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Communication Skills
Training Manual

Prepared By:

Ms. Leneka Rhoden, Managing Director

Ms. Tavia-Ann Carr, Intern

INTRODUCTION

This training manual aims to provide guidelines and instructions to ensure that you are fully equipped with the right techniques and skills that will enable you to effectively communicate in business and its components. The manual will assess all aspects of ethical communication and put a special focus on letter and business email writing. At the end of this training, you should be knowledgeable in:

- Business communication
- Business writing and written communication
- Business email writing
- Letter writing
- Developing and delivering business presentations
- Communicating through technology
- Social media
- Communicating different messages

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COMMUNICATING IN BUSINESS

There are seven (7) principles that are used to evaluate verbal or written communication:

- Clarity of the message
- Conciseness of message
- Objective of the message
- Consistency
- Completeness of the message being conveyed
- Relevance of the message to the topic/matter at hand
- The structuring of the message displays that the audience's knowledge and understanding was taken into consideration

The message is first created in one's head and is then <u>encoded</u> into a form that permits and enhance understanding. The audience, in order to receive the message, has to <u>decode</u> the encoded message. This process is known as the social communication model. But also, in this process is a factor regarded as 'noise'. This 'noise' is a disruptive factor that distorts the message that is trying to be conveyed. However, when the audience provides feedback, it allows chances to provide clarity so that there are additional notes made to create mutual understanding.

In addition to verbal and written communication, there is also spoken communication. In this type of communication, the inclusion of verbal, listening and non-verbal communication all occur at the same time.

WRITING IN BUSINESS AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

There are steps that must be taken when writing in business. The first step is to **_plan_**:

In the planning step, we prepare the message that we want to convey. This process should encourage thinking such as _why am I writing this message (what is the message about), what do I want my audience to understand from this message?_

After this, we move unto the next step which is to **_write._** The message that you planned is encoded in a format that enhances and allows understanding from your audience so that the message can be easily decoded. Ensure to exclude irrelevant details from the message and focus on being clear and concise.

Next, we **_revise._** Pay attention to the layout and spacing of the message you structured. Most importantly, ensure that you proof-read.

EMAIL WRITING

There are different types of emails that can be written in business. These types are the **internal, external** and the **customer emails**. Whatever the occasion, an email can be written to inform of the details.

Internal Emails

There are six (6) features:

- *Subject line*

It should quickly and concisely summarize the contents of the email in such a way that makes the recipient want to open the message.

- *Greeting*

The goal is to sound professional yet friendly

- *Opening*

If the message is long with many details, then an opening is necessary. Ensure that clarity is provided on why the recipient is receiving the email.

- *Body*

The body must be concise. All the same, ensure that you are paying particular attention to the sentence structure and that each sentence has a clear idea or connected points which makes the sentences mor digestible.

- *Closing*

The close should be direct and specific in the expectations. It should include a call to action with specific desired outcomes.

- *Signature*

Below are examples of internal emails:

From: John Jaurès [johnjon@productive.com]

Sent: Tuesday, October 21, 2017 10:13 AM

To: Team Members

Subject: Changes to Agenda

Hi Everyone,

Here are some additions to the agenda for our meeting on Thursday:

- New software installation
- Changes to protocol
- Email monitoring policy

If you have any additions, please let me know by the end of day tomorrow.
Thanks,
John

From: daraujo@teamcloud.com [mailto:daraujo@teamcloud.com]

Sent: Tuesday, February 08, 2017 2:06 PM

To: Eddie Bangston

Subject: Team Cloud Employee Benefits

WELCOME TO TeamCloud!

Team Cloud is committed to providing our employees with the highest quality of benefits at an affordable price.

In our efforts to make your orientation a pleasant one, we have implemented a web based employee self-service system to assist you in completing the new hire process, including benefits enrollment.

A personalized account has been created for you. To login, please visit

www.mybenefits.com and login using the User ID and Password provided at the end of this email.

Before logging in, please be sure to disable any Pop-Up Blockers or adjust your settings to allow pop-ups from mybenefits.com. Also, it is helpful you have all your dependents' social security numbers, birthdates, etc.

