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# Training & Discussion on **Effective Writing Skills**

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# Goals & Objectives

- Understanding written communication
- Understanding importance of possessing good writing skills
- Knowing about different types of documents used for business writing
- Discussing company's current writing skill-set among employees
- Reviewing, Analyzing & Suggesting organizational improvement in written communication

# Writing?

- One of the best methods to communicate
- Writing is one of the oldest known forms of communication
- In today's age of information and technology, writing has become a lost art

# Why Written Communication?

- Creates a permanent record
- Allows you to store information for future reference
- Easily distributed
- All recipients receive the same information
- Necessary for legal and binding documentation



# Writing Skills?

- A career requirement
- More than a “nice thing to have”
  - a necessity
- Your Writing = Your Personality
- As a professional, it is crucial to write well

# Writing Skills?

- The ability to write does not require a unique talent or an outstanding mental ability
- Everyone has the basic skills necessary to write well
- A basic understanding of writing and a commitment to writing well in all situations is needed as a professional

# Questions a writer asks

- How do I begin?
- What is my purpose?
- How do I make my point clear?
- How do I create a logical flow?
- How do I say what I mean?
- How do I avoid grammatical errors?
- How can I make my message brief?
- How can I create a visual effect?

# The Writing Process

- Planning
- Writing
- Quality Control



# The Writing Process

## Planning

- Keep objectives in mind and research the topic
- Think about the audience
- Outlining helps organize thoughts

# The Writing Process

## Writing

- Follow your outline, use your handbook
- Inspiration is acceptable but must be carefully reviewed
- Use the interview approach to supplement the outline (who, what, where, when, how)

# The Writing Process

## Quality Control

- Reread your work
- Be critical of your own work

# Considerations while writing

- Who?
- What?
- When?
- Why?
- Where?
- How?



# Good Writing

- **Completeness:** all information needed is provided
- **Correctness:** relevant and precise information
- **Credibility:** support your argument
- **Clarity:** should not be vague, confusing, ambiguous
- **Conciseness:** to the point
- **Consideration:** anticipate the reader's reaction
- **Vitality:** use the active voice rather than the passive voice

# Business Documents

A good business document should always answer the following questions:

- What is this document about?
- Why has it come to be?
- Who wrote it?
- How is it organized?
- What is it trying to accomplish
- What supports the conclusion?
- What problem or opportunity does it address?

# Spelling and Grammar

- It is important in all business communications to use *proper grammar* and *correct spelling*
- What you write and how you write could reflect a positive or negative image
- Sloppy and/or poorly written communications could be perceived as a lack of caring



# Spelling and Grammar Tips

- Proofread communications before sending
- Use spell and grammar check if available
- Make sure to have subject, verb and tense agreement

- Ensure proper word usage:

*affect/ effect*

*among/ between*

*can/ may*

*there/ their*

*shall/ will*

*than/ then*



# Types of Writing

- E-mails
- Letters and Memos
- Agendas
- Reports
- Promotional Material
- Academic Documents
- Research (scientific) manuscripts
- White Papers

# E-Mails

- E-mail is fast, convenient and easy
- Email is now the dominant method of communicating in business.
- Convenient for communicating with people in different places and different time zones
- Easier to communicate with people who understand written English but don't speak it well
- Excellent mechanism for follow-up or action items after a meeting
- Messages can be saved and retrieved easily

# E-Mails (Challenges)



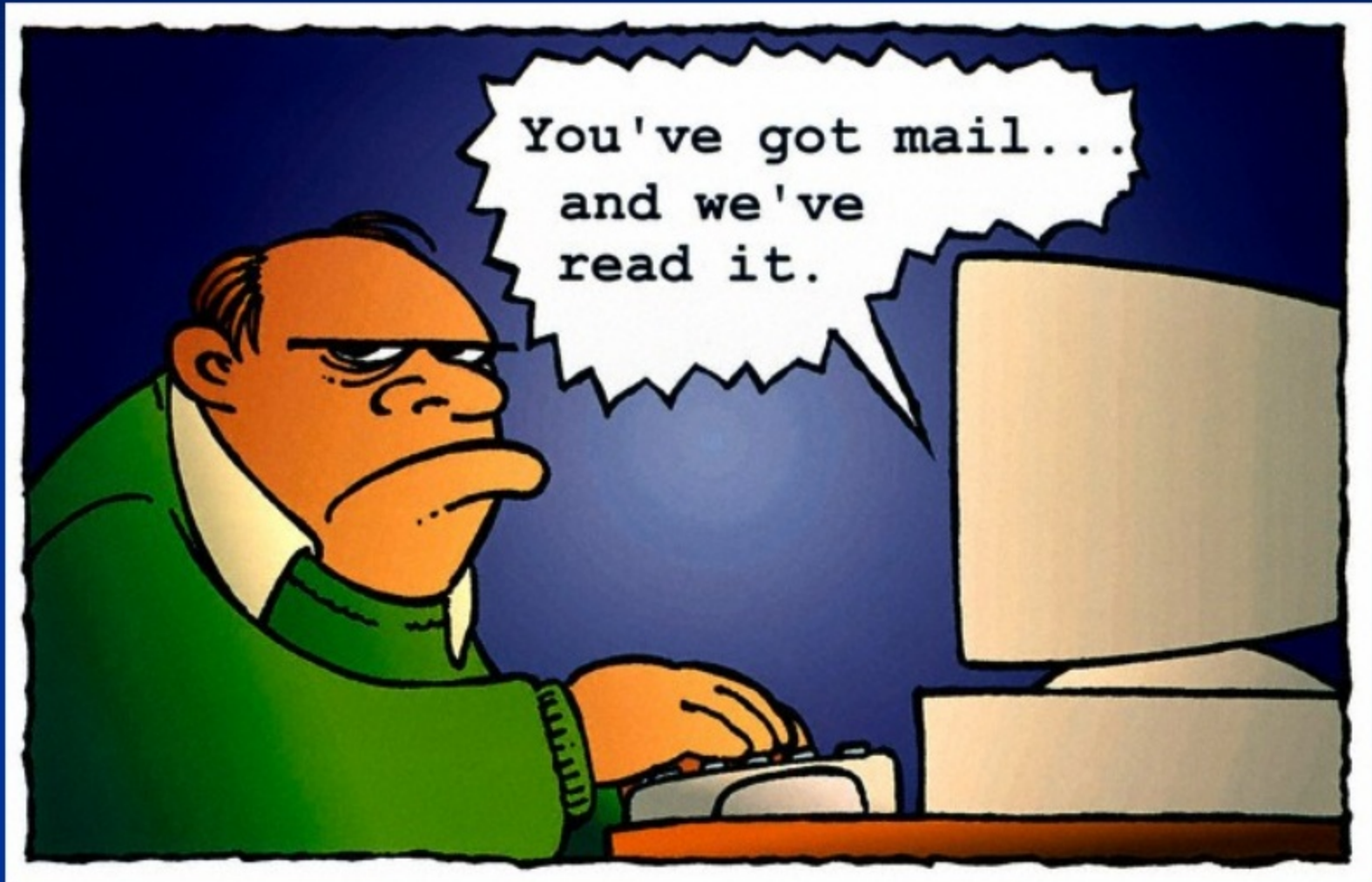
Email is not always  
confidential -- emails can  
sometime be obtained from  
central network even if deleted  
from personal computers



