

Additional Projects to Accompany *Technically Write!* 6th Edition

Chapter 3: Letters, Memos, and Email

Project A 3.1: Unexpected Software Expenses

You are an engineering assistant at the local branch of H L Winman and Associates. One week ago, branch manager Vern Rogers asked you to research a software program called *Amaze 2.3*, and to have it in-house within a week. (With *Amaze*, the company will be able to create graphics for computer-generated slides to be projected through an LCD projector.)

You identified Cottonwood Computers Ltd at 333 Main Street as the local supplier, where Alicia told you that *Amaze* costs \$395 and delivery takes about three weeks (the program has to be special-ordered from the manufacturer in the British Columbia).

“No. That’s too long,” you replied. “We need it within three days.” So you agreed to have the software couriered to you overnight, at a cost of \$40, and specified that it be supplied on a CD ROM.

Amaze arrived three days ago. However, when you tried to install it your screen contained the message: “Unable to access data on drive D. Disk contains corrupt data.” So you called customer service at Carlton Software Associates (CSA) in Vancouver—the manufacturer—where you were put on hold for 13 minutes until service representative Kevin came on the line, to whom you explained the problem. Kevin said: “We’ll send you another disk. It’ll take about 10 days.”

You asked Kevin to courier the disks to you: your need had now become urgent. He agreed, and said there would be a service charge of \$30. You explained that there should be no charge because you paid for the original program to be couriered to you, but Kevin said that could be done only if the original order had been placed directly with CSA. You would have to work through the local supplier. Exasperated, you agreed to pay the charge.

Today an envelope arrives, not with the replacement CD ROM you had requested, but with 3.5 inch disk containing only a program to display the images, not the complete software package. Because you need to develop the presentation slides, not just display them you again phone CSA (at your expense, because they don’t list either an 800 or an 888 number). This time the customer service representative is Andrea, and you wait 17 minutes for her to answer. You explain the problem and that you had specifically ordered the full software in CD ROM format.

“For security reason, we don’t supply our full software programs to customers on CDs any more,” Andrea replies. “It’s too easy to install multiple copies. You need to connect to our Web site and download the files you need.” You arrange to download the files, but you are considerably annoyed by the inconvenience (Kevin should have explained this) and the costs you have incurred:

- Two couriered shipments at \$40 and \$30.
- Two long-distance telephone calls at \$13.47 and \$16.20.

You decide to write to the head of customer service at CSA and request a refund of some of your expenses. Their address: 2120 Ferguson Loop, Vancouver, British Columbia.

Project A 3.2: Email - Proposal Readiness Project

Sending an email to introduce a document you send in the mail is an excellent technique since it prepares the recipient for the information. The email message should be short and to the point yet contain enough information so the reader understands the situation and the information which will follow.

You are an engineer with H L Winman and Associates in their Toronto office and have been asked to answer a Request for Proposal (RFP) from the City of Lakeville. The city has decided to build an additional recycling collection location. The site you have selected is at the northwest corner of Magyar Street and Wellington Avenue (Wellington Avenue is a major road between the Lakeville city centre and a prime residential district known as Somerville Estates).

You've prepared the proposal complete with architectural diagrams, a cost analysis and a time schedule. Before dropping it into the mail to the Lakeville City Council, you decide to email the contact person to introduce the proposal and highlight the major points. From the RFP you have the following information:

Send proposals and questions to Ellen Johnson

Lakeville City Council
143 Cedar Street
Lakeville ON M2J 1K7
(905) 626-14xx (tel)
(905) 626-14xx (fax)
email: E.Johnson@LCC.com

Write the email message.

Project A 3.3: Portable Computer Problems

After several years working for Macro Engineering Inc (MEI) in Toronto, you decide to “go independent.” You resign from MEI and set up your own business, registering your company’s name as Pro-Active Consultants Limited. You set up an office in your home, and use your home telephone also as your business telephone.

On July 1 of this year you buy a new computer to replace a computer destroyed by a power surge. The new machine is a portable Nabuchi 300CDT, and it cost \$2360. It has a sound card, an internal CD-ROM drive, a 3.20GHz Intel Xeon processor with 1MB L3 cache, 4GB dual-channel DDR, 266MHz SDRAM memory, and a 100 Gbyte hard drive. You install Windows XP plus a host of software programs you expect to use as a consultant.

