Work Area 4: Written communication

UNIT 4.4: Use written communication skills to generate non-standard documents based on the needs of the reader and contribute to the improvement of written communication

LO104: Demonstrate the ability to assess requirements on written information of colleagues, customers and stakeholders; covering qualitative and quantitative information, tacit and explicit knowledge, both official and unofficial policy and opinion documents. Respond to these needs through the development of appropriate written communication

LO105: Improve and enhance systems of written communications as part of a coherent organisation-wide approach to the improvement of the quality of business communication.

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EUROPEAN PERSONAL ASSISTANT LEVEL 4

Module Details

Work Area Code:	4
Work area title:	Written communication
Unit Code:	4.4
Unit Title:	Use written communication skills to generate non-standard documents based on the needs of the reader and contribute to the improvement of written communication
Learning Outcomes Nos:	104, 105
Learning Outcomes titles:	LO104: Demonstrate the ability to assess requirements on written information of colleagues, customers and stakeholders; covering qualitative and quantitative information, tacit and explicit knowledge, both official and unofficial policy and opinion documents. Respond to these needs through the development of appropriate written communication LO105: Improve and enhance systems of written communications as part of a coherent organisation-wide approach to the improvement of the quality of business communication.
Recommended Duration:	2.5 hours
Trainer:	

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Reporting to stakeholders

- A stakeholder is a person, a group, or an organization that is interested or concerned in an organization.

- Stakeholders may be accountants, creditors, employees, directors, shareholders, agencies, unions, and suppliers, from which the organisation derives its resources.

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Reporting to stakeholders

- Reporting to stakeholders is the procedure of providing information to them.
- Information and updates about the organisation team and/or a project are included in the report to give the stakeholders adequate knowledge on the status and development of the team and the project.

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Reporting to stakeholders

- The members and leaders of a team report to stakeholders to provide information about what is happening in the group or organization.
- A team secretary, delegated in compiling and preparing the final report of the team members.
- Team leaders may also create their report.

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Reporting to stakeholders

- The primary reason behind reporting to stakeholders is **communication**.
- To inform the overall status and progress of the team/project, along with essential information such as the achievements and concerns.
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are also included in the report.
- Complete, accurate, updated and factual information
- an overview of the team's standing and development

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Tools for reporting to stakeholders

- To assess the requirements on written information, you may use:
  - Surveys/questionnaires
  - Focus groups
  - Individual interviews
  - Informal discussions
  - Written communication (e.g. emails)

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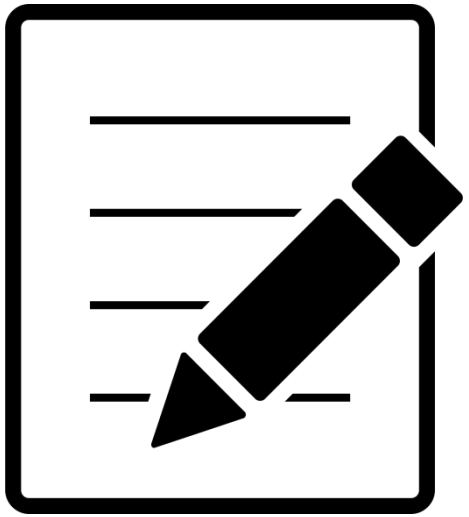
Reporting to stakeholders

- Provide important details on the undertakings, routines, status, and progress.
- Include the overall details on the status and progress of the team and the project itself.
  - daily performance,
  - achievements
  - problems.
- Include pending actions and prioritisation, as well as previous actions



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Reporting to stakeholders

- Reports may include both qualitative and quantitative data.
  - Qualitative data are more descriptive in nature and can be expressed using words, sentences, and paragraphs.
  - Quantitative information includes numbers and figures, which can be expressed effectively using data presentation tools like tables, graphs, charts, and diagrams.
- The language used should be understood by all sorts of readers.
- Jargons and acronyms should be limited
- You may include a glossary part

