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# UNIT 22 SOME KINDS OF OFFICIAL REPORTS

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## Structure

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- 22.2 Proposal
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- 22.4 Reports on Experiments : Research Report
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## 22.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we will discuss four types of formal reports:

- reports making a proposal,
- reports on market surveys,
- reports on experiments, and
- reports of meetings.

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## 22.1 INTRODUCTION: OFFICIAL REPORTS

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Unlike news reports, official reports not only to present data/facts but also help in decision-making. Some reports are used for internal communication, some help in corresponding with outsiders. Some serve as a permanent record, others solve an immediate problem. Official reports may appear in different forms, but the reasons for preparing a report provide the best clues about how to organize and write it.

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## 22.2 PROPOSALS

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*Blueprint solutions* finds that new recruits in the company do not have the relative experience in handling client relationships and require training. The HRD team has been requested to present a proposal to find out whether ABACUS Communications, Mumbai can help in meeting the training needs. Given below is the report to this effect.

### The problem:

In the past years, Blueprint Solutions has hired 12 new consultants, boosting the total staff to 40 people. The new staff members all have excellent qualifications to advise our clients in general business matters. However, some of the new

people have relatively little experience in handling client relationships, a skill that is important to their success.

### **The solution: Abacus Communications Course in Effective Speaking and Human Relations**

To help the 12 new members of the professional staff develop their human relations skills, a training programme in communication and leadership can be conducted. Rather than an in house training programme, it would be more effective to hire an organization with a proven track record in management education. After looking at a number of alternatives, it was found that the best source for such training is Abacus Communications.

Over the past 52 years, according to the records, 3.2 millions professionals have been trained in human relations by Abacus. Their courses are offered throughout India and some 22 foreign countries.

### **The Abacus Communications Method**

Participants are encouraged to learn by doing. Instead of listening to lecturers, participants present reports and make presentations, engage in friendly competitions, and practice problem-solving and decision-making techniques. Applying the lessons in class reinforces the learning process and gives students constructive feedback from instructors.

### **Anticipated Results of the Programme**

The Abacus communications course in effective speaking and human relations is ideally suited to the needs of our consulting staff. The course is designed to enhance communication skills and help people develop their leadership potential. The consultants will be taught how to get better results from meetings and how to gain cooperation of clients. During the course, the participants will study and practice various techniques to improve their business and personal relationships. They will learn how to handle responsibility, work under pressure, and motivate themselves and others.

### **Course Schedule and Costs**

The Abacus Communications course in effective speaking and human relations consists of 15 one hour sessions, 3 hours each day. Classes will be held Monday through Friday, from 9:00 to 12:00 a.m. The cost for 12 participants would be Rs 45,000.

The report above is what is called an internal “proposal” report. What do you think the proposal is trying to do?

It is trying to persuade the top management that the Abacus Communications is fit to conduct the training programme. The primary intention of a business proposal is to persuade someone. Here the writer gives three things: (a) the problem (2) the solution and (c) the cost. This is exactly what the management would want to know.

Note the language of the proposal. When the writer talks about Abacus Communications, ‘have’ ‘has’ is used. When the proposal is being made, ‘will’, ‘would’ is being used.

Proposals can be written for internal purposes as the above example. It could be for reorganization of a department, change in recruiting procedures, ideas for improving

the operations of a company etc. When preparing such documents, the writer needs to explain

- why the project is needed
- what it will involve
- how much it will cost and
- what the benefit will be.

We often have to write proposals for research purposes, trying to persuade a selection committee that the research project is useful. In research proposals for academic purposes what we need are the reason for the study, the methodology used and the implications. Unless it is a large-scale study which would involve many researchers, the budget need not be included in the proposal.

Proposals vary widely in style and format. Some are brief informal memos (see Section 4.6) others are lengthy, formal documents in manuscript format.

√ **Check Your Progress 1**

You work in the BPO sector, and are astonished with the amount of paper that is wasted every day. Each call agent is given a scribbling pad for recording information about calls. You have a proposal: you want the unused side of the waste paper to be printed in an attractive format, so that the paper can be used as scribbling pads, and as in-house memo sheets.

Write a short proposal about this. Invent details wherever necessary (about rimes of paper wasted everyday – money wasted, some designs that can be used, the cost of printing and binding, and the benefits from the proposal.)

