**Bovée-Thill Business Communication**

**Supplemental Cases: Fall 2011**

New cases to accompany

* *Business Communication Essentials*, Fifth Edition
* *Excellence in Business Communication*, Ninth Edition
* *Business Communication Today*, Tenth Edition

On the following pages, you will find 12 new cases to accompany Bovée-Thill business communication texts, each with a suggested solution or solution guidelines. The cases are tagged by skill category and appropriate chapter for each text. (Note that these cases appear in *Business Communication Today*, Eleventh Edition, in case you are using that text.)

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**1. Media Skills: Social Networking, Microblogging**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 6  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 7  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 7

Foursquare (**http://foursquare.com**) is one of the leading providers of location-based social networking services. Millions of people use Foursquare for social engagement and friendly competition, and many business owners are starting to recognize the marketing potential of having people that are on the move in local areas, broadcasting their locations and sharing information about stores, restaurants, clubs, and other merchants.

**Your task:** Review the information on Foursquare’s Merchant Platform at **http://foursquare.com/business/venues**. Now write four brief messages, no more than 140 characters long (including spaces). The first should summarize the benefits to stores, restaurants, and other “brick and mortar” businesses of participating in Foursquare, and the next three messages should convey three compelling points that support that overall benefit statement. If your class is set up with private Twitter accounts, use your private account to send your messages. Otherwise, email your four messages to your instructor or post them on your class blog, as your instructor directs.

Solution

Note: Students should keep in mind that this service is provided in the spirit of friendly competition and creates marketing messages that are real-time, authentic, and enthusiastic. Timeliness is of vital importance in these messages to potential customers.

Use the free tools provided by Foursquare to attract new customers and keep your best ones coming back. **https://foursquare.com**

Offer customers extra enticements by using Foursquare Specials, attractive freebies that will boost your business.

Special offers will be automatically presented in the Foursquare applications of near-by users for better promotion.

Claiming a Foursquare Venue will also allow you to profile your customers and monitor their activities at the Venue Stats dashboard!

**2. Media Skills: Blogging**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 6  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 7  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 7

U.S. automakers haven’t had much good news to share lately. GM, in particular, has been going through a rough time, entering bankruptcy, shedding assets, and relying on bailouts from the U.S. and Canadian governments to stay in business. The news isn’t entirely bleak, however. Chevrolet, one of the brands in the GM automotive stable, has just introduced the Volt, a gas/electric hybrid that might finally give drivers a viable alternative to the wildly popular Toyota Prius.

**Your task:** Working with a team assigned by your instructor, write a post for GM’s dealer-only blog that describes the new Volt and the benefits it offers car owners. Include at least one photo and one link to the Volt section of GM’s website. You can learn more about the Volt at Chevy’s website, **www.chevrolet.com**.

Solution

Note: While this post is intended for the car dealer’s blog, students should remember that they’re providing information ultimately intended for the customer. This will require detailed information presented in an enticing and energetic format. Effective communication in the blog will ensure success as dealers create a buzz about an exciting new product.

[Post title] Stay in the Game with the 2011 Chevrolet Volt

The 2011 Chevrolet Volt lives up to the high expectations. Available at approximately $32,780, it is the most advanced hybrid fuel-efficient car, featuring an electric-only mode with a range of roughly 40 miles per charge, and luxurious interiors.

It is a four-seat, four-door hatchback, engineered with closed grille and aerodynamic back edges which increase its fuel efficiency. The futuristic dashboard has been specially designed to help customers make the most of their car.