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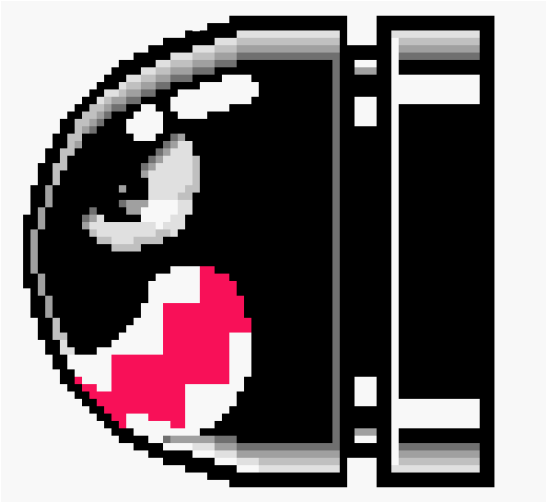
Reporting to stakeholders

- Use bullets in order to list down important information in the report.
- Use headings and subheadings as a guide
- Important elements:
  - Completeness
  - Accuracy of data
  - Freshness
  - Factuality



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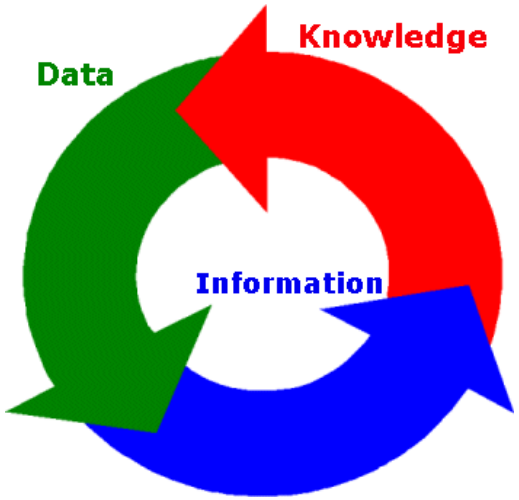
Requirements: Quantitative information

colleagues

- Various quantitative data gathering methods to track productivity. The data can be used:
  - To rank employees and work units, and to award raises or promotions.
  - To justify the termination or discipline of poorly performing workers.
- You can gather data over long periods of time such as a month, quarter or year, or daily



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Requirements: colleagues

Qualitative Data

- Qualitative reports contain human observations.
  - Observing workers and recording information about their behaviors, work habits and the types of obstacles that workers must overcome to perform their jobs effectively.
  - When gathering such data, you should minimize interactions with the subjects of your observations.
  - To reduce your own workload, ask each departmental supervisor to compile qualitative data reports.

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Requirements: colleagues

Assessments

- In some instances, qualitative reports may contradict the information contained in quantitative reports.

Considerations

- Producing quantitative and qualitative reports can prove time consuming and expensive.

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Requirements: colleagues

Explicit knowledge	Tacit (implicit) knowledge
Objective, rational, technical	Subjective, cognitive, experiential learning
Structured	Personal
Fixed content	Context sensitive/specific
Context independent	Dynamically created
Externalized	Internalized
Easily documented	Difficult to capture and codify
Easy to codify	Difficult to share
Easy to share	Has high value
Easily transferred/ taught/learned	Hard to document
Exists in high volumes	Hard to transfer/teach/learn
	Involves a lot of human interpretation

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Opinion documents

- They analyse “opinion mining”
- An important task of opinion mining is to extract people’s opinions on features of a service, product or organisation.
- For example, the sentence, “I love the GPS function of XXXX mobile”, expresses a positive opinion on the “GPS function” of the phone.
- “GPS function” is the feature.

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Opinion documents

- May be based on qualitative, quantitative information or both, depending on the size of the data and the topic
- They are usually SUBJECTIVE

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eupa next

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Writing to customers

*"Excellent customer service and high customer satisfaction must start with understanding **customer expectations**. You need to know who your customers are and what they want."*

*(*Source: http://blog.clientheartbeat.com/customer-expectations/)*

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Writing to customers or colleagues

- When we write to customers or colleagues, we need to make clear what we want them to do.
- In the actions that should be done, it should be clear which of these are necessary and which are relatively optional.
- The verbs may / can and should are best suited to distinguish the cases of action you expect from those you are writing to.

