No problem because they are bored with the conventional You’re welcome, which in itself is not altogether meaningful. The new expression seems more contemporary and hip, but it doesn’t seem to fit all circumstances.

15. **To focus on the “you” view, should writers scrub all uses of I and we from their writing? Why or why not? (L.O. 4)**

Although writers are encouraged to use the “you” view, doing so does not mean that they must remove all first-person pronouns. Doing so would make a message sound unnatural and contrived. It would also be extremely difficult to achieve in most first-person messages. Conscientious business writers strive to focus on the audience, but they should not sterilize their messages by removing all uses of I and we.

Note: Solutions to the Writing Improvement Exercises are provided in the Annotated Instructor’s Edition.

Communication Workshop: Career Skills Perfecting Your Critical-Thinking, Problem-Solving, and Decision-Making Skills

1. **Identify and clarify the problem.** Students will first focus on the problem of the chaos caused by multiple lines. Where should customers stand?
2. **Gather information.** When solving any problem, we need information. Students will probably relate their experiences at banks and airlines (which often have roped areas to clearly force single lines), sporting events (where fans frequently crowd concessionaires), and retail stores (where people often politely form lines at checkout counters). Grocery stores have multiple lines, but they are physically separated.
3. **Evaluate the evidence.** Evidence would logically come from observing customer lines at McDonald’s stores and customer lines at other types of retail establishments. At how many McDonald’s stores was customer behavior observed? Where did the evidence regarding alternative customer behavior originate? Was that information based on a wide number of retail establishments? Was it documented? Was it anecdotal?
4. **Consider the alternatives.** Many people prefer the orderliness of single lines. Customers know that they are being treated fairly. No one can crowd ahead. However, when big crowds of people are involved, the line can look very long. At McDonald’s a

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single line might snake around and at rush times actually flow out the door, giving the impression that the restaurant is very crowded. Rushed customers might take one look and leave to find a less crowded restaurant. However, major competitors seem to have gone to single lines. Wendy's International and Burger King use single lines successfully. By the way, a Wendy's spokesperson said, "With stopwatches we've proved [a single line] is faster. But consumer perception is the only thing that counts." Setting up line areas separated by physical barriers might crowd the counter area and make it difficult for disabled people to stay in line. As an alternative, students might suggest that one or two of the McDonald's try using a single-line system for several months.

5. **Choose the best alternative.** Students will select one alternative and offer reasons supporting it in a memo or in class discussion. Most important is that they go through the critical-thinking steps to arrive at a decision and that they are able to defend their solution.