The standard features of the Volt include:

* Two LCD screens on the dashboard that display speed, battery power, range to recharge or re-fill as well as an efficiency gauge that gives you real-time feedback
* A seven-inch diagonal high-resolution touchscreen on the center console and a driver mode control switch
* A six-speaker energy-efficient Bose stereo with CD/DVD player, auxiliary audio jack, iPod/USB interface and 30GB of digital music storage

17-inch alloy wheels, automatic headlights, power adjustable mirrors, keyless ignition, remote ignition, automatic climate control, cruise control, auto-dimming rearview mirror, six-way manual front seats, and tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel

Car owners will get a 100,000 mile/8-year warranty for the 16-kWh lithium-ion battery. The Volt's standard equipment includes a charger that allows customers to recharge the battery in about 10 hours using a conventional 110-volt outlet. Alternatively, a 220/240-volt station can be purchased that will charge the battery in about four hours.

The new Volt enables users to cut costs on gasoline and go green!

The average costs of recharging the battery is $1.50 per day allowing customers to commute gas-free and tailpipe emissions-free at much lower costs. People can further reduce their costs by charging the battery during off-peak hours. It also has a small, on-board gas generator that creates energy to power the vehicle. Hence, customers can have a much quieter ride compared to noisy, internal combustion engines found in most cars.

**3. Media Skills: Microblogging; Compositional Modes: Teasers**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 6  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 7  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 7

Twitter updates are a great way to alert people to helpful articles, videos, and other online resources.

**Your task:** Find an online resource (it can be a website quiz, a YouTube video, a PowerPoint presentation, a newspaper article, or anything else appropriate) that offers some great tips to help college students prepare for job interviews. Write a teaser of no more than 120 characters that hints at the benefits other students can get from this resource. If your class is set up with private Twitter accounts, use your private account to send your message. Otherwise, email it to your instructor. Be sure to include the URL; if you’re using a private Twitter account, the system should shorten it to 20 characters to keep you within the 140-character limit.

Solution

Note: This exercise gives students an opportunity to pass along tips regarding the more exciting elements of the job hunt. They can inject a lighthearted, helpful approach to an often challenging task.

Watch Ken Lloyd of “Jerks at Work” share his secret psychological techniques and nail your first job interview. [URL]

**4. Media Skills: Email; Message Strategies: Requesting a Recommendation**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 7  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 8  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 8

One of your colleagues, Katina Vander, was recently promoted to department manager and now serves on the company’s strategic planning committee. At its monthly meeting next week, the committee will choose an employee to lead an important market research project that will help define the company’s product portfolio for the next five years.

You worked side by side with Vander for five years, so she knows your abilities well and has complimented your business insights on many occasions. You know that because she has only recently been promoted to manager, she needs to build credibility among her peers and will therefore be cautious about making such an important recommendation. On the other hand, making a stellar recommendation for such an important project would show that she has a good eye for talent—an essential leadership trait.

**Your task:** Write an email message to Vander, telling her that you are definitely interested in leading the project and asking her to put in a good word for you with the committee. Mention four attributes that you believe would serve you well in the role: a dozen years of experience in the industry, an engineering degree that helps you understand the technologies involved in product design, a consistent record of excellent or exceptional ratings in annual employee evaluations, and the three years you spent working in the company’s customer support group, which gave you a firsthand look at customer satisfaction and quality issues. Make up any additional details you need to write the message.

Solution

Note: Students will do well to consider their approach and organize their thoughts prior to writing this email. This is an opportunity to refresh Vander’s memory of performance but students may struggle with professionally stating accomplishments without sounding grandiose or inflated. They should appeal to Vander’s need to understand how this will benefit her as well, thereby motivating a speedy and successful response.

To: katina.vander@seele.com  
From: ryan.tenney@seele.com

Subject: Recommendation for the role of lead analyst for the market research team

Dear Katina,

The role of lead analyst for the market research team, currently under consideration, is one I am very keen on. I would be grateful, if you could put in a word for me with the strategic planning committee.

I have acquired a breadth of industry-specific knowledge during my 14 years of work experience in the electronics industry. Likewise, I have three years work experience in the customer support division, leading to firsthand knowledge of customer satisfaction and quality issues. Also, my engineering background, allows me to better understand the technological aspects of product design.

