Can You Read Me Now?
Effective Communication at Work

Melissa Bostrom
28 February 2008
Today’s agenda

- Structuring your content
- Adapting your style
- Changing your tone
- Designing your documents
Attention all: I have nothing against Orville Redenbacher. The reason for no popcorn is that 60% of all fire alarms in office buildings are because some idiot let it burn in the microwave. Last night we had another incident........Based on our last 2 weeks, we have made anywhere from [removed] to [removed] bookings after 8 O'clock. Therefore this popcorn cost us between $[removed] and $[removed] that will not be recoverable. If you must have popcorn, buy it already made in a bag or a tin. If you have microwave popcorn at your desk you will be terminated.................Period!

Thank you.

Bob Becker
Vice President
Consumer Research
1-800-xxx-xxxx Ext xxxxx
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Dave’s email

From: Xxxx, Dave
Sent: Wednesday, January 24, 2007 2:59 PM
To: Kenan-Flagler Students; Kenan-Flagler Faculty and Staff
Subject: Fire Alarms

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Structure revisions

- Subject line
- Bottom line
- Reasons (1 paragraph or less)
- Details (1 paragraph or less)
- Forward-looking closing
- Signature and contact info
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Passive voice examples

- The smoke was smelled...[by whom?]
- The fire department was called by an alert staff member...
- The popcorn was made...[by whom?]
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Style: False subjects

- “We must ban popcorn...”
- “I’ve learned that two fire alarms...”
- “There is no need for disruptions...”
- “We offer plenty of other snacks in the vending machine.”
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Tone tips

- Use pronouns
- Use contractions
- Strive to transfer a conversational sound to the page
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- Designing your documents
Design: Fonts

Serifs

Sans serif vs. serif fonts

Sans serif for body text of electronic documents

Serif for body text of print documents
Design: Headings

- Label document’s parts
- Show readers where to find information
- Describe the contents well
Design: Good headings

- Keep more space above than below
- “Pop” off the page in a bold sans serif font
- May demonstrate “you attitude” by appealing to the reader directly (e.g., asking a question)
Design: Whitespace

- NCSU home page
- At least 1” margin on all sides
- 10-point font for readability
Typeface enhancements

- **Bold** items “pop” off the page
- *Italicized* items “pop” from the paragraph
- **Underlining** looks like a hyperlink
- **ALL CAPITAL LETTERS LOOK LIKE SHOUTING!**
Questions?