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**(Memorandum)**

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**MEMOS**

**1.0 Introduction**

Of all the written documents that are used in companies, the memo is the most popular and useful but often the most abused. It seems such a simple task to write a memo, yet memos share pitfalls with other means of communication.

Memos are essential for communicating up, down and across the channels of communication. They should be written only if the subject is sufficiently important, otherwise a simple note will do. They are often written if the recipient cannot be reached either personally or by telephone. One practical consideration is that if the subject is complex, a memo can be reread by the recipient. If it is multicopied, identical information can be made simultaneously available for everybody concerned. Another important advantage of a memo is that it can be filed.

One of the more obvious disadvantages of frequent memo-writing is that a multitude of memos can cause important information to be obscured or lost.

**2.0 Types of Memos**

There are four main types of memos:

1. Notification
* This covers instructions or explanations of procedures and policies; announcements of meetings and promotions.
1. Requests
2. Responses to requests
3. Special reports

**3.0 Format**

The format of memos is intended to simplify and speed up internal communication by ensuring consistency.

Memos consist of headings lie ‘To’, ‘From’, ‘Date’, ‘Subject’ and a body. There is no address or salutation at the end. Usually they are left unsigned, but sometimes the writer’s initials are placed at the end.

Example:

**MEMORANDUM**

TO : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

FROM : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

DATE : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SUBJECT : \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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1. **Headings**
2. **To**

If the memo is to an individual, the name is written according to the appropriate degree of formality:

* In full (e.g. Glen Hoddle) or
* Initials and surname (e.g. G Hoddle) or just
* Glen H

Sometimes the designation is included (e.g. storeperson). If the memo is for a group of people, they are either covered under one heading (e.g. All managerial staff) or listed separately. Titles (e.g. Mr, Mrs & Ms) are left out.

1. **From**

The writer includes his or her name in accordance with the formality of the memo and usually designation.

Example:

J. Charlton, General Manager

1. **Date**

This the date on which the memo was written. Many writers use the form 1 February 2014 rather than 1/2/2014 to avoid possible ambiguity.

1. **Subject Line**

This serves the same purpose as a headline in a newspaper, as it is eye-catching and focuses attention on the message. It limits the memos to only what is covered in the subject line. If there are other topics to be covered, it is best to put them into other memos.

Short, topical subject lines act as a title, but they do not tell the reader very much. It is best to use a subject line that is specific and informative so the reader can grasp the main point immediately, but not so long that it takes the place of a complete paragraph:

Example:

Topic: Personal photocopying

Specific: New policy on using the photocopier for personal

& Informative matters

1. **The Body of the Memo**

The first paragraph should explain why the memo is being written.

Example:

*Decisions have to be made about anti-pollution measures on 22 April, so we need up-to-date data from sub-committees by 20 April.*

One of the ways of streamlining a memo’s message is to itemize its main points in paragraphs, using a bold layout. The use of subheadings, underlining and other attention-getters often improves the appearance, and hence the readability, of memos.

Put the ‘Big Idea First’ to save the reader the trouble of searching for it. The points the writer wishes to make are set out in logical order, with a separate paragraph (or item) for each major point.

Anything that distracts the reader from the message should be eliminated. This can cover any manner of annoyance such as mechanical and grammatical errors, margins that are too narrow and the wrong tone.

If the reader is supposed to do something, this should be made clear by stating it concisely.

Example:

*It is important that your draft of accounts should be submitted to your Office Supervisor by 6 June.*

**4.0 Tone**

A memo can make or break relationship. Memos should be polite and mainly personal. They can be used to build up morale, therefore particular attention should be paid to tone. Some government departments still insist on the use of an impersonal approach. However, the trend in business is away from stiff formality.

1. **Authoritarian tone**

Most examples of bad tone result from the attitude of the writer to the recipient. If the writer feels superior and knows all the answers, an authoritarian tone ensues.

Example:

*When I was working as liaison officer with the Falco company I had no trouble at all. I suggest that you get your act together.*

Often the stressing of company interests carries an authoritarian tone.

Example:

*Our company has to look at the whole geographic picture; it’s what suits the majority that counts and individuals have to conform.*

A condescending attitude destroys relationship.

Example:

*Of course, if you feel that you cannot comply with your supervisor’s requests, we could transfer you to a job which is within your capabilities.*

Perhaps even worse than treating the recipient as a child is the insulting and intimidating message.

Example:

*It is quite obvious, Mr. Stevens, that you are incapable of understanding a simple instruction.*

Messages that are rudely expressed get nowhere.

Example:

*In my memo of 5 September you were asked to submit the report by 10 September. Today is 14 September. Where is it?*

1. **Humble tone**

At the other extreme, memo writers sometimes use false language and fawning, flattering remarks.

Example:

*How delighted I was to read your report. It was expressed so beautifully and the ideas are as impressive as usual. It is a delight to work with such an inspiring colleague.*

Few people are taken in by it – not after the first time anyway.

Undue humility is also hard to take.

Example:

*As a mere cog in such an efficiently run organization I feel that I cannot really make any suggestions for improvement that you asked for. You obviously know far more about running a workshop than I will ever know.*

This could be ambiguous too. Is the writer being sarcastic?

1. **Maintaining tone**

It is important to maintain a proper distance, using neither an over-familiar tone nor a detached, formal tone.

Recipients want to feel good about their work and are encouraged by some token of appreciation and respect. Think carefully about what you are going to write by making rough drafts and rewriting. Encouraging appreciation and respect is worthwhile, as it builds up an atmosphere of trust. Above all, never write a memo in anger.

Conciseness is the hallmark of a good memo, so use simple words and short, clear sentences. Be aware of emotionally charged words. Write very much to the point. If you think well, you will write well. Draft the message with the receiver’s needs in mind and you will find memo-writing a pleasant task.

**Example: Writing A Memo**

**The Situation**

You are Office Manager with a large electronics engineering firm called Techtronics Ltd. Over recent months, there has been a problem with persistent lateness on the part of office and factory staff. Three weeks ago your General Manager decided to introduce ‘clocking in’ and ‘clocking off’ for all company staff, himself included. This decision was made in a spirit of industrial democracy, after much deliberation. Your own departmental office staff did not particularly welcome this innovation and feelings have been running high.

**Your Task**

The General Manager has asked you to draft a memo to office staff, aimed at improving the situation and securing their co-operation, while reiterating the need for punctuality in all staff.

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO**: All Office Staff

**FROM**: T. Wilson, Office Manager

**DATE**: 16 September 2014

**SUBJECT**: STAFF PUNCTUALITY AND TIME CLOCK PROCEDURES

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed our performance since the installation of the time clocks.

During the last three weeks staff punctuality has greatly improved. This has led to a very efficient and well organized office which has been appreciated by other sections in the company.

The General Manager has asked me to emphasize the importance of staff punctuality which led to the installation of the time clocks.

I am aware that, traditionally, office workers do not operate under a time clock system and acknowledge that it is difficult to get used to the new procedure.

However, as this system is producing benefits, I would like it to continue for the next six months.

Thank you for your co-operation. Well done.

T. Wilson