**Checklist**

Is the subject line appropriate?

Is the organization and content appropriate for the audience?

If a buffer is used, does it avoid suggesting either a positive or a negative response?

Is the reason, if it is given, presented before the refusal?

Is the reason watertight, with no loopholes? Is the negative information clear?

Is an alternative given if a good one is available?

Does the message provide all the information needed to act on the alternative but leave the choice up to the audience?

Does the last paragraph avoid repeating the negative information?

Is tone acceptable—not defensive, but not cold, preachy, or arrogant either?

**Originality in a negative message may come from:**

An effective buffer, if one is appropriate.

A clear, complete statement of the reason for the refusal.

A good alternative, clearly presented, which shows that you’re thinking about what the audience really needs.

Adding details that show you’re thinking about a specific organization and the specific people in that organization.