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**22.3 SURVEY REPORTS**

From our experience we know that often the best way to obtain answers to our questions is to ask people with relevant experience and opinions. If we do this on

a large scale, we are actually conducting a survey. Surveys can include everything from a few interviews to the distribution of thousands of questionnaires.

When an agency or an organization needs specialized information that hasn't been recorded anywhere, it may want to conduct a survey. These survey reports not only present data /facts but also persuade or help in decision-making.

*Read this survey report published in the newspaper, and do the tasks that follow.*

### **SURVEY CONFIRMS WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF SMS AS BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS TOOL IN INDIA**

A survey was conducted on SMS and email for Business purposes in India. The use of SMS for business purposes shows widespread adoption within the India market, according to a pilot study commissioned by BulkSMS.com in July 2006. 95% of respondents reported receiving business communications via SMS while 75% received e-mail communications for business purposes.

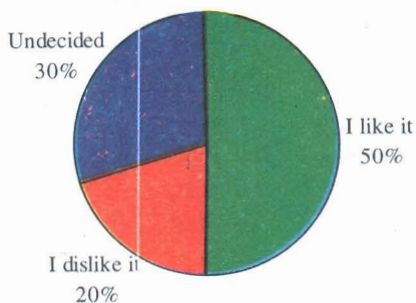
The study compared the experiences of Internet-savvy Indian consumers who are also mobile phone users. Respondents for this research were drawn from a small representative sample. The sample included prepaid and contract mobile phone users from three major urban areas.

It was found that respondents received on average:

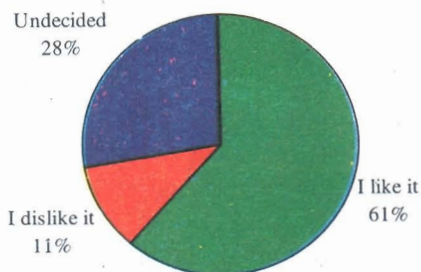
- Three to four relevant business SMSes per week.
- 35 relevant business e-mails per week.
- Six irrelevant business SMSes per week.
- Seven irrelevant business e-mails per week.

61% of respondents were happy to receive business communications via e-mail, and 50% of respondents were happy to receive business communications via SMS. The other findings from the research are:

- Overall, users report lower volumes of business communications via SMS than e-mail.
- The financial services sector use SMS more than e-mail to send business communications. After financial services, the retail sector makes the most use of SMS for business communications.
- 35% of respondents reported receiving internal work communications via e-mail while 15% received these communications by SMS.
- Less than 15% of all respondents receive fewer than six business SMSes per week.
- More than 30% of respondents receive more than 50 business e-mails per week.
- More respondents received irrelevant business e-mails than SMS communications.
- Respondents do not like receiving irrelevant advertising messages from businesses.



Rating receipt of business communications via SMS



Rating receipt of business communications via e-mails

This study is the first in a series tracking the prevalence and nature of SMS use in India.

✓ **Check Your Progress 2**

1. What did the survey wish to find?

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2. Who is the sample who participated in the survey?

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3. What was found in the survey? List three findings.

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Survey reports, as you can see, always includes:

- 1 The reason for the survey
- 1 People who participated in the study (*Subjects*)
- 1 The way in which information was gathered (*Methodology*)

- What was found (*Findings*)
- Recommendations

Surveys often require the information to be put in tables, graphs and pie charts. Reports often accompany graphic representations of facts and figures. The reports describe the figures and either make recommendations or predict future trends.

Let us give you an example. Here is a table which summarizes a survey on whether people are concerned about artificial colouring in the prepackaged food they eat.

|               | Percentage who are very concerned | Percentage who are slightly concerned | Percentage who are not concerned |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Men           | 44                                | 40                                    | 16                               |
| Women         | 57                                | 37                                    | 6                                |
| Adults 18-45  | 49                                | 40                                    | 11                               |
| Adults 46 -65 | 55                                | 32                                    | 13                               |

How do we report this finding? We can say:

Half the people surveyed are very concerned about artificial colouring in the prepackaged food they eat. Women and older people are most concerned.