**USE WITH CARE....**



# Watch Out!





# E-Mails (Challenges)

- Email is often sent out without re-reading, proof-reading and other standards applied to written communications. We press the send button too soon!
- Emails can be forwarded and sent to others without your approval or knowledge

# E-Mails

- Many users do not realize the potential outcome of what is being sent through e-mails
- Business e-mails should be concise and to the point
- The language used in business e-mails should not be overly informal

# E-Mail Manners

- Always include a subject or e-mail title
- Avoid the “ready, aim, fire” approach
- Avoid “flaming”
- Don’t be too-casual
- Consider if e-mail is the appropriate tool
- Make one point per e-mail
- Make the font user-friendly
- Don’t use all capital or lower-case letters



# Letters and Memos

- Letters and memos are the basic vehicles of business communication
- They should be brief and make a single point (*no more than 2 pages*)
- Letters are for external communications
- Memos are for internal communications



# Letters and Memos

All business letters should include:

- Heading or Letterhead
- Date
- Inside address
- Salutation
- Subject line
- Body
- Closing and Signature
- Enclosures or 'CC'

# Letters and Memos

All business memos should include:

- TO: (To whom is the memo directed?)
- FROM: (Who wrote the memo?)
- DATE:
- SUBJECT: or RE:

# Types of Letters and Memos

- Letters of request
- Sales letters
- Response letters
- Cover letters, recommendations
- Letters of collection
- Letters to vendors and suppliers
- Memos that deal with employee issues
- Memos that make announcements
- Memos for policies and procedures

“The greatest problem in communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished.”

- *George Bernard Shaw*



# Have you hit your target?



- In written communication most confusion & frustration are caused by failing to be specific
- Make it clear, brief and concise

# Reports

- Define the main point
- Define the goals and objectives
- Collect the evidence needed to support the main point
- Organize the report
- State the conclusions and recommendations

# Organization of Reports

- Title
- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Materials and methods
- Results and discussions
- Conclusions
- Recommendations

# Common Errors & Tips

- Company name usage
- Shortened words (thru, condn, mgmt, ref, lib)
- Repetition of words  
**Example:** file the file in the file folder.
- Use of ampersand (&)
- Use of **bold**
- UPPER CASE



# Common Errors & Tips

## Punctuation

- Use commas to separate elements in a series, and to separate ideas or clauses.
- Use correct punctuation in abbreviations; e.g., for example i.e., that is etc., et cetera
- Do not use multiple punctuation marks, for example: !!! ... ???, etc.
- Punctuation of lists and tables

# Common Errors & Tips

- Hyphen and dash usage
- Confusion between its and it's
- Use of apostrophe
- Abbreviations and acronyms
- Use active voice
- Do not switch tenses very often
- Proofread for accuracy

# 10 Commandments

1. Know what you want to say before you say it.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Use bullet points.
4. WIIFM (What's in It For Me?)
5. Don't get bogged down
6. Call to action
7. Edit
8. Spell check
9. Take 5 before hitting send
10. Follow up



# Our Company

## Communication with clients:

- 50% support, 35% sales, 15% developers
- 30% Emails 45% MSN Chats, 20% Phone Calls  
(in case of local/national customers, around 50% phone calls are used and developers are more involved in implementations)



# Our Company

- Level of written communication:  
**Not-so-good**
- As most of the support/sales people are from IT background (only), they are more knowledgeable in technical terms but need lot of training on communication, especially in written communication.
- Increase in written communication required

# Conclusions

- Utilize full potential of written communication
- Use frequent e-mails as per your requirement
- What you write will ultimately define you as a professional to your colleagues and superiors
- Match the appropriate communication method to the recipient
- Eliminating excessive or unnecessary communication will improve your workflow
- Mastering these skills will improve your ability and enhance your career



# Discussion?