I have always been a consistent and sincere contributor, with a rating of “Excellent” or “Exceptional” during all annual employee evaluations. Aside from professional leadership, I have also initiated and organized the company’s environmental programs for the past three years.

I will be able to lead the market research team well, given the chance. If you require any further information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Ryan Tenney   
Business Analyst

**5. Media Skills: Social Networking; Message Strategies: Writing Routine Informative Messages; Composition Modes: Summarizing**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 7  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 8  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 8

As energy costs trend ever upward and more people become attuned to the environmental and geopolitical complexities of petroleum-based energy, interest in solar, wind, and other alternative energy sources continues to grow. In locations with high *insolation* , a measure of cumulative sunlight, solar panels can be cost-effective solutions over the long term. However, the upfront costs are still daunting for most homeowners. To help lower the entry barrier, the Foster City, California–based firm SolarCity now lets homeowners lease solar panels for monthly payments that are less than their current electricity bills.

**Your task:** Visit **www.solarcity.com,** click on “Residential,” and then click “SolarLease” to read about the leasing program. Next, study SolarCity’s presence on Facebook ( **www.facebook.com/solarcity** ) to get a feel for how the company presents itself in a social networking environment. Now assume that you have been assigned the task of writing a brief summary of the SolarLease program that will appear on the Notes tab of SolarCity’s Facebook page. In your own language and in 200 words or less, write an introduction to the SolarLease program and email it to your instructor.

Solution

Note: This message offers the unique opportunity to give good news that doesn’t have a catch. Customers will benefit financially while taking positive action to help the environment. Students should include all details making them easily understood by the average homeowner; readers should understand the benefits of the program and how they will receive ongoing support from SolarCity.

SolarCity has created SolarLease, a unique financing option that lets homeowners to go solar without any upfront cost and save money from day one. With this program, instead of buying a solar system, you simply lease it and pay as you go. The cost of the lease plus your electricity bill will typically be less than what you are paying for electricity now, and the price is locked in for the duration of the lease. This means that as regular utility rates continue to increase every year, it will be your savings that continue to grow.

What’s more, there are no unexpected repair costs to worry about because they are covered under this program. SolarLease also includes SolarGuard, which allows you and SolarCity to continuously monitor your system to ensure it is performing as expected. SolarCity is so sure of its product that it guarantees performance or will pay you back. At the end of your lease, you can upgrade to a new system, extend your lease, or have the panels taken off your home, free of charge. To find out more about what makes SolarLease the most popular residential solar financing option in the country, visit http://www.solarcity.com/residential/solar-lease.aspx.

**6. Media Skills: Email; Message Strategies: Making Routine Negative Announcements**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 8  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 9  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 9

You’ve been proud of many things your gardening tool company has accomplished as it grew from just you working in your basement shop to a nationally known company that employs over 200 people. However, nothing made you prouder than the company’s Helping Our Hometown Grow program, in which employees volunteer on company time to help residents in your city start their own vegetable gardens, using tools donated by the company. Nearly 50 employees participated directly, helping some 500 families supplement their grocery budgets with home-grown produce. Virtually everyone in the company contributed, though, because employees who didn’t volunteer to help in the gardens pitched in to cover the work responsibilities of the volunteers.

Sadly, ten years after you launched the program, you have reached the inescapable conclusion that the company can no longer afford to keep the program going. With consumers around the country still struggling with the aftereffects of a deep recession, sales have been dropping for the past three years—even as lower cost competitors step up their presence in the market. To save the program, you would have to lay off several employees, but your employees come first.

**Your task:** Write an email to the entire company, announcing the cancellation of the program.

Solution

Note: Students will do well to consider their approach and organize their thoughts prior to writing this email. This is an opportunity to refresh Vander’s memory of performance but students may struggle with professionally stating accomplishments without sounding grandiose or inflated. They should appeal to Vander’s need to understand how this will benefit her as well, thereby motivating a speedy and successful response.

