

**CHAPTER 7**

**Negative Messages**

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### Goals in Communicating Bad News

- **Acceptance**—strive to help receiver understand and accept the bad news.
- **Positive image**—promote good image of yourself and your organization. Strive to reduce bad feelings. Convey fairness.
- **Message clarity**—make the message so clear that no further correspondence is necessary.
- **Protection**—avoid creating legal liability.

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### Preventing Legal Problems

**Avoid abusive language.**

- **Defamation**—false published statement that harms an individual's reputation
- **Libel**—written defamation
- **Slander**—spoken defamation

Examples: *deadbeat, crook, quack*

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### You Can Usually Diminish Negative Feelings if

- The reader knows the reasons for the rejection
- The bad news is revealed with sensitivity

- Disappointment
- Irritation
- Anger

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### The Indirect Strategy



The **indirect strategy** allows you to prepare the reader before delivering the bad news, thus softening the impact of the bad news.

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### Possible Buffers for Opening Bad-News Messages



- Best news
- Compliment
- Appreciation
- Agreement
- Facts
- Understanding
- Apology

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## Presenting the Reasons

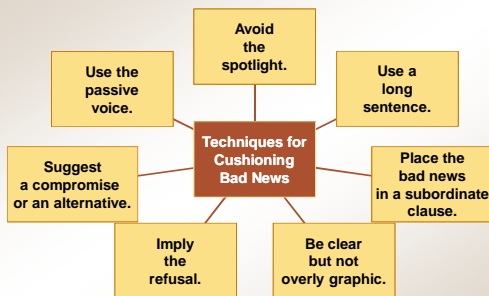


- Be cautious in explaining.
- Cite reader benefits, if possible.
- Explain company policy, if relevant.
- Choose positive words.
- Show that the matter was treated seriously and fairly.



To reveal the bad news with sensitivity, apply the following techniques for

### Cushioning Bad News:



## Closing Bad-News Messages



Avoid endings that sound canned, insincere, inappropriate, or self-serving. Try to personalize the closing with

- A forward look
- An alternative to the refusal
- Good wishes
- Freebies
- Resale or sales promotion

## Writing Plan for Refusing Routine Requests or Claims



- Start with a neutral statement on which both reader and writer can agree, such as a compliment, an expression of appreciation, a quick review of the facts, or an apology.
- Try to include a key idea or word that acts as a transition to the explanation.

## Writing Plan for Refusing Routine Requests or Claims



- Present valid reasons for the refusal, avoiding words that create a negative tone.
- Include resale or sales promotion, if appropriate.

## Writing Plan for Refusing Routine Requests or Claims



- Soften the blow by positioning the bad news strategically, using the passive voice, accentuating the positive, or implying a refusal.
- Suggest a compromise or substitute, if possible.

## Writing Plan for Refusing Routine Requests or Claims



- Renew good feelings with a positive statement.
- Look forward to continued business.
- Avoid referring to the bad news.

## Writing Plan for Breaking Bad News to Employees



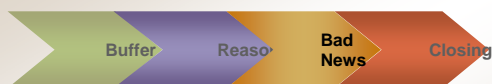
- Open with a neutral or positive statement that transitions to the reasons for the bad news.
- Consider mentioning the best news, a compliment, appreciation, agreement, or solid facts.
- Show understanding.

## Writing Plan for Breaking Bad News to Employees



- Explain the logic behind the bad news.
- Provide a rational explanation using positive words and displaying empathy.
- Try to show reader benefits, if possible.

## Writing Plan for Breaking Bad News to Employees



- Position the bad news so that it does not stand out.
- Be positive but don't sugarcoat it.
- Use objective language.

## Writing Plan for Breaking Bad News to Employees



- Provide information about an alternative, if one exists.
- If appropriate, describe what will happen next.
- Look forward positively.