Assignment 1 Directions

Technical communication is meant to be used and not just read. Good technical communication communicates information to an audience who will act on that information in a variety of ways: in making hiring decisions, in following technical procedures, in developing research plans, and more. In this assignment, you will evaluate the usability of a piece of technical communication - that is, you will analyze whether the document effectively communicates the necessary information to its audience and where it fails to do so. In this way, the assignment will introduce you to basic elements of technical communication.

Your analysis should demonstrate that you understand the basic principles of technical communication discussed in the first chapter of your textbook. The process you will follow in this assignment is relatively straightforward. I will provide you with analysis points based on Markel's introductory chapter. You will study a document and then determine how well it relies (or doesn't) on effective technical communication practices. You will then present your analysis in a memo to me.

Markel provides brief examples of what I am asking you to do. He does a basic rhetorical analysis of three documents in order to show how their elements constitute forms of technical communication. Although this assignment is asking you to be more ambitious than his examples, they should help you better understand this assignment. (See Chapter 1, "A Look at Three Sample Documents")

There are three steps to this assignment:

1. Choose one of the following three documents I have provided for you to analyze: an [applicationPreview the documentView in a new window](https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1848202/files/83006089/download?wrap=1), a [bookletPreview the documentView in a new window](https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1848202/files/83006090/download?wrap=1), and a [guidePreview the documentView in a new window](https://psu.instructure.com/courses/1848202/files/83006091/download?wrap=1). Citizens use the application to apply for home energy assistance; science teachers and students use the booklet to design environmental projects; employers use the guide to create a workplace first aid program. These documents are representative of technical communication.

2. Evaluate your chosen document for usability. This will involve reading the document carefully, paying attention to the features that enable use. (In other words, how did the author structure the document so that readers could access and use the information effectively and efficiently?) I provide specific points of analysis below.

3. Write a memo to me that organizes your rhetorical analysis in both a logical and convincing way. (I am your audience.) Follow the memo format described by Markel in his chapter on writing memos.

* 1. Be concrete in your analysis. That is, use examples from the document as you make your key points.
  2. Be sure to analyze and not just describe the document. This will require you to evaluate - and pass judgment on - both content and design.
  3. Be sure your analysis is well organized.

Your analysis should be 2 single-spaced pages (approximately 1000 words). Therefore, you must be as concise as possible. However, don't mistake brevity for superficiality. I'm looking for a high-quality analysis that shows you can look at a technical document with a critical eye.

Analysis Points

Markel offers a set of characteristics for technical communication:

* Addresses particular readers
* Helps readers solve problems
* Reflects an organization's goals and culture
* Is produced collaboratively
* Uses design to increase readability
* Consists of words or graphics or both

Use these characteristics to organize your analysis. Be sure that your analysis addresses each of these six areas.

Evaluation Criteria

I will evaluate the analyses according to these criteria:

* Completeness: The analysis addresses all of Markel's characteristics of technical communication.
* Organization: The analysis is well organized. It has a clear structure supported by headings.
* Support: The analysis is concrete in that it uses examples from the document to support major points.
* Interpretation: The analysis interprets, analyzes, passes judgment - it does not just describe.
* Style: The analysis is well written. Topic sentences are clear.
* AND: The analysis demonstrates that you have learned about the basic elements of technical communication.