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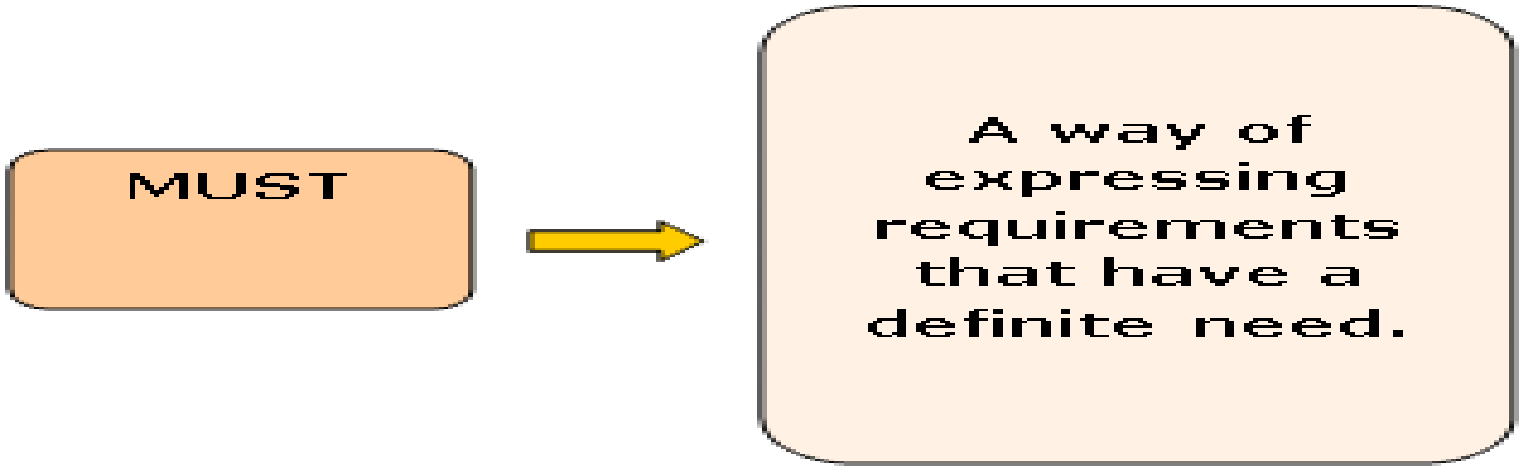
WHEN TO USE 'MUST'



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WHEN TO USE 'MAY/CAN'

MAY OR CAN

A way of expressing requirements where there is a certain amount of choice involved