Please log in as soon as possible. This system is designed to provide you with information regarding our benefit programs to make the enrollment process more efficient. If you need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Once again, welcome to TeamCloud!

Best Regards,

Derrick Araujo

Human Resources Generalist

866.419.4111

User ID: ebangston

Password: teamcloud1

External Emails

There are different emails that can be written for external purposes:

- *Requests*

These types of emails should be direct, especially in the subject line. You should provide details of the request in the body of the message and close your message with a call to action and an appreciation.

ABC Software

To: Mike Scott

CC: Western Sales Team

Subject: Exclusive Event: Executive Summit On Business Agility

Dear Mike,

Senior leaders like you know that delivering faster is critical to adapt to rapidly shifting customer expectations, competitive shifts, and regulatory changes. If you're facing these challenges, then most likely, so are your peers.

We thought you'd be interested in attending ABCs upcoming "Executive Summit on Business Agility" on June 15, where senior executives can engage with peers and co-create fresh ideas to solve their toughest business challenges.

- Have meaningful, face-to-face interactions with other F500 senior leaders.
- Learn directly from executives who are tackling similar blockers.
- Participate in facilitated, expert-led discussions on how to architect your whole business system for speed, steering, and opportunity.

Please include this invitation code ES25V on the Request to Attend form. As an additional benefit of participating in the Executive Summit, enjoy a complimentary pass to the ABC-ON!™ business agility conference, June 15–17—in Phoenix, Arizona at the AAA 4-Diamond JW Marriott Phoenix Desert Ridge Resort where we will have Josh Jones, Dan Atware, and Jalissa O'Neill, as our distinguished keynote speakers.

To create a valuable exchange of ideas, this event is limited to 50 attendees. The event is filling up fast, so please respond within the next few days.

Best regards,

Dan Smith

Senior VP/ Sales

ABC Software

Claims

These types of emails should have the major point stated immediately. The subject line should be used to express the reason for the message. The closing aspect of the email should be used to restate the desired action and should showcase appreciation.

October 15, 2017

To: General Manager Best Eastern Hotels

From: Sheila Eastman

Subject: Erroneous Charge on My Stay October 4

Dear Mr. Smith,

Upon receipt of my hotel bill from my stay on October 4, I noticed I had been mistakenly charged for a room service meal. I did not have room service during my brief stay and would expect an immediate credit in the amount of $64.73 to my credit card account.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Best regards,

Sheila Eastman

Adjustments

This email should begin with an immediate reference to the prior correspondence. The main point should be stated immediately and the body entail details regarding on how the request is being handled. The closing should reflect a positive statement referring to the fact that the adjustment has been made.

October 16, 2017

To: Sheila Eastmen

From: Brian Smith

Subject: Your Credit for the error on your October 4 bill

Dear Ms. Eastmen,

Thank you for your message of October 15 requesting a credit for a mistaken charge to your bill. After a quick review, you are quite correct about the error in your bill. A credit of $64.73 has been issued to your credit card company and should be reflected in your next statement.

On behalf of Best Eastern Hotels, we sincerely apologize and hope that our prompt response to your request restores your faith in our company.

Sincerely,

Brian Smith

General Manager

Best Eastern Hotels

Customer Emails

There is one major step that must be taken in order to write an email that deepens a relationship with a customer and not turn them away from the company.

1. Personalize the email so that there is a tone of courtesy and positivity no matter the type of message being sent.

April 2, 2018

Re: A suggestion for your next release

To: John Goodenow

Dear John,

Thank you for taking the time to let us know of your idea. I brought it up at yesterday's project status meeting with the developers, and everyone reacted positively to your suggestion. In fact, we wanted to get more details from you about how you would like to see the feature to work. Would you be available later this week to spend a few minutes on the phone with Josh and Alicia, who own that area of the product architecture, to discuss?

Please let us know when a convenient time for the call would be. Once again, thanks for being a great customer and providing such useful feedback.

Best regards,

Bob

Senior Product Manager

ABC Software

In writing emails that contain bad news, it is good to state the bad news clearly, but also structure the message in such a way that expresses sincerity from the customer.

