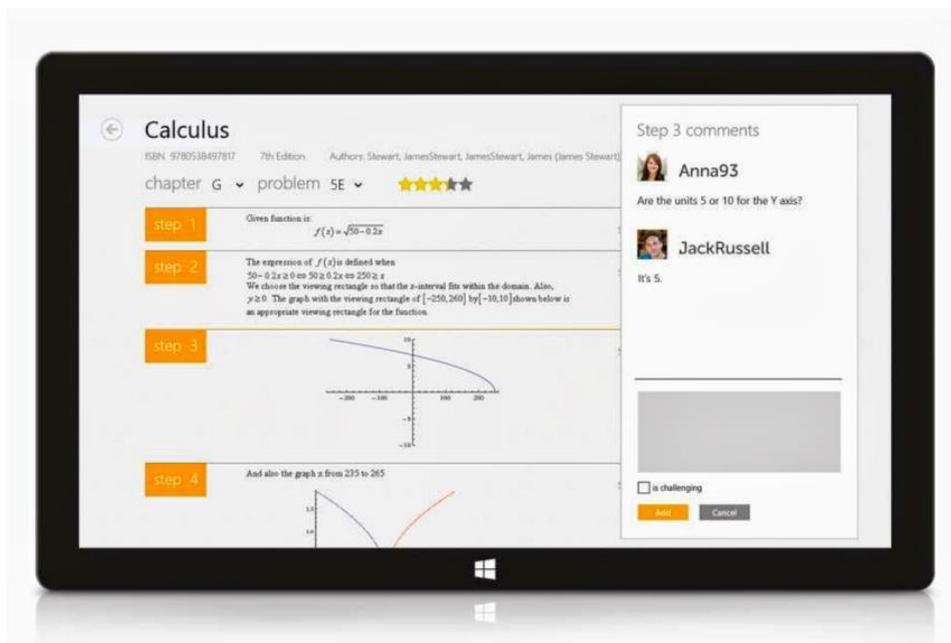# Solution Authoring Guidelines

Version 9.4
September 2016

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Subject-specific Guidelines- Business

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List of changes made over version 9.3

BU1. Content

A. Explanation / Approach:

1.1. For review based or direct questions:

Follow the sequence:

1. Comprehend the intent of the question

2. Identify the underlying concepts of the problem.

3. Define or give a brief explanation of the underlying concept with the help of an example.
   (Note: The definition or explanation should not be copied directly from any textbook or any other source).

4. Provide logical step-by-step explanation separated by single line delimiters.

Example:

Question:

What steps can you take to appear self-confident while applying for your dream job?

Answer:

Self-confidence is the level of optimism a person feels within. Self-Confidence is of very high significance from the interviewer's perspective. An interview candidate must ensure a high level of self-confidence, as it would improve his performance in an interview or an exam.

During risky situations, a candidate is likely to lose self-confidence. One such situation is, when applying for a dream job, it is likely that a person loses confidence. This leads to deterioration in performance and a negative outcome in the interview.

One should appear self-confident in order to perform to the best of one's abilities.

Following are the pre-requisites for a candidate who wishes to score high on self-confidence:

- Casual conversation is a stress buster; lower stress levels would ensure self-confidence.

- Good dressing exudes great confidence; the dress code should be formal. It is also important to carry oneself with grace.

- Good Knowledge in subject is very important, as it ensures high level of self-confidence.

- Good self-esteem through one's achievements and qualifications would ensure high self-confidence.

- A thorough rehearsal would also ensure high quality of preparation, and would boost self-confidence.

- Relevant inputs and suggestions should be sought from learned experts, family, and friends.

- Maintaining an assertive body language and gestures is also an important aspect. It can be accomplished with polished behavior. This would lead to a good acceptance from others. Good reception and an active participation from the interviewer also boost self-confidence of the candidate.

1.2. For case-based questions:

a. Write the **essence** of the whole case in one or two brief sentences.

b. Support your statement with **adequate information**.

c. Write the answer in points rather than in paragraph.

d. Conclude with the appropriate outcome.

Example of Essence:

- The given case is based on the problem of low self-confidence. It emphasises on how lack of self-confidence may not help a person find a good job.

Example of Adequate Support:

- Withdrawal from peers' suggestions
- Negative perception about oneself and towards life (Pessimism)
- Low self-esteem
- Overestimating others' abilities and superstitious belief in luck factor

Example of Outcome:

- Should recollect the successful moments/events in the past, which boost confidence levels
- Should not compare with others
- Should pay attention to peers' encouraging words
- Should associate oneself with positive people
- Should figure out positive qualities within for a feel-good factor
- Should enhance one's self-worth
- Should join some workshop on developing self-confidence

- Should have an optimistic approach

B. Equations:

- Use MathType or Microsoft Equation 3.0 available in MS Office 2007/2010 to type an equation.
- Formulas/equations must be preceded by a brief explanation of the context.
- Variables must be italicized based on the textbook style.