To: <All Employees>

Subject: Regarding the ‘Helping Our Hometown Grow’ program

Hello everyone,

Over the past 10 years, we have been able to help nearly 500 families of Norwood start their own vegetable gardens through the “Helping Our Hometown Grow” program. We all cherish this program and the help we have brought the community where we all work and live. The level of commitment every one of you gave to the families of our town has been a source of immense pride for me personally, too.

All these reasons make it particularly difficult to announce that financial circumstances are forcing us to cancel the program. We are still recovering from the recent recession, and we are facing lower sales as well as increased competition. The only alternative to canceling the program would be staff reductions, which is unacceptable to me.

I remain hopeful that we can restore the program when the economy turns around and we regain a solid financial footing.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,  
Janet Leigh

**7. Media Skills: Social Networking; Message Strategies: Refusing Requests for Recommendations**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 8  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 9  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 9

You’re delighted to get a message from an old friend and colleague, Heather Lang. You’re delighted right up to the moment you read her request that you write a recommendation about her web design and programming skills for your LinkedIn profile. You would do just about anything for Lang—anything except recommend her web design skills. She is a master programmer whose technical wizardry saved more client projects than you can count, but when it comes to artistic design, Lang simply doesn’t have “it.” From gaudy color schemes to unreadable type treatment to confusing layouts, her design sense is as weak as her technical acumen is strong.

**Your task:** First, write a brief email to Lang, explaining that you would be most comfortable highlighting her technical skills because that is where you believe her true strengths lie. Second, write a two-sentence recommendation that you could include in your LinkedIn profile, recommending Lang’s technical skills. Make up or research any details you need.

Solution

Note: While this request may be uncomfortable at first, the sender should recognize that turning the request into a positive opportunity will benefit Lang more than an inflated or untrue recommendation. By providing positive information on one set of skills, the sender is helping Lang be realistic about her employment goals—thereby narrowing her search to appropriate positions. This message should be positive, upbeat and encouraging. By providing specific positive comments on LinkedIn, the sender is reinforcing a helpful but realistic approach.

[email response]

To: Heather@gmail.com

From: Kristen@Simeon.com

Subject: Recommendation on LinkedIn

Dear Heather,

I am delighted to hear from you. Thank you for letting me know about your job-change plans. Your excellent programming skills should make it easy for you to land a job.

I have always considered your core strength to be your programming skills, and I remember how your technical wizardry saved many of our client projects. With this in mind, I can certainly write a recommendation of your brilliant technical skills on my LinkedIn profile.

I wish you the very best in your career.

Sincerely,

Kristen Anderson  
Web Designer  
The Simeon Designing House

[recommendation in LinkedIn profile]

Heather Lang is a software wizard—she has comprehensive technical knowledge of HTML programming and JavaScript coding, is good at designing website structure and navigation layout, and has years of experience as a web developer. Plus, her positive outlook and ability to bring people together make her an asset to any team.

**8. Media Skills: Blogging; Message Strategies: Persuasive Business Messages; Collaboration Skills**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 9  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 10  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 10

As a strong advocate for the use of social media in business, you are pleased by how quickly people in your company have taken up blogging, wiki writing, and other new-media activities. You are considerably less excited by the style and quality of what you see in the writing of your colleagues. Many seem to have interpreted “authentic and conversational” to mean “anything goes.” Several of the Twitter users in the company seem to have abandoned any pretense of grammar and spelling. A few managers have dragged internal disagreements about company strategy out into public view, arguing with each other through comments on various industry-related forums. Product demonstration videos have been posted to the company’s YouTube channel virtually unedited, making the whole firm look unpolished and unprofessional. The company CEO has written some blog posts that bash competitors with coarse and even crude language.

