

June 23, 2004

To: Students of 304C

From: Jason Palmeri

Re: Persuasive Document Project

In this memo, you'll find all the instructions you need for your first assignment: the persuasive document project. By completing this assignment, you will learn the fundamentals of persuasive, reflective communication. You'll also have a chance to use writing to argue for changes you would like to see in organizations.

The Document

What changes would you like to see in your workplace? In your club? At OSU? In a business that you patronize (or boycott) as customer? In the world at large?

For this assignment, you will write a persuasive document (asking for a change or action) to a specific organizational audience. If you are writing an internal document (to your boss, for example), you should follow memo format (BAC, p 579) while you should follow letter format (BAC, p 573) if you are writing to an external organization (a place where you don't work). You may modify these formats to adapt to your audience.

There is no absolute length requirement. Ideally, however, your document will contain at least 250 well-chosen words. (Hint: This means you should choose a complex persuasive purpose, which requires some development.)

Your document will be most persuasive if it employs the principles of

- you-attitude and positive emphasis (BAC, ch 2)
- reader benefits and audience adaptation (BAC, ch 3)
- clear, concise style (BAC, ch 4)
- organization (BAC, ch 9).

The Reflection Memo

In addition to writing the document, you will also complete a reflection memo outlining the persuasive choices you made. This reflection will likely be as long (or maybe even longer) than the document itself. By learning how to become a reflective communicator, you can ensure your success in all of the communication situations you will encounter in the future.

In this reflection, you should begin by outlining your audience and your persuasive purpose. Some questions to consider:

- Who in the organization has the power to make the change you propose?
- What will the audiences' initial reaction be to the message?
- How much information does the audience already have about the topic?
- What objections is your audience likely to have? How can you address these?
- Is it possible that this document has multiple audiences? If so, how will you address them?
- How can you emphasize the positive aspects or benefits of your proposal *for your readers*?
- What expectations does your audience have about the appropriate language, structure, and form for messages?

In addition to explaining how you adapted your message to audience, you should also briefly note any instances in which you *chose* not to follow the BAC rules and explain how this choice was informed by your audience analysis. (By the way, I do really like it when people *consciously* bend rules for sound rhetorical reasons).

Finally, I will ask you to consider a couple of questions about the broader social and ethical implications of your persuasive document:

- How will your persuasive message impact the organizations' diverse stakeholders (ex: employees, local and global communities, customers, management, shareholders)?
- What broader social or economic conditions impact your ability to be persuasive in this case? How might the organization (or indeed, the world at large) need to be changed to enable your message to be more successful?
- Who are you including in your primary audience and who are you (implicitly) excluding?

Turning the Project In

You will post your persuasive document and reflection memo as attachments on the discussion board. You should save these documents in MS word or Rich Text Format (rtf). The first draft is due at the beginning of class on Wednesday 6/30. The second draft will be due by midnight on 7/14.

If you have any questions about the project, please make an appointment (or catch me by chance) to chat in-person or on-line.

I look forward to reading your projects!