

Communicating in the Workplace

Administrative Accounting and Bookkeeping Program

Exercise: Negative Messages Solution

(Scenario 01)

You are a department head at a medium size company and must refuse a vacation request from one of your reports. They want a week off to visit family over the Victoria Day Weekend. They have worked for the company for a little over two years and have been a good, reliable employee. However, another employee with seniority has already requested vacation for the same week, and you can't leave the department so short staffed during what is usually a busy sales period. This will have to be handled delicately as you know that family is important to this person and they live some distance away, limiting their chances to visit.

NOTE: The following solution (in italic) is only of many possible strategies:

Opening Buffer (Apologize, show empathy.)

Hello [NAME]. I received your vacation request for the week leading up to Victoria Day and gave it a lot of thought. We really appreciate the good work you've been