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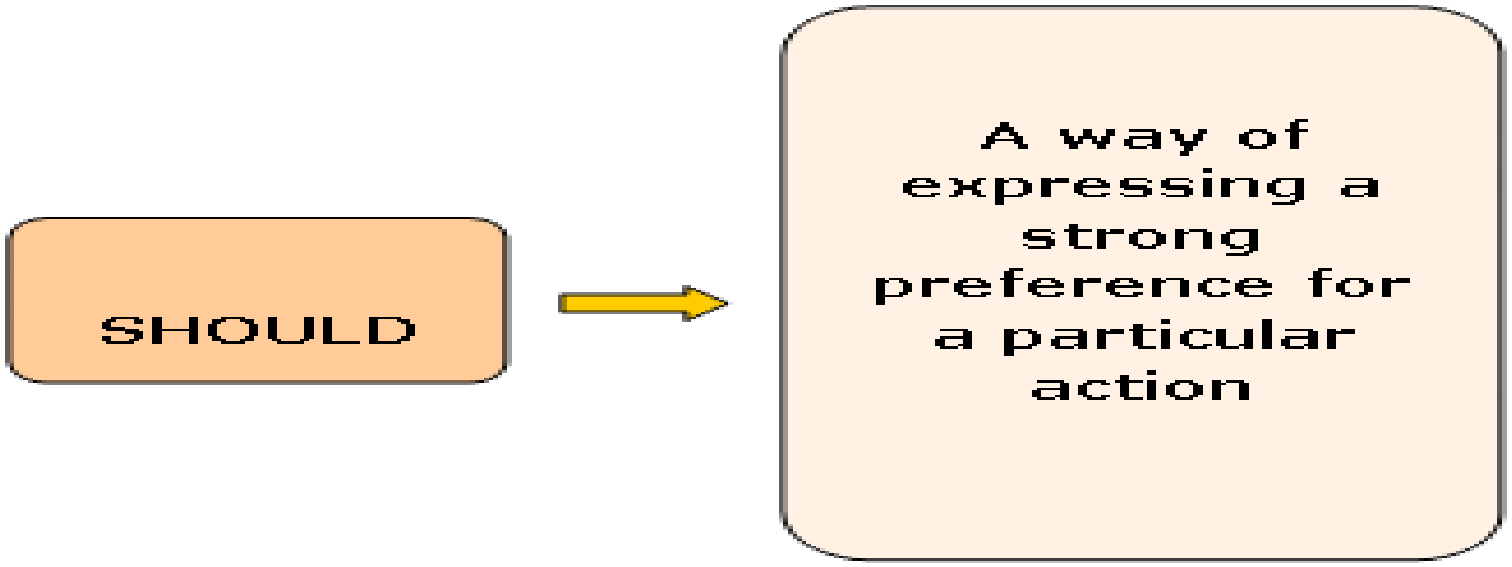
WHEN TO USE 'SHOULD'



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Methodological tool

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MUST, MAY/CAN OR SHOULD?

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An effective policy document should include:

- Crystal clear descriptions of duties and responsibilities, as well as the following:

1. prohibitions on illegal activities
2. Smoking and drinking,
3. foul language,
4. discrimination and harassment
5. confidentiality expectations,
6. procedures for calling in sick,
7. expected dress and appearance
8. reporting procedures for emergency situations.

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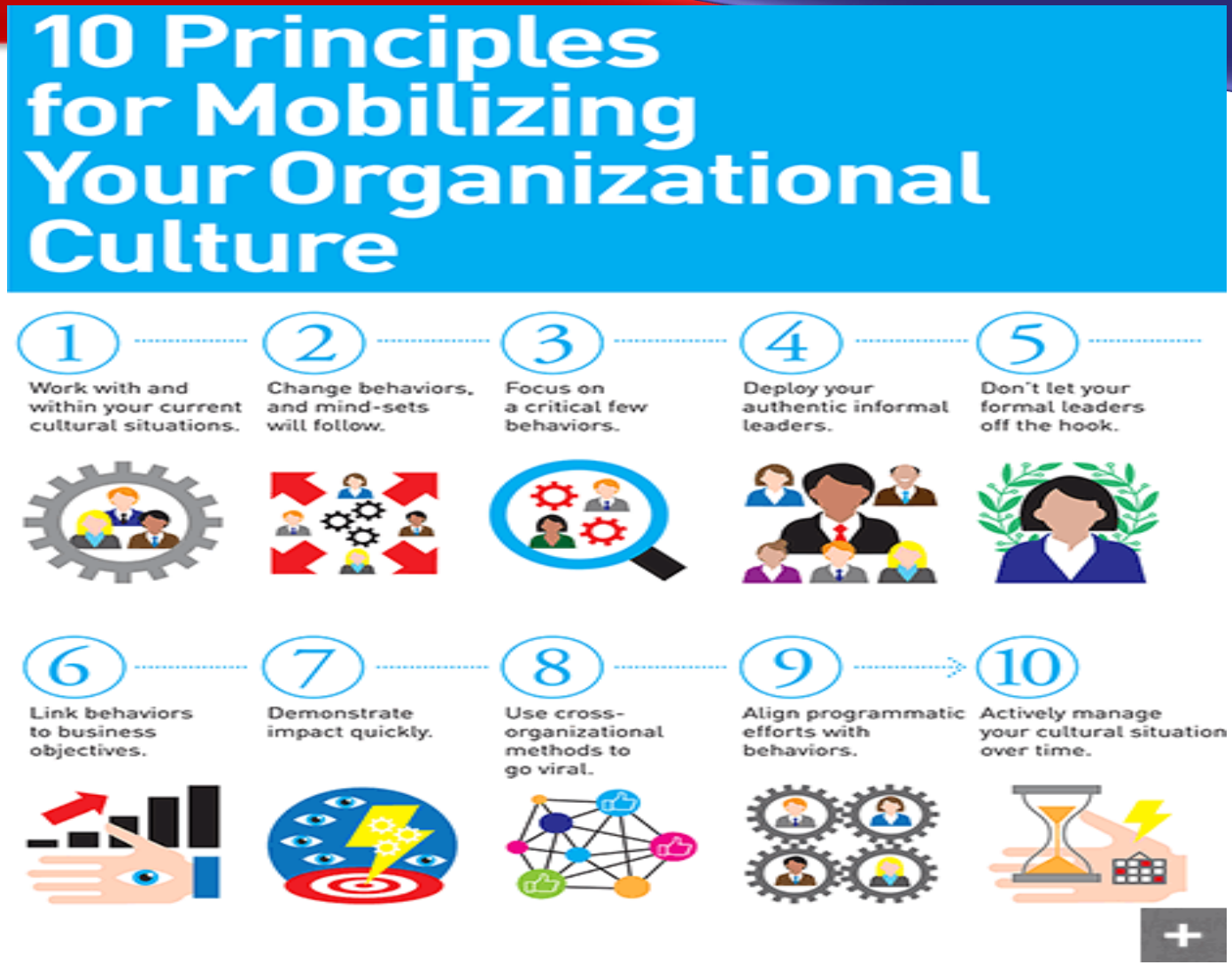
Corporate culture principles



