## Professional Writing

## Chapter Seven Activities

1. You are documentation manager for XXX Software, a growing company, and you supervise preparation and production of all user manuals. The present system for producing manuals is inefficient because three different departments are involved in (1) assembling the material, (2) word processing and designing, and (3) publishing the manuals. After studying the problem, you decide that greater efficiency would result if the company started using another system for the production of manuals, which would enable everyone involved to contribute during all stages. To achieve this, you must write a proposal to be read by the General Manager, as well as by the three Department Managers.

Brainstorm some reasons that you think these readers would find convincing for your proposal, remembering that they would have different concerns and interests. What would be your persuasive strategy in this proposal?

2. Here is an extract from a report on the development of a computer game, written by one of the developers to the project manager. The writer follows a “write as you think” approach, which gives the text a muddled and wordy presentation. Also, the style combines specialist techniques (extensive use of technical terminology) with journalistic elements (chatty tone). Revise and edit the text both on a structural and sentence level. Break up paragraphs, include sections, headings and bullet points where appropriate, and re-organize information to make it clearer.

The game was a drag and drop style board game involving one person directing another person’s actions using a set list of verbal commands. The game also recorded moves made during a game for reviewing, either as a textual description or as real-time playback. As well as implementation, documentation of the system was a big part of the project with documents on five major aspects of the system produced. P1, the project plan, described the overall project, what was involved in the current system and our plans to implement a new system. P2, the requirements document, detailed the current system and our proposed solution to the problem presented to us by the client. P3, the architecture document, presented how we intended to develop the system and how it met the requirements determined in the previous document. P4 detailed the user interface of the document and also how it met the requirements of P2. P5, the detailed design document, contained the specifics of the implementation of the system and was intended to be used when coding the system. The documentation was intended to guide the implementation process in order to produce better quality software. I think that the software produced during the project was superior to previous software used for the same reason and I think this can be entirely attributed to following the project software development process.

When I say that the software produced during the project was superior to the software previously used I don’t mean that the software produced was a superior piece of software. I think the overall design of our project was a good design that could’ve been implemented successfully but I do think it was lacking in some areas due to not enough time spend during this phase. It was initially intended that the interfaces would respond to users’ commands and pass the responsibility of performing the operations on to various other modules. Little consideration was given to how a textual review would be displayed with regard to getting the information from the storage system to the interface so we ended up with the interface extract the information from a stored round object.

3.Below are some verbal descriptions of actions, relationships, steps and trends. Read the description and decide what kind of visual would present this information graphically. Draw the visual to illustrate. There could be more than one option for each description.

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| **Verbal description** | **Visual** |
| The budget was divided as follows: supplies 20%, salaries 40%, advertising 25%, shipping, 10%, and reserve 5%. |  |
| The fuel-mixture container is located on the right top corner of the engine, and the main valve is located below the injector plug. |  |
| Measured values fro the X, Y, and Z plants were 41.2, 50.8 and 20.5 respectively. |  |
| First, check...Then, open...Next, move... |  |
| The engine s composed of A, B, C and D components. |  |
| The error rate for online help menus was about half of the rate for printed instructions. |  |
| Profits rose continuously in the last five years, even though the number of investors remained constant. |  |
| If X happens, we should do Y; on the other hand, if B happens we should do A. |  |