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GUIDELINES FOR PROOFREADING OUTGOING CORRESPONDENCE

To ensure that a document fulfills its purpose, use reliable resources to verify all names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates, and other facts. Do not rely on your memory. If possible have another person proofread the document. A person who is not familiar with the document can identify inconsistencies and words or sentences with unclear meanings. Use resources to help correct grammar and punctuation errors. When in doubt, look it up. Attending seminars or classes on editing can sharpen your skills and make you a more valuable employee.

Check Accuracy

Misspellings, punctuation errors, and incorrect information can embarrass and damage the credibility of an organization. Since the owner would not want you to do that, always check spelling and grammar usage. If you use a word processor, do not rely entirely on the spelling checker, because it cannot determine correct usage of words such as homonyms. When proofreading on paper, it is helpful to focus your attention on one line of text at a time by using a ruler, envelope, or another sheet of paper to cover up text below the line you are reading so that you can concentrate on each word.

Be Consistent

Within a document, always use the same spellings, hyphenation, margins, indents, and hierarchy of headings. Consistency gives the reader a sense of comfort when information is structured logically and presented clearly. Inconsistencies in a document might confuse the reader and cause him or her to stop reading, look back at the entire document, and try to figure out why the information is presented differently.

Listening Skills

Too often we have trouble understanding what has been said because we are not really turned in to the person talking to us. You can avoid some everyday misunderstandings by being a better listener. Here are helpful ideas to improve your listening skills.

Purpose of Conversation

Think about your reasons for being in a conversation. Ask yourself, “Am I here to learn something?” “Am I here to defend my position?” “Am I here to give support to the speaker?” It is important to understand the purpose of the conversation. This will help you become a better listener.

Check for Understanding

If someone gives you instructions, listen carefully and then repeat the instructions. If you’re not sure you understand what someone has said, repeat what you think is meant, and ask if you’ve understood correctly.