You pushed long and hard for greater use of these tools, so you feel a sense of responsibility for this situation. In addition, you are viewed by many in the company as the resident expert on social media, so you have some “expertise authority” on this issue. On the other hand, you are only a first-level manager, with three levels of managers above you, so while you have some “position authority” as well, you can hardly dictate best practices to the managers above you.

**Your task:** Working with two other students, write a post for the company’s internal blog (which is not viewable outside the company), outlining your concerns about these communication practices. Use the examples mentioned above, and make up any additional details you need. Emphasize that while social media communication is oft en less formal and more flexible than traditional business communication, it shouldn’t be unprofessional. You are thinking of proposing a social media training program for everyone in the company, but for this message you just want to bring attention to the problem.

Solution

Note: Students may use catchy social media language to grab the reader’s attention. This informality, however, should not carry throughout the message as its misuse in the workplace is the main message. To better make the case against inappropriate writing, students should take extra care to ensure professional, clean, concise writing for this message.

Using Social Media at Work: Nothing LOL About It

“afk atm brb. btw m1 gtg”

I found this cryptic message staring at me from my computer screen when I messaged a colleague asking for a project update. Sensing my confusion, the intern who shares my workspace rushed to my rescue and expertly decoded this missive to inform me that this person is away from his desk at the moment but will be back soon, and that Module 1 is good to go.

This incident would be funny if it were not symptomatic of a larger problem that is quickly spreading across our organization. While it is exciting to see just how quickly we have transitioned to blogging, wiki writing, and other new-media activities for business communication, more attention needs to be paid to the style and quality of communication. Many of us seem to have interpreted “authentic and conversational” to mean “anything goes.” And the first to go have been grammar and spelling, closely followed by common sense and common courtesy. txtg language, acronyms, ALL CAPS, unedited videos, internal disagreements, crude language—all this and more have been evident in the social media communication environment of our company.

To protect the quality of our work environment and our relationship with customers and other groups, we need to reverse this trend. We must keep in mind that although social media communication is often more informal than traditional business communication, we still need to maintain a certain level of professionalism when communicating online. This is especially true of external communication, but is also very relevant to internal communication as not doing so can lead to miscommunications even more serious than the one described earlier. Also, please remember that any online communication can easily be forwarded to anyone else and forms a permanent record that often has the legal weight of printed documents.

A good general rule to ensure that our online communications reflect well on us and the organization is to use the same care in developing electronic messages as in writing a formal letter. Take a few seconds to think about the purpose of your message and the needs of your audience, choose your structure and words carefully, and revise and proofread your message for grammar, spelling and clarity before you put it out there. These simple steps will go a long way in developing an appropriate online identity for our company.

**9. Media Skills: Letter Writing; Message Strategies: Marketing and Sales Messages**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 9  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 10  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 10

Water polo is an active sport that provides great opportunities for exercise and for learning the collaborative skills involved in teamwork. You can learn more at **www.usawaterpolo.org**.

**Your task:** Write a one-page letter to parents of 10- to 14-year-old boys and girls, promoting the health and socialization benefits of water polo and encouraging them to introduce their children to the sport through a local club. Tell them they can learn more about the sport and find a club in their area by visiting the USA Water Polo website.

Solution

Note: Students have an opportunity with this message to present positive, helpful, and welcome information, if presented correctly. Be sure to include as much information as needed for the conscientious parent who might consider this opportunity.

Dear Parents,

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends organized sports as means of improving fitness levels and socialization skills in pre-teens and adolescents. However, given the numerous sports options available these days, choosing the right game for your child can be a difficult task. An excellent option is water polo—a combination of soccer, basketball, ice hockey, and rugby, played in a deep pool. This exciting sport can teach your child to compete in a positive environment, develop long-lasting friendships, and increase his or her stamina.

The intensity of water polo makes it a great fitness exercise. Water polo is a wonderful way to get children comfortable with water—and it helps them become better swimmers, improves their shoulder and leg strength, and serves as a cardio workout. As a water-based activity, water polo is a low-impact sport, leading to lower rates of injuries compared to other sports. The game also teaches basic water safety skills to players.