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4 Components of a Great Corporate Culture depend greatly on communication!

1. Vision: It has to be communicated effectively!
2. Values: They have to be promoted
3. Practices: They have to be described in detail
4. People: Effective communication is key!

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Composing a non-standard document: structure

1. First of all, make an introduction, outlining the topics you will be presenting.

2. Next, develop the subject by providing the details and arguments that support your point of view.

3. Close with a summary of the contents or a series of conclusions based on what you said earlier.

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Composing a non-standard document: systems

- The structure of the document allows the writer to insist on specific points and eventually provide a clear summary.
- Readers should not be left with the slightest doubt about the goals and results analyzed in the report.
- Reporting can cover many forms of communication and is widely used in business.
- The goal is to inform stakeholders, customers or colleagues.

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Q & A System

- Useful for providing information in a document through Frequently Asked Questions.
- Particularly informative
- Very useful when you want to inform about a topic, the general public, customers or when you intend to divert a lot of information.
- E.g. The operation and use of a device, the completion of an application or a list of instructions
- Readers can easily collect the information they need

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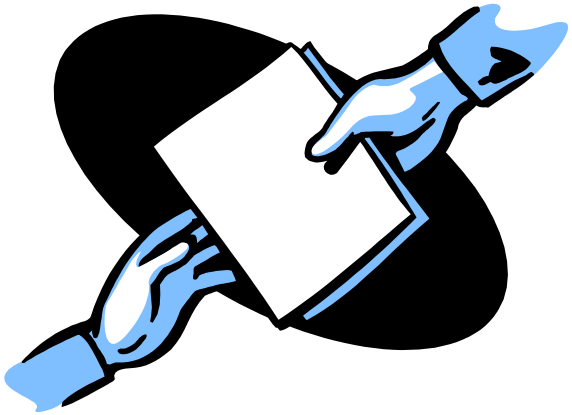
Q & A System : step-by-step

1. Specify the questions
2. Discuss in detail with your colleagues in an effort to record as many questions a reader could have.
3. Select only the most common problems and queries.
4. Record the questions using simple, understandable and daily language.
5. Give the corresponding answers in a straightforward manner.