C. Tables:

- Use Excel tables for creating tables and paste them in your Microsoft Word file in JPEG/PNG format. Send respective excels along with the word file. The name of the Microsoft Excel should have the same name as of the Microsoft Word file. The formatting of the table should be as per the authoring guidelines (the font type, font size and alignment).
- On pasting a table in Word document, adjust the font parameters as specified in the General Solution Authoring Guidelines.

D. Special Points/Others:

- State your assumptions clearly and precisely.
- In Assumption based solutions, use any name 'xyz' to be the assumed company name
- In case-based solutions, use initials to specify names; if two names begin with S, then use S1 & S2
- Memos, reports, advertisements or emails should be presented within a box.
- Difference-based solutions must be written in points defining various criteria.
- Sentences must be written in instructional style

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Example solutions - Business

Example 1: Regular type

Question:

Creating a unique, but consistent resume and a cover letter format is one method of demonstrating your skills with word processing and page design application. How else might you demonstrate specific skills through your employment communication?

Solution:

There are various methods to demonstrate your skills and experience for employment communication apart from sending resume or cover letters, such as the following:

- **Register with job portals:** Job portals are the online gateways, which connect the recruiters and job seekers. Employers post their requirements on the portal and job seekers can upload their resume, view various openings and apply according to their experience and level of knowledge. Job portals such as monster.com, career.com, hotjobs.com are very popular in United States.

- **Register with government employment agencies:** Every state has its own employment agency, which runs on government expense and is free of cost for job seekers. Government employment agencies provide only government jobs.

- **Join social networking sites:** Social networking sites allow job seekers to develop new relations with companies' executives and employees. Social networking sites like LinkedIn, twitter, Facebook, and YouTube help job seekers to share information and advertise themselves.

- **Join Professional committees:** Jobseekers can become members of professional organizations and social clubs, where they can build new professional relationships by attending seminars, conferences, and debates. Professional bodies, such as society of marketing management, association of management etc…, can help an individual to gain knowledge and skills.

Example 2: Assumption type

Question:

Imagine you have been asked to collaborate on a project with a colleague whose work style is very different from yours. For example, you like to plan carefully and follow a schedule, while your colleague is spontaneous. You like to write thorough drafts that require only minimal revision, while your colleague likes to write incomplete drafts and revise heavily later. Based on these differences, do you think it would be more efficient and cost effective for the company to have you work on this project by yourself? Should you make that argument to your supervisor? What might be the benefits of collaborating? What are the drawbacks?

Solution:

Collaboration is a collective effort of the employees working together to achieve the goals of a company, department, team, and an individual. Members of a team may have different personality traits, different perception, and diverse opinion about any issue. A team member should have the ability to harmonize, negotiate, and manage to avoid conflicts and disagreements. To work alone on a project can definitely cost the company.

Some of the advantages of collaboration are as follows:

- **Productivity:** On analyzing the individual goals and team goals, the employees in teams can create a healthy competition, and thereby, help motivate one another to achieve the objectives.

- **Diversity:** Each team member would have diverse skills, perception, and knowledge. Therefore, the team leaders are responsible for identifying the skills of their team members and helping them to maximize output.

- **Better Solutions:** Team work always churns out better quality and creative solutions. Employees with different experiences and perceptions brainstorm the pros and cons of solutions. Hence, the best possible solution is chosen.

- **Shared responsibility:** In team work, responsibilities are divided equally among the team members. Hence, the risk of task failure can be minimized.

Some of the drawbacks of collaboration are as follows:

- **Time consuming:** Collaboration is time-consuming process while taking decisions. Discussing the pros and cons of problem, sharing information with one another is likely to consume more time. This can delay achieving the objectives.

- **Conflicts/Disagreements:** Different people have different perceptions, opinions and values. The varied perceptions clash with each other. This can lead to conflicts and disagreements.

- **Domination:** Sometimes one or two group members may dominate a discussion. This may limit the participation from other members which suppress their creativity.

Based on the above mentioned differences, the drafting should be assigned to a more experienced person. The reason is that collaborations should be complementary. However, this case presents a conflicting collaboration. Such collaborations are bound to give rise to creative deadlocks.