However, a problem occurs within a week: every now and then the mouse button freezes and the cursor cannot be moved. The only remedy is to reboot the computer by depressing the CTRL-ALT-DEL keys simultaneously, but that means you lose whatever you have been working on during the last 15 minutes. After several such episodes, you wait for the next mouse-freeze and then carry the computer to Westside Computer Centre, where you bought it. Yet when you demonstrate the problem to technician Michel Olenick, the fault has rectified itself. You leave the computer with Michel for 24 hours but, no matter how much he tries, the fault does not recur. “Intermittent problems can be far harder to diagnose than a full failure,” Michel comments when you pick up the computer.

Ten days later another fault occurs: the whole keyboard suddenly freezes up and there is *nothing* you can do to reboot it. You can’t even switch the computer off! The only remedy is to disconnect the power cord and battery. When you reconnect them, the fault is resolved. You visit Westside Computer Centre again, and again the fault refuses to show up.

This week you are experiencing still another problem: the internal power source transformer is immediately beneath the internal PCMCIA modem card. It tends to overheat the modem and cause the modem to malfunction: when it is hot, it will not dial!

“Oh, that’s a recurring problem,” Michel says. “You just have to remove the modem, allow it to cool down, then reinsert it. Then it will work for you.”

Michel is right, of course, but you are still annoyed by this most recent symptom. It’s inconvenient and you feel you really shouldn’t have to fiddle around like that, and particularly as the other problems are still occurring intermittently. So you decide to write to the computer manufacturer. In your letter you describe the problems and request they supply you with a fully functional, new computer. Nabuchi Electronics’ head office in Canada is at 2830 rue St Augustine, Montreal, Quebec, H3B 2S2. Address your letter to the customer service manager.

Project A 3.4: A Faulty CD Player

Ten days ago you were in the city of Montrose, 1400 km from your home, at the end of a driving vacation. In Montrose you visited Sheila Wilson and Gary Schultz, and they showed you a five-disc in-car CD player Sheila had bought for Gary's birthday. It fitted neatly into the glove compartment and connected to their car radio.

On your third day in Montrose you visited Madison Music Centre, the store where Sheila purchased the CD player, and explained to store owner George Madison that you wanted to buy an identical unit.

He shook his head: "That's the Regent 501: it's last year's model. I don't have any left." Instead, he showed you a Regent 601. "This is their new model," he said. "It came in just yesterday. You can put it in the glove compartment just like the 501. The main difference is that it plays six discs and they claim it has better interference-free circuitry."

You enquired about the price. He said \$374.50 plus taxes, to which Sheila said: "That's \$50 more than I paid!" George Madison shrugged, and you turned away, ready to leave the store. Then suddenly he said: "I'll give you a deal: I'll let you have a voucher for free installation, over at Marine Autos. Installation normally costs \$35. You can't beat that!"

You would have preferred to have it installed in your home city, but the free offer appealed to you and so you bought the CD player on Madison Music Centre's sales invoice No. 2324. The following day you had the CD player installed on your way out of Montrose (it took 35 minutes), but had to pay both federal and provincial tax on the \$35 "free" installation charge. Then you drove home: a 15-hour journey.

The following day you took a stack of CDs out to the car, loaded them into the Regent 601, and enjoyed the music. Great! Until the player reached the end of the first disc. Then it stopped. You fiddled with the controls and got it to start playing again, but it was the same CD. No matter how hard you tried, you could not get it to play any of the other discs—only the top disc—even though you tried shuffling them and reinserting them.

In exasperation, you telephoned around to find who had the service contract for the Regent line of home electronics: no one! So you took the 601 into Kelvin Electronics at 241 Marchand Avenue. When you picked it up today, technician Merv Halverson handed you an electronic microchip mounted on a tiny circuit board. "There's your problem," he said. "I've replaced it and the set works fine." And he presented you with the defective microchip and a repair bill (Invoice 1731) for \$87.50.

"Shouldn't that be under warranty?" you asked. "The player's only one week old."

"Not with us, I'm afraid," Merv answered. "I guess you can get your money back from the manufacturer, or the place you bought it." He tells you that the Regent line is made in China, but he couldn't find a mailing address.

You decide to write to Madison Music Centre in Montrose (street address: 611 Garrick Street). Tell George Madison what has happened and ask for a refund of \$.... (you decide how much).