### √ Check Your Progress 3

The rapid growth of your company over the past five years has decreased the sense of community among the employees. You wanted to find out whether a newsletter would help rebuild a personal element in the organization. Given below are the responses of the employees of 20 companies to the questionnaire about newsletters. Summarize the findings in a paragraph.

1. How useful is a newsletter in giving information about employees?

|                    |      |
|--------------------|------|
| Useful             | 78 % |
| Not very Useful    | 14 % |
| Absolutely Useless | 8 %  |

2. Does the newsletter help you know about others?

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Yes       | 70 % |
| Sometimes | 19 % |
| No        | 11 % |

3. Do you think the newsletter helps in bringing people together?

|           |      |
|-----------|------|
| Yes       | 62 % |
| Sometimes | 30 % |
| No        | 8 %  |

## 4. What should a newsletter contain?

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Only Informative                          | 12 % |
| Mostly informative, but also entertaining | 64 % |
| More entertainment, less information      | 20 % |
| Only entertainment                        | 4 %  |

## 5. How often should newsletters be published?

|                      |      |
|----------------------|------|
| Once a month         | 42 % |
| Once in Two months   | 51%  |
| Once in Three months | 9 %  |
| Once in Four months  | —    |
| Once in six months   | —    |

## 22.4 REPORTS ON EXPERIMENTS: RESEARCH REPORTS

A research report describes the results of a scientific investigation. Thousands of papers are written each year by scientists at universities and research institutions all over the world. These reports are published in scientific journals, many of which you can find in the University library. It is not the same as the report you write in your regular lab notebook. The goal of the research report is not to prove that you got the right answers; but to document your findings and communicate the knowledge you have acquired from an experiment.

Upon reading a research report, the reader should be able to understand

- What you have done
- Why you have done it
- What you have concluded

The report is divided into distinct sections, with its own characteristic heading:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Apparatus and Experimental Procedure (or Method)
- Results
- Discussion and
- Conclusions.

## 22.5 MEMORANDUMS

When you think of a memo, what do you think of? Usually we think of a little piece of paper that says something like: "From the desk of ..." or "Don't forget ..." or "Reminders ...". The message could be something as simple as: "Buy more paper clips" or "Meet with President at 2:30"

These memos are informative and may serve simple purposes; more complex memos are often needed in an office setting. Standard memos are usually brief,

because it recognized that readers have time only to skim messages. Unlike letters which may be sent to outsiders, memos are used for the routine, day-to-day exchange of information within an organization. Also letters are usually sent to one person, while the same memo can be sent to any number of receivers. These memos are therefore less private. Memos are used to announce working schedules, promotions, acquisitions, opening of branch offices, to designate responsibility, and confirm oral agreements or decisions.

Since the purpose is to quickly give information to the reader, the information has to be clear, carefully arranged and neat. Many organizations have memo forms printed, with labeled spaces for the date, the receiver's name, the sender's name and the subject.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| <b>MEMO</b>          |   |
| <b>DATE</b> .....    | <b>FROM</b> .....   |
| <b>TO</b> .....      | <b>TELEPHONE</b> .....  |
| <b>DEPT</b> .....    | <i>for your</i>   |
| <b>SUBJECT</b> ..... | <input type="checkbox"/> approval <input type="checkbox"/> information <input type="checkbox"/> comment |
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Here is an example of a memo.

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| <b>MEMO</b>  |  |
| <b>To:</b> The Senior Management Team  |  |
| <b>From:</b> The Managing Director   |  |
| <b>Date:</b> 2 March 2007  |  |
| <b>Subject:</b> Purchase of Coffee Machines  |  |
| The Board is thinking of buying three coffee machines. Before we do this, we need to know:   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● how much they will cost</li><li>● where to place them</li><li>● who will operate them</li></ul>                              |  |
| Can you therefore provide:   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Comparative information on coffee machines</li><li>● Total cost involved (installation, operation and maintenance)</li></ul> |  |
| Please submit this information before the Board meeting scheduled for 20/ 3/ 2007.   |  |



Usually memos don't need to be signed nor do we use the greeting (Dear Sir/Madam...) or say 'Yours sincerely...'.  
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Summaries of sales reports, survey reports and proposals are also given in memos. Memo reports are highly structures, including how data was gathered, procedures used, conclusions and recommendations. Unlike regular reports, we find that a direct style is used where we use 'I' 'You' 'we', short sentences in the active voice.