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Problem – Solution System

- Recognizing Problems and Suggesting Solutions
- In case you write a letter about a deadlock, the problem & solution method is the ideal one.

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Problem – Solution System

- It offers different solutions to the reader, allowing you to solve the problem in a practical and decisive way.
- It can be applied to potential problems with a colleague or a client.

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Problem – Solution System

- You present the problem briefly and analyze the possible solutions.

- Rather than being angry and annoyed, determine your attitude and make it clear that you will not accept postponements or excuses on the subject that you mention in your letter.

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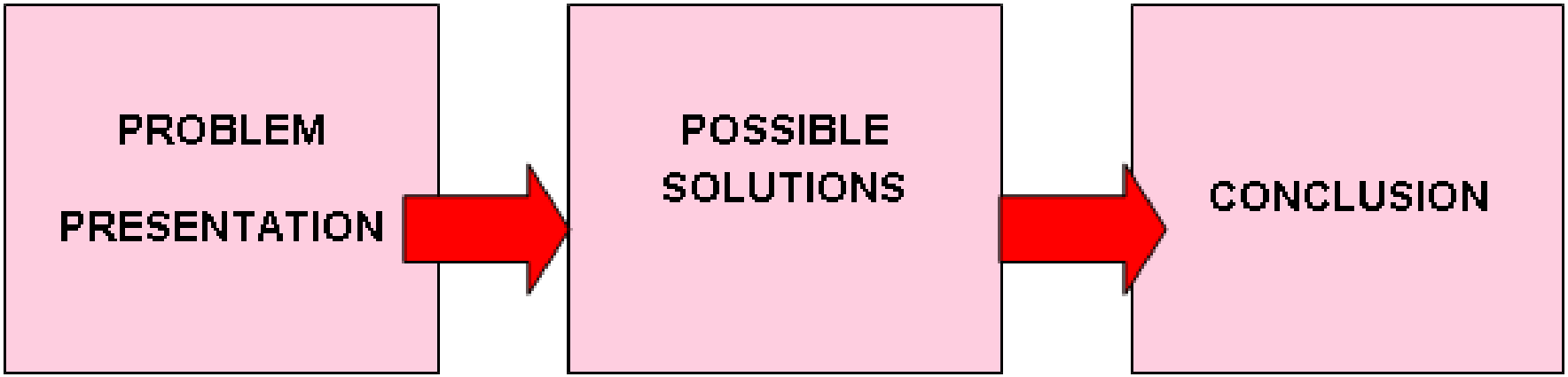
Problem – Solution System



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Methodological tool

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Case study: apply the problem solution strategy

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eupa next

The reversed pyramid System

- The reversed pyramid provides a logical structure for writing the text.
- Allows you to write text in a series based on what is the most important information.
- It is the most commonly used in business documents.

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The reversed pyramid System

- Ideal for writing business documents of general content and announcements, invitations to an event, employee briefings, etc.
- Also ideal for producing reports and executive summaries and other business documents that require the compilation of information in a reference format, understandable by all.
- Journalists often use this technique to write news, articles, and reports.