April 2, 2018

*Bob Josephson

Re: A suggestion for your next release

To: John Goodenow

Dear John,

ABC Software is considered to be one of the most customer-driven software companies in the industry. Tantamount to that reputation is our responsiveness to customer suggestions for product features.

We thank you for your feature suggestion, and we are sorry that we will not be able to consider your suggestion for the next release as we simply do not have the staff to implement such a feature. As you may know, the growth of the software industry has put increasing pressure on the ability of companies to hire software developers.

We hope that you will continue to remain a loyal user of ABC and will not hesitate to send your suggestions to us in the future.

Best regards,

Bob

Senior Product Manager

ABC Software

Responding to a critical message from a customer

When a critical message is received, follow the following guidelines:

1. Contact the customer immediately
2. Describe immediate remedy to the problem
3. Describe why the problem occurred
4. Describe action being taken to correct the problem going forward
5. Offer positive thoughts for the future

September 22, 2018

*Sara Hernandez

Re: Why doesn't your app work on my device?

To: Mark Griffiths

Dear Mark,

Thank you so much for sending in your inquiry. We took a look at the information and screenshots you provided, and it looks like your device may not have its location functionality turned on, which can prevent our app from working correctly. For guidance on turning on your location functionality, please look at the attached guide.

If this doesn't resolve the issue, please let us know, and we can work with you to solve the issue.

Sincerely,

Sara Hernandez

Customer Support Representative

Responding to a customer's request

Use the subject line to reinforce the main point. Provide your answer to the request right away in the opening of your message. Use the body of the message to provide details, explanation, and any additional details. Most importantly, to secure that positive customer experience you wish for your client, close with a summary and expression of appreciation and good will.

July 31, 2018

*Dave Waddell

Re: Your July 25 Inquiry Regarding Additional Education Discount

To: Dan O'Connell

Dear Dan,

Thank you for your message regarding Plato Publishing's discount to academic institutions. Yes, we do offer an additional discount for Higher Education purchases.

Our website has the complete schedule of the sliding scale used to calculate volume discounts off our list price. For academic institutions such as yours, we add an additional 25% discount to the volume discount price. There is also a monthly list of publications that are being offered at special prices that also will receive the additional academic discount.

I have attached a PDF list of our complete offering for your convenience.

We greatly appreciate your ongoing business. Please contact me if you have any further questions or needs.

Sincerely,

Dave Waddell

Customer Service Manager

Plato Publishing

LETTER WRITING

Letter writing follows the similar rules as that in email writing. However, there are few features that must be added into a business letter.

- *Sender's Address, Date, Inside Address*

This is included in the letterhead or at the top of the letter one line above the date. Please note that the sender's name or title should not be included in this part of the letter because it is included in the letter's closing. In this portion of the letter, only the street address, city and zip code should be added.

The date should indicate when the letter is written. If the letter is written over a time period, write the date that the letter was completed.

The inside address is the recipient's address. Try to include the specific individual to whom you are writing.

- *Salutation*

Use the same name (first name preferably) as the inside address, including the personal title. Leave one line blank after the salutation. If the reader's gender is unknown, use a nonsexist salutation such as their job title followed by the recipient's name.

- *Body*

Be concise and clear in the message being conveyed. Begin the body with a warm opening and then state the main point. Afterwards in the next paragraph, justify the importance of the main points and in the upcoming paragraphs, continue your justification with background information and supporting details. The closing paragraph should restate the purpose of the letter and a request of an expected action.

For block and modified block formats, single space and left justify each paragraph within this aspect of the letter. Here should be a blank line between each paragraph.

- *Closing*

The closing should have the same format as the date – starting at the vertical point of the page. The closing should also be one line after the last paragraph in the body. Capitalize the first word only and leave four lines between the closing and the sender's name for a signature.

TIPS ON EMAIL AND LETTER WRITING

Date: April 1, 2018

To: Rennata Johnson, CEO of Diversity NOW <rjohnson@diversitynow.com>

From: Dennis Hoffman <shoffman@qcom.com>

Re: Diversity Day

The details you requested for your much anticipated April 23 talk follow. To promote your talk, could you please provide the title?