#### ✓ Check Your Progress 4

Read this letter of complaint that was sent to the general manager of Pritchard's, a large bookshop. How many complaints does the customer have?

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to complain about the treatment that I received when I visited your shop recently. I have been a customer for more than thirty years, but have noticed that the level of service has deteriorated over the past few months.

In general, staff seems to be cold and unsmiling and never welcome when you come into the shop. A smile surely costs nothing. It is hard to find, or identify member of the staff. They do not wear uniforms, which is fine, but hardly any of them appear to wear any kind of identification, like a name tag or badge.

Even if one wants to pay, it can be difficult to find anyone to serve you – they either pretend to be busy or are deep in conversation with other members of staff. When you do manage to catch someone's attention, you feel as if they are doing you an enormous favour! They tend to throw any books you have bought into a bag and roll their eyes if you ask for a book to be gift wrapped or delivered. I do not expect people to behave like servants, but I do expect good, helpful, and polite service.

I love books and bookshops And would certainly not wish them to become like supermarkets. However, I have to say that it is difficult to imagine finding such a poor even in a supermarket.

Yours faithfully,

Sushmita Sinha

#### Task 1

##### Complaints

- 1) .....
- 2) .....
- 3) .....
- 4) .....
- 5) .....

**Task 2**

Write a memo to all the managers of the bookshop, insisting that they improve their level of service to the public, make at least five relevant points.

**To:** .....

**From:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Subject:** .....

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**22.6 REPORTS OF MEETINGS: MINUTES**

On report that is written at all places of work is a report of the meetings held. These are called Minutes. The function of the minutes is to record the proceedings for future reference. In many workplaces, meetings often begin with a reading out of the minutes of the previous meeting. They are useful because people can forget what was decided at a meeting if there is no written record of the proceedings. Minutes can also inform people who were not at the meeting about what took place.

√ **Check Your Progress 5**

Given below is an excerpt from minutes of a meeting. Study the excerpt and do the tasks that follow.

**Minutes of the meeting of Campus Recruitment for Cadence India, Noida, held in the Meeting Cell, on February 25, 2007 at 10 am.**

**Members Present**

Paritosh Dayal

Rachna Seth

Ramesh Kailasam

Nihal Jaisingh

Rajiv K Urs in the Chair

**Members Absent**

K P Gill and Prasoon Sen could not attend the meeting.

The Director of the Campus Recruitment Cell introduced the agenda of the meeting, and requested Paritosh Dayal to report on the recruiting activities in the month of February 2007.

*Item 1: Report of Recruitment Activities in February 2007*

Paritosh Dayal presented the following facts:

**ICFAI Hyderabad:** ICFAI Placement Cell Officer had suggested the names of five candidates. Three of them have been invited to the Noida office. Their replies were being awaited.

**Regional Institute of Engineering, Bhubaneshwar:** 54 undergraduate engineering third year students were interviewed during regular campus interviews on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>. Ramesh Kailasam and Rachna Seth reviewed the evaluations and 10 students have been asked to come in for additional interviews at our local office.

*Item 2: Activities Scheduled for March 2007*

The recruiting activities for the next month was decided as indicated below:

| Date        | Activity   | Responsibility       |
|-------------|--|----------------------|
| March 18-19 | University of Hyderabad<br>Prescreening and first round<br>of interviews           | Nihal Jaisingh       |
| March 21    | St. Xavier's College, Kolkata<br>Prescreening and first round<br>of interviews     | Rachna Seth and team |
| March 28    | KPM College of Engineering<br><i>Prescreening and first round</i><br>of interviews | Prasoon Sen          |

1. Who do you think would receive these minutes in the company?

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2. Why do you think the meeting was held?

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3. The meeting lasted nearly 2 hours. The minutes is however short. What do you think the writer has recorded? What has she left out?

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The format of minutes of meetings varies from organization to organization. Though the minutes of meetings do not have a specific format, they are all required to carry the following information:

- time, date and place of meeting
- members present (and absent)
- approval of the previous meeting's minutes
- agenda
- items/ points discussed and decisions taken
- time, date and place of next meeting

This kind of minutes is to be presented to the management and the team so let them know about the work plan of the month. This meeting, for instance, was held to take stock of the recruitment activities in the month of February and to decide about the activities in the following month. It also wanted to delegate work to the members of the team, so that they could plan their travel accordingly.