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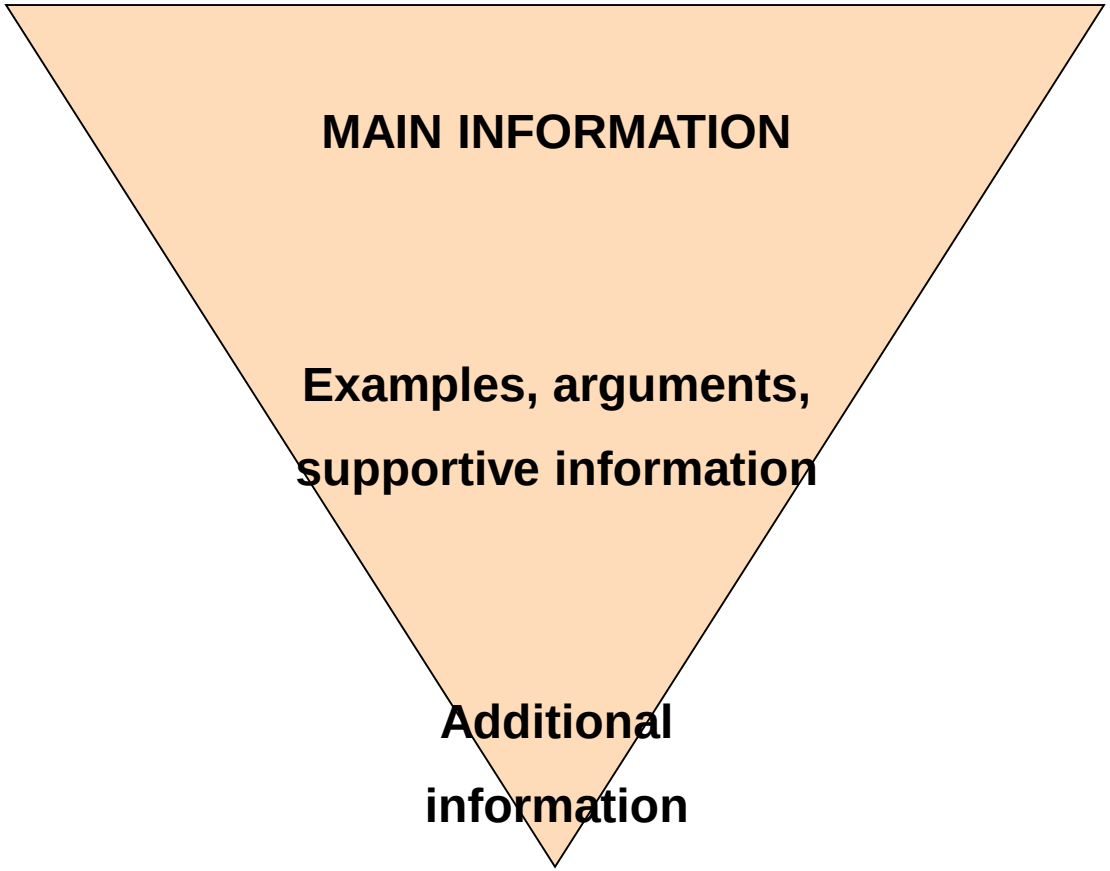
The reversed pyramid System



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Communication theory

- Communication theory is a field of information theory and mathematics that studies the technical process of information and the process of human communication
- Communication theory was proposed by S. F. Scudder in the year 1980. It states that **all living beings existing on the planet communicate** although the way of communication is different.

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Communication theory, viewpoints

- **Mechanistic -** communication is simply the transmission of information from the sender to the receiver.
- **Psychological -** communication is the thoughts and feelings of the sender. It also includes the reactions, feelings of the receiver after he decodes the information.
- **Social -** communication as a result of interaction between the sender and the receiver.
- **Systemic -** communication is a new and a different message which is created when various individuals interpret it in their own way
- **Critical -** communication is simply a way with the help of which an individual expresses power and authority