The argument should be well-communicated to the supervisor. The supervisor should be made aware of the potential conflicts that might arise due to collaboration. A highly experienced person, who needs minimal revision, should be assigned the task completely.

Example 3: Analysis type

Question:

Your company has invited one of its biggest clients, Vince Embry to be a keynote speaker at a company retreat. Vince has cancelled other engagements and arranged his calendar to accommodate your schedule. He has also purchased an airline ticket at his own expense and has begun writing his speech. However you have just learned that the company must cancel the retreat due to budget cuts. Create a message to Vince communicating the bad news that the retreat is cancelled so he will not have the opportunity to speak. Consider what you can offer that will make up for his inconvenience and expense.

Solution:

The message should be conveyed to Vince at the earliest; therefore, the appropriate medium to deliver the message could be through voicemail.

Voice Mail Message:

Hello Mr. Embry, this is Mr. P, calling from xyz. We deeply regret to inform you that our retreat scheduled for the next Friday has been cancelled. We sincerely apologize for the inconvenience caused.
We are thankful to you for accepting our invitation and investing your time, effort and money to be a keynote speaker at our event. It would always be a sheer privilege to have you with us.

As a compensation for the inconvenience caused, we shall reimburse your air ticket cancellation charges. Moreover, since you have been our esteemed customer, we offer you a discount of 20% on your next five purchases with us.

It would be an honor to have you with us sometime in future. Please inform us about your flight details at the earliest, so that we could cancel your flight ticket and reimburse the amount into your account as soon as possible.

Goodbye

Example 4: Memo or Presentation type

Question:

Think about the last team presentation you gave. In a Memo to your instructor, describe the setting (when, where and what) and then explain how your team used the guidelines outlined in this section to coordinate your group effort. If your team did not integrate one (or more) of the guidelines, identify if a negative result occurred.

Solution:

To : XYZ, Instructor

FROM: Abc

DATE: 04/04/2013

SUBJECT: Guidelines for an effective team presentation

Students should make team presentations during their MBA as a part of their curriculum. The subject topic should be chosen from International Economics, comprising of graphs, theory as well as Numerical Questions. Presentations should be given in an auditorium. Audience would comprise students, lecturers, and evaluators.

The success of a team entirely depends on good cooperation and proper team management. Therefore, it is very important to assign roles in accordance with the strength of an individual. The Team leader must ensure that significant contribution is made by every member of the team.

Introduction should be handled by one team member, who will cover the first topic of the presentation. The same team member should also introduce the remaining team members and convey their roles. Similarly, every team member must introduce the next speaker after concluding his/her part, to ensure flow of presentation and also to keep the audiences engaged.

Every participant should be familiar with the data and information of one another. If one participant fails to give a presentation due to unavoidable circumstances, the next participant should be ready to pitch in. Audience may ask the participants questions based on the topic. So, they should be well aware of the entire presentation, as the questions may be asked from any part of the presentation.

There are situations when participants tend to forget the information that they would want to speak. This would require other team members to interrupt. There should be good planning on who should speak on which topic, if any such situation arises.

Example 5: Ethics Based
Question: Are print and video news releases, by their very nature, unethical? Why or why not?

Solution:

Print and video releases provided by media are very useful in the context of public relations and corporate communication. Thus, these releases leverage contemporary business communication. To label them as unethical by nature would be unjustified.

However, there are many instances when the communication enabled by these releases proves unethical. The concerned authorities are responsible to maintain ethics in communication.

Press releases can be unethical due to the following reasons:

- Press releases often use quotes, bold or italic alphabets to emphasize a point. Undue emphasis on some text gives wrong impression and misleads the readers.

  For example, the reader will have an opinion by reading the title of a report. Consider two titles for this answer: "Unethical practices in business communications" or "Business Reporting and PR: **Unethical**". The former is an apt title, whereas the latter can mislead the readers to believe that Business Reporting is unethical by virtue.

- Credibility of information such as genuineness, secondary data, and revised practices is not examined by majority of the readers. This is often exploited by the communicators. This practice defies general business ethics. The general public trusts the media and presenting fake information is unethical.

- Press releases become unethical when news organizations quote any report that includes name of a person, place, and organization without their consent.

- Releasing inaccurate or incomplete information is considered as fraud and subject to civil or criminal penalties. However, these practices are prevailing and are going unnoticed.

Following are the examples of unethical practices in video news release:

- It is unethical to take the speech or presentation out of context to edit it for video news release.

- It is unethical when credit is not given to the owners of information, by disclosing their labels in the video.

- It is unethical when the PR officials pay the news channel for the news production, if the news is biased and supports the company. It supports the realistic and logical opinion, but it is against media and general business ethics.

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