The Memo Revision Assignment

Presented by
Student Success Center
Refining and Refocusing Your Topic

• Choose a topic is relevant and researchable
  – Can I identify my community/audience?
  – Will I be able to find outside information to inform my analysis?

• Avoid being too narrow or too broad

• If you have already committed to your topic, decide whether it needs to be refocused to become broader or narrower
Topic Selection Tips

• Choose a real company, not an imaginary one.
• Choose a company that you can do research on
  – Company should be too small, because you won’t be able to find information
  – Company should be from a country that does not make information publically available
• The problem should be complex – you don’t know the solution(s) yet
• The scope of the problem should not be too broad. If you’re working with a very large company, try to focus on a specific department or branch.
Responding to Instructor Feedback

• Pay close attention to your instructor’s feedback on your initial memo assignment.
  – He/she will be looking to see that you have reviewed and addressed these comments.
  – Instructor comments will help to trigger your own ideas about how to improve your memo.

• If you did not receive detailed feedback or have any specific questions, feel free to ask your instructor – they are here to help!
Organizing Your Memo

• Follow your instructor’s guidelines for page length – sometimes the requirement is 2 pages, sometimes 1 page
• The paper is shorter than the initial memo, and the recommended structure is simpler
  – Initial memo: Background, Reasons, Research plan/Timeline, Needs
  – Revised Memo: Problem/Purpose, Research Plan
• Condense your analysis, but do not leave out any major components
Using the Rubric as a Guide

- Be sure to understand the sections and criteria of your rubric – this is how your paper is scored!
- The rubric is helpful for *drafting* the content of your memo and also for *revising/proofreading* your memo before you submit it
Rubric: Content/Assignment Parameters

• The purpose of your memo should be clear from the very first sentence!

• It is not enough to state a problem; you need to prove that the problem exists and is significant.

• In your memo, you do not need to solve the problem, but you need to provide a strategy and timeline for solving it.

• Be realistic about the budget and resources that you are requesting – don’t be afraid to ask for what practical and necessary to complete your proposal.
Rubric: Audience

- Who are the specific decision makers that you are addressing in your proposal?
- Do they work within the department or group within your company that would handle issues related to your topic?
- Have you anticipated and addressed their major concerns and possible objections in your memo?
- Think of your instructor as part of your audience, too. Have you provided him/her with enough context to understand your proposal?
Rubric: Organization

• Do you have an introduction that will draw your audience in?
• Are your paragraphs clear and developed? If there are any sentences that do not advance the paragraph, they can be deleted!
• Are you using section headings and white space to improve readability and skim value?
• Do the transitions between sections make sense?
• Does your conclusion resolve your paper in a satisfying way?
Rubric: Mechanics, Format, Design

• Language and syntax
  – Your sentences should be direct, concise, and clear, but also sophisticated. Show an advanced knowledge of your topic.
  – Proofread your paper for spelling and grammar before submitting it – try reading it out loud to yourself!
  – Make sure that any listed/bulleted items have parallel structure

• Is there a way to improve the aesthetics of your document without being unnecessarily fancy?
• Have you maximized skim value?
Additional Resources

• Ask a question or make an appointment with a librarian:
  http://guides.library.jhu.edu/hebusiness

• Make a tutoring appointment:
  carey.jhu.edu/ssc

• Email us: carey.tutoring@jhu.edu