

IDS 135: Silicon Snake Bytes Notes to Instructor

Identifying Biases and Preconceptions—Part 2 A group discussion activity in preparation for Essay #4

Introduction:

This discussion activity asks students to delineate audience needs before they begin planning their essays. It was developed because we discovered that students who did not perform well on the essay assignment had not thought enough about what kind of information their audience (“the boss”) will need. They wrote from their own perspective and needs, but could not put themselves in the place of the person who receives the communication.

Small group discussion: Identifying the audience’s preconceptions, needs and biases

Students will work in groups of 4-5 to answer the following questions. All group members will take notes, since all will generate answers for their own audiences. The notes will allow them both to contribute to the large group discussion and tailor their proposals to their audience’s needs.

- What preconceptions does your boss have about how well your current computer setup meets the company’s needs? Besides more general preconceptions, think about the correlation between the tasks you do and how you use the computer to do those tasks. Does your boss understand the importance of this correlation?
- What needs does your boss have, related to your job, that currently aren’t being met?
- What biases does your boss have that might prevent him/her from approving your proposal?
- What company responsibilities does your boss have that might prevent him/her from approving your proposal?

Large group discussion: categorizing preconceptions, needs, and biases

The whole class will convene in a large discussion group. Students will report their answers to the small group questions. Other students will record their answers on the chalkboard. Once a list has been made, students will be asked to answer the following questions

- What preconceptions do all or most bosses have about how well current systems meets their company’s needs?
- What biases do all or most bosses have that might prevent them from approving new computer equipment proposals?
- What company responsibilities do all or most bosses have that might prevent them from approving computer equipment proposals?

Essay Planning

Students will be required to turn in their list of their boss’s preconceptions, needs and biases, plus additional notes that explain how these problems are being addressed in the proposal.



IDS 135
Silicon Snake Bytes
Essay #4: Proposal for a New Computer

Draft Due: Monday, November 16
First Revision Due: Thursday, November 19 (original and four copies)
Final Revision Due: Tuesday, November 24 (No tape this time)
Approximate Length: 092—2-2 ½ pages
101—3 pages

Topic

- See next page for complete assignment description

Assignment Objectives

- Design a business form to organize and communicate information
- Demonstrate understanding of computer systems

Grading Criteria

- Ability to use assigned form
- Ability to understand audience needs and meet them
- Ability to write focused paragraphs with narrowly focused topic sentences
- Ability to develop a persuasive argument in the justification section
- Ability to write mechanically correct prose.

Use a memo format to present your proposal. Be creative in the person you address it to.

Cover the points listed above: set a context that covers your job responsibilities, provide a justification as to why you need the new system, and some kind of closing that “cinches” the deal. Put the budget at the end. Your work should be about two pages long.

You will be graded on how good a job you do at justifying your expenditures and your writing skills.



Proposal for a New Computer

Imagine yourself in a new job—in any kind of job that uses a computer.

Keep your mind open. Does your job require a lot of travel? Do you work at home? Do you have a top-secret job? Are you a consultant? a corporate raider? a developer? a restaurateur? a cookie maven? a toy specialist? a traveling salesperson? a farmer? a calendar maker? a multi-media electronics wizard? a musician? a computer graphics animation specialist? an ophthalmologist? a rocket scientist? What is the best type of equipment for your job?

You have \$3,500 to spend on a new computer system.

The minimum requirements for your system include a CPU, monitor, keyboard, pointing device (like a mouse), a printer, and software. You can invest in an IBM-compatible or a Macintosh. Optional equipment could include any other computer peripherals, such as a modem, ZIP drive, portable printer, multi-media kit, etc.

Write a proposal to show why you need this system, and what the money will be used for.

Include in your proposal **why** (also known as “justification”) you need the computer. Why do you need this model? How is it better than your existing system? (Remember, even if you don’t have a computer, you still have some kind of system -- even pencil and paper!) What is special about the printer? How does the software enable you to do your job better? What is it about your proposed system that will make you a more productive worker? How does your system support the kind of work you do, the responsibility you have? How does it increase your value to the company?

The justification shows that buying you this new system is a smart investment for the company.

Be creative! Feel free to invent jobs and requirements!

We are looking for variety in your job tasks and the software that you buy, as well as how well thought-out your proposal is.

Include a pricing section that shows the budget, line by line.

Do not be creative in this section! All prices must be based on real-world information. Make two columns. Show the item on the left and its price on the right, with a total at the end. Make sure you include the appropriate sales tax.

For pricing information use reliable printed resources (newspapers, trade magazines, computer catalogs, etc.) and /or in-person shopping (Computer City, Radio Shack, Office Max, etc.). Obviously, you want to get as much stuff for as little money as possible. Check out sales; find out if you can get student discounts; find out about bundles or pre-loaded software.