The minute of a meeting is like a summary, which we will discuss in the next unit. What are included in the minutes is just the *decisions taken*; the process of arriving at that decision is not recorded. This is because it is important to record who said what in the meeting, as long as all agreed on the same thing at the end. We therefore do not need to describe everything said by everyone, we need to summarize any long discussion or debates, and only record the decisions taken. Criticism of members should not be included unless it takes the form of an official motion. It is however necessary to record all decisions taken, action taken, information conveyed, recommendations agreed upon, and record names of people who are being given some new designation or responsibility.

### √ Check Your Progress 5

Here is another excerpt from a minute of a meeting, of the Library Advisory Committee of Institute of Culture and Fine Arts. What do you think you can leave out from this?

The Chairperson, Rajesh Srinath greeted the members and then asked for announcements. Mary Fernandez said registration was open for the Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference. Harish Kana reminded everyone about the upcoming Infranet Users Group meeting.

Bithika Das then addressed several topics, beginning with a possibility for purchasing of subject related encyclopedias. Many members also felt this would be useful. Mihir Kale was worried about the price of such encyclopedias and wanted to know whether the budget of this year would permit their purchase. Nancy Brown said we could find out the price and then take a decision. She volunteered to request the faculty members to give their requirements of encyclopedias in their area of research.

Nancy Brown informed the Committee that the departments had requested a copy of individual departments' budgets for the library. Nancy Brown said she would find out what aspect of the budget the Faculty Assembly wanted, but she thought it was the certified budget.

Mihir Kale said we need to continue to try to get a position or person to coordinate consortial purchasing efforts. NC LIVE should be emphasized, Mihir said, and

he said the Budget Committee needs to discuss NC LIVE; consortial purchases. A person at the Office should be given the responsibility to negotiate purchases, along with support staff; document delivery issues; and digitization costs. All members agreed with this.

Rewrite this minutes in the format below so that it records only the decisions taken and the important information.

The Chairperson greeted the members.

The following announcements were made:

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**Item 1: Purchase of subject related Encyclopedia**

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**Item 2: Individual Departmental Budget**

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**Item 3: Consortial Purchase**

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## 22.7 LET US SUM UP

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During your career, you will be writing many kinds of reports. You might be required to analyze a situation, to pinpoint a central problem and to come up with a solution before you begin to write. Once your purpose is clear, you will then need to focus on how best to present it to your reader. Assessing your reader, gathering appropriate information, organizing your ideas and information in a way that convinces your reader to go along with your recommendations, and choosing an effective format will all contribute to an effective written product.

You may be asked to write reports about meetings, reports about events, trips, procedures, and proposals. Despite the varied purposes of these reports, they have one primary thing in common: They should answer a key question (or questions) that their primary readers want answered.

## 22.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Raman, M. and Sharma, S. (2004). *Technical Communication: Principles and Practice*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Forman, J and Kelly, K.A. (1990). *The Random House Guide to Business Writing*. New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company.

## 22.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Your Progress 1

Answers may vary. However, we provide a report as an example.

### Report on use of waste paper Submitted by Shreya Das

This is a proposal to reuse the unused side of paper for memos and scribbling pads.

We would like to bring to your notice the amount of paper that we use up each month in our office. It is felt that the paper expenditure can be considerably by reusing some paper for internal communication. We present below a list of paper related goods that we use and the expenditure we incur on these:

The expenditure we incur for paper per month are:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 200 rimes of paper (@Rs. 150 per rime)                            | Rs. 30,000 |
| 300 Writing pads (@ Rs. 25 per pad)                               | Rs. 7,500  |
| 100 Memo pads (@ Rs. 50 per pad)<br>(paper and printing included) | Rs. 5,000  |
| Total   | Rs. 42,500 |

We have found that we use approximately 8 rimes of paper everyday to print out for in house official communication which are eventually shredded. Most of these communication cannot be called confidential, since they are notifications, agenda sheets and short reports on ongoing activities.