Your expertise in corporate diversity training makes this a great day. Here is your schedule for the day:

- Opening coffee, 8:30 a.m., West Conference room. Leadership team.
- First session, 9 a.m., Theater room. All associates
- Lunch and message time, 11 a.m. On your own
- Second session, 1:30 p.m., Theater room. All associates
- Debrief, 2:30 p.m. West Conference room. Leadership team.

The details for the day's brochure must go to the printer a week ahead. Could you please provide the titles to include? If there is any other information you think important, please let me know.

Your reputation and experience means so much to the employees of QCom. Please send me the titles by April 15. I look forward to meeting you personally.

Dennis

dhoffman@qcom.com

303-101-3843

TIPS

- ✓ Spell out the date to make is easy for the reader. April 1, 2018

- ✓ Respect the speaker by spelling her organization's name right. Diversity NOW

- ✓ Provide a subject line that helps the speaker with a bit more detail: "QCom Diversity Day Details and Confirmation Request"

- ✓ Start with the main idea and focus on the receiver: The details you requested for your much anticipated talk follow. To promote your talk, could you please provide the title?

- ✓ Create a visual layout for the message that makes the detail easier to find. Use of paragraphs. Use of lists.

- ✓ Continue focusing on the reader with a you view. Starting more of the sentences with "you" or the topics the reader cares about.

- ✓ Use parallel structure to help detail stand out. In bullet list.

- ✓ Create focus and action in the closing paragraph. Specific speaker compliment and specific reminder date.

DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING BUSINESS PRESENTATIONS

Creating a good presentation involves research and analysis and reflection. In developing presentations, keep in mind the priorities: purpose, audience and message. Having these priorities in check will determine the content, presentation tools and techniques that are employed.

Consider the audience's desired outcome, whether they would prefer a presentation with lots of design or one that is simple, whether or not they appreciate interactive presentations. And most importantly, test drive your presentation.

COMMUNICATING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Technology is always changing. However, no matter how often technology is changed, following these points will help you sift through the advancements and to keep abreast of it all.

- The point of the meeting is the content of the discussion or presentation, not the technology itself.

- Your colleagues' comfort level with technology will range so be patient with them and with yourself.

- Practice with the technology.

- Plan the scheduling of the meeting to include enough time for participants to download software, if necessary, and make sure it runs on their systems.

- Send clear instructions to participants well in advance to simplify the process for them as much as possible.

- Create at least one back-up plan—preferably two—in case the technology doesn't work for everyone.

- Send an agenda to participants that includes time for the technology.

- Learn how to present information, conduct discussion, and generate next steps appropriately and effectively within the technology platform being used.

- Conceive a plan to follow up with information, notes, conclusions, and next steps after the meeting has concluded.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a relatively inexpensive and efficient way to express the company's communications. It's used to accomplish each of the following:

1. Bring services or products to market; that is, increase awareness.
2. Engage customers; often with respect to service issues or problems.
3. Encourage a "buzz" or interest around a company, its product(s) or service(s).

COMMUNICATING DIFFERENT MESSAGES

There are different types of messages that can be communicated within the organization. These include:

➢ *Informative*

This includes sharing of important messages in a professional and unbiased manner. They can have the format of short, long formal or in a casual tone, with a focus internally or externally, and can even be direct or indirect depending on the situation. The purpose of informative messages is to promote understanding, encourage action, stimulate thinking, and promote ideas. However, there are a few guidelines that should be followed when creating these types of messages:

1. Get to the main idea as quickly as possible.
2. Use a greeting to identify the audience.
3. Be clear and concise with the presentation of information.
4. Check your message for grammatical errors.
5. Include a call to action.

➢ *Team-Focused*

This type of communication is necessary to create an environment that supports collaborative work and its best to utilize team collaboration software platforms that facilitate this communication. Engaging in this communication effectively will male working in and across teams a much easier task to do.

➢ *Critical and Criticism*

One must be conscious first of their demeanor when partaking in this type of communication. Nonetheless, the strategies that were discussed in writing an email responding to a customer's critical message should be employed when communicating critical and criticism – based messages.

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