Water polo is fundamentally a team sport. The club structure of the game fosters camaraderie and cooperation amongst the players. Through the game, your child will learn to make new friends and compete in a safe, fun environment. It improves other skills as well, such as planning and time management.

Above all, water polo is fun! Many children enjoy it more than running or doing aerobics. It also instills a lifelong interest in water sports and other organized sports.

To learn more about water polo and to find water polo programs in your neighborhood, please visit the USA Water Polo website: www.usawaterpolo.org. Thank you for considering this option.

Sincerely,

Ryan Campbell

Chief Marketing Officer  
USA Water Polo, Inc

**10. Message Strategies: Proposals**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 11  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 12  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 14

One of the banes of apartment living is those residents who don’t care about the condition of their shared surroundings. They might leave trash all over the place, dent walls when they move furniture, spill food and beverages in common areas, destroy window screens, and otherwise degrade living conditions for everyone. Landlords obviously aren’t thrilled about this behavior, either, because it raises the costs of cleaning and maintaining the facility.

**Your task:** Assume that you live in a fairly large apartment building some distance from campus. Write an email proposal that you could send to your landlord, suggesting that fostering a sense of stronger community among residents in your building might help reduce incidents of vandalism and neglect. Propose that the little-used storage area in the basement of the building be converted to a community room, complete with a simple kitchen and a large-screen television. By attending Super Bowl parties and other events there, residents could get to know one another and perhaps forge bonds that would raise the level of shared concern for their living environment. You can’t offer any proof of this in advance, of course, but share your belief that a modest investment in this room could pay off long term in lower repair and maintenance costs. Moreover, it would be an attractive feature to entice new residents.

Solution

*Note: This email proposal will go to the landlord, who is surely as frustrated as the tenant, so students can assume the reader is interested. The purpose of the message is to inform the reader of areas that need improvement or change and the benefits of making these changes. Naturally, the value of the suggestions made would be best highlighted by what benefits they offer the landlord. These remarks should be stated as positively as possible, emphasizing what needs changing and how these changes will benefit everyone, rather than focusing on fellow tenants’ poor behavior or the landlord’s current inability to provide a more pleasant living space.*

To: roger.greenberg@gmail.com

From: h.lockie@uchicago.edu

Subject: Proposal for Apartment Community-Center Creation

Dear Mr. Greenberg,

Of late the living conditions at Cedarwood Apartments have undergone a noticeable decline. Residents often litter the common areas and spill food and beverages there; at times they damage common property and even their own apartments. For instance, the tenants who recently vacated apartment B-15 damaged the passage walls while moving their furniture.

This obviously adds to your maintenance costs, as well as makes the property unattractive to potential tenants.

One long-term solution to these problems is to foster a sense of shared ownership and community among residents in the building. I believe this can be done by converting the little-used storage area in the basement into a small community center.

With some modest investment—re-painting the storage room, constructing a kitchen with basic utilities, and providing a large-screen television, informal seating arrangements, and indoor-games—this space can be turned into an attractive community room for residents. After the initial investment, the maintenance cost can be kept fairly low.

A community room can be used in various ways. For instance, you could

* Build a sense of ownership by encouraging residents to give their feedback on what they would like most in the common room.
* Encourage residents to use the common room by making it available to them for free.
* Motivate artistic residents to showcase their talents in this space.
* Host common events such as Super Bowl parties, potluck dinners, and other group events where residents can socialize with each other.
* Help residents to organize birthdays, anniversaries, New Year’s Day, Christmas and other common celebrations in the community room.

Not only will the residents enjoy having a common space to relax in, but also get to know each other well. This, in turn, would change their impersonal attitude towards Cedarwood Apartments leading to greater shared concern toward the building.