We propose that paper which is not deemed confidential can be reused, since most documents are printed on only one side. We suggest that we use the unused side to make scribbling pads and memo sheets for our internal communication. This is a sure way to cut down on our paper costs and also a move towards eco-friendliness. The used paper could be printed and bound and used as scribbling pads. Find attached with this proposal, samples of border designs for scribbling pads and memo sheets, and inhouse notifications.

Given below is the expenditure that we will incur if we accept this proposal:

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| 100 rimes of paper (50% reduction)            | Rs. 15,000 |
| Printing and binding charges for writing pads | Rs. 2000   |
| Printing and binding charges for memo pads    | Rs. 2000   |
| Total   | Rs. 19,000 |
| Amount Saved                                  | Rs. 23,500 |

We submit the proposal with the relevant documents for your consideration.

1. The survey wished to examine the use of SMS and email for business correspondence in Indian markets. Who is the sample who participated in the survey?
2. A small representative sample of Internet-savvy consumers who have prepaid or contract mobile phones in three major urban areas were the participants in the survey.
3. Three findings:
  - a) More people (61%) are happy to receive business communications via e-mail than SMS (50%)
  - b) The financial sector and the retail sector use SMS more than email
  - c) Respondents do not like receiving irrelevant advertising messages from businesses.

## Check Your Progress 3

The rapid growth of your company over the past five years has decreased the sense of community among the employees. A questionnaire was given to 20 employees to find out whether a newsletter would help rebuild a personal element in the organization. Many employees felt that newsletters are useful in giving information about employees (78%), helping them know each other better (70%) and bringing people together (62%). The newsletter, 64% of the employees felt should be essentially informative, but also have some sections for entertainment and fun. Regarding the periodicity of the newsletter, if published, 41% said it should be once a month and 51% said it should be once in two months. It can therefore be said that employees feel newsletter will help in bringing the community together, and would help them know about each other.

## Check Your Progress 4

### Task 1: Complaints

- 1) Staff seems to be cold and unfriendly.
- 2) They do not wear uniforms or a name tag or badge, so identification is difficult.
- 3) They are busy chatting with other members on the staff.
- 4) They tend to throw any books you have bought into a bag.
- 5) They are not too willing to gift wrap books or have them delivered.

### Task 2: Memo

**To:** Managing Director, Bookworld

**From:** All Managers

**Date:** 22 April 2008

**Subject:** Improving level of service

We have received complaints about our service to the public.

Henceforth could we ensure that

- a) Staff wear uniform and name badges at work.
- b) Customers are always attended to in a friendly and polite way
- c) Books are gift wrapped or delivered when requested

Rohit Sharma

### Check Your Progress 5

Bithika Das then addressed several topics, beginning with a possibility for purchasing of subject related encyclopaedia. Many members also felt this would be useful. Mihir Kale was worried about the price of such encyclopaedias and wanted to know whether the budget of this year would permit their purchase. Nancy Brown said we could find out the price and then take a decision. She volunteered to request the faculty members to give their requirements of encyclopaedias in their area of research.

Nancy Brown informed the Committee that the departments had requested a copy of individual departments' budgets for the library. Nancy Brown said she would find out what aspect of the budget the Faculty Assembly wanted, but she thought it was the certified budget.

Mihir Kale said we need to continue to try to get a position or person to coordinate consortial purchasing efforts. NC LIVE should be emphasized, Mihir said, and he said the Budget Committee needs to discuss NC LIVE; consortial purchases. A person at the Office should be given the responsibility to negotiate purchases, along with support staff; document delivery issues; and digitization costs. All members agreed with this.

### Check Your Progress 6

The Chairperson greeted the members.

The following announcements were made:

- a) registration is open for the Teaching and Learning with Technology Conference
- b) Infranet Users Group meeting is on 22 April 2008.

#### **Item 1: Purchase of subject related Encyclopaedia**

- a) The possibility of purchasing subject related encyclopaedia was discussed.
- b) Nancy Brown has volunteered to find out the departmental requirements for encyclopaedia and their prices

#### **Item 2: Individual Departmental Budget**

- a) Departments have requested a copy of individual departments' budgets for the library.
- b) Nancy Brown will find out what aspect of the budget the Faculty Assembly wanted.

#### **Item 3: Consortial Purchase**

The Committee felt the need to get a person to negotiate purchases, along with support staff; document delivery issues; and digitization costs.