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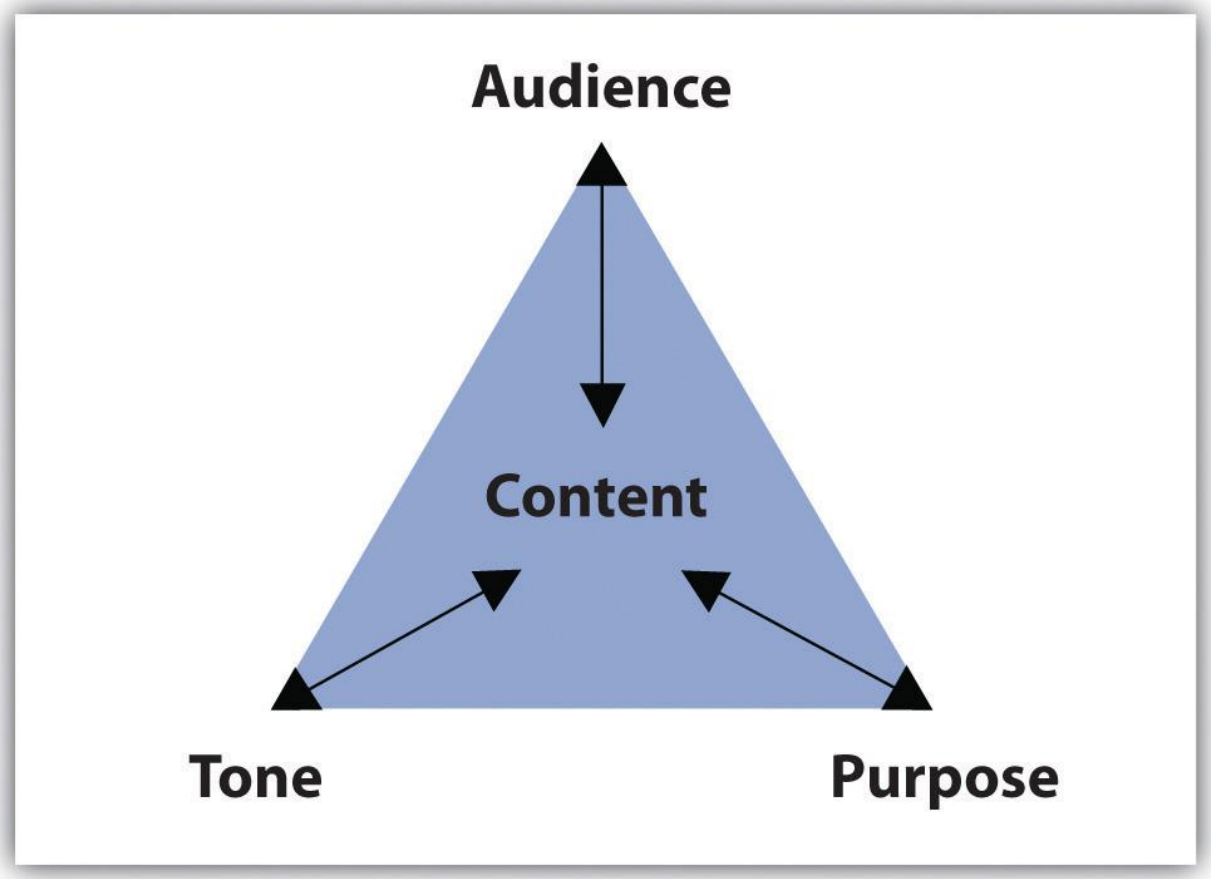
Written communication strategies



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Written communication strategies

- Purpose = The reason the writer composes the text.
- To understand your identified audience, start by gathering demographic and psychographic information.

	Demographics	**Psychographics**
Definition	Statistical data relating to the population	The study and classification of people according to their interests, activities, and opinions
Examples	age education level gender income level geographic region cultural or ethnic background	attitudes beliefs values loyalties knowledge level lifestyle

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Written communication strategies

- You can understand your audience and social/cultural context by doing research
- Then, you can choose the appropriate channel based on demographic and psychographics of your audience
  - E.g. if your audience comprises of elderly people, will you use the social media for promoting a service or more traditional channels, like mail? (Demographics)
  - If your audience have a negative attitude towards formality (usually younger people), what language will you use? Probably not very formal, yet professional (psychographics)

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- Review Question 1
  - Explain the tools that may be used to assess the requirements on written information and knowledge of colleagues, customers and stakeholders
- Review Question 2
  - Can you name and elaborate on the different systems of writing a report/letter?

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- SYSTEMS
  - Q&A
  - Solution – problem
  - Reversed pyramid
- Important elements for reporting:
  - Completeness
  - Accuracy of data
  - Freshness
  - Factuality
- Components of corporate culture related to communication
  - Vision: It has to be communicated effectively!
  - Values: They have to be promoted
  - Practices: They have to be described in detail
  - People: Effective communication is key!

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Well Done!

You have completed this unit

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