While I cannot offer researched evidence of the benefits of creating a community center, I have a strong conviction that this initial investment will give you long-term returns. You would benefit by having

* Fewer instances of vandalism
* Lower maintenance costs
* Happier residents
* An added feature to entice future tenants
* Positive reviews and opinions about your housing facilities

Given the increasing availability of rented apartments in this neighborhood, having a community room will give your property an edge over other apartments. If you have any questions regarding this proposal, please call me.

Sincerely,

Heather Lockie  
D-21, Cedarwood Apartments

**11. Presentation Skills: Planning, Designing, and Creating Presentation Slides; Collaboration Skills**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 12  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 14  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 17

Garr Reynolds offers an excellent brief introduction to effective slide design in his “Top Ten Slide Tips” at **www.garrreynolds.com/presentation/slides.html**.

**Your task:** With a team of two or three other students, create a free-form slide presentation that covers Reynolds’s ten tips. Be sure to give Reynolds credit for his information and ideas. You may include a few brief quotations from him, but for the most part, express his ideas in your own words. Illustrate his points as you see fit with visuals that you create yourselves or use with appropriate attribution from a source such as Creative Commons (**http://creativecommons.org**) or Morguefile (**www.morguefile.com**). Make sure you follow the usage and attribution terms for any photos you find online. (For these two sites, the terms should be listed for any photo you find.)

Solution Guidelines

*Note: Whatever design style they choose, students should be sure to embrace Reynolds’s key principles of simplicity, restraint, and naturalness. Importantly, the minimalist approach advocated by Reynolds and others requires that the speaker—not the slides—deliver the bulk of the message. The slides are there to emphasize, punctuate, and illustrate the message, not to deliver it.*

*Because this project makes use of others’ original source material, students must take care to use materials appropriately and to provide attribution as specified by the owners of the material.*

**12. Career Skills: Researching Career Opportunities; Media Skills: Email**

*Business Communication Essentials*, Chapter 13  
*Excellence in Business Communication*, Chapter 15  
*Business Communication Today*, Chapter 18

Knowing the jargon and “hot button” issues in a particular profession or industry can give you a big advantage when it comes to writing your résumé and participating in job interviews. You can fine-tune your résumé for both human readers and applicant tracking systems, sound more confident and informed in interviews, and present yourself as a professional-class individual with an inquiring mind.

**Your task:** Imagine a specific job category in a company that has an informative, comprehensive website (to facilitate the research you’ll need to do). This doesn’t have to be a current job opening, but a position that you know exists or is likely to exist in this company, such as a business systems analyst at Apple or a brand manager at Unilever.

Explore the company’s website and other online sources to find the following: (1) A brief description of what this job entails, with enough detail that you could describe it to a fellow student. (2) Some of the terminology used in the profession or the industry, both formal terms that might serve as keywords on your résumé and informal terms and phrases that insiders are likely to use in publications and conversations. (3) An ongoing online conversation among people in this profession. For example, this might be a LinkedIn Group, a popular industry or professional blog that seems to get quite a few comments, or an industry or professional publication that attracts a lot of comments. (4) At least one significant issue that will affect people in this profession or companies in this industry over the next few years. For example, if your chosen profession involves accounting in a publicly traded corporation, upcoming changes in international financial reporting standards would be a significant issue. Similarly, for a company in the consumer electronics industry, the recycling and disposal of *e-waste* is an issue. Write a brief email message summarizing your findings and explaining how you could use this information on your résumé and during job interviews.

Solution Guidelines

*Note: Some students may find this project challenging because it requires getting fairly deep into the vernacular of a particular profession or industry. For the purposes of the exercise, it’s not essential for them to understand all the concepts and terminology they encounter, but they should be able to identify at least one hot-button issue and collect important keywords and insider jargon.*

*Depending on where you are in the course and whether your address résumés and other employment communication, this activity could be incorporated as part of a larger project in which students assemble an entire job-search package. In this case, the industries and professions chosen should obviously be targets that the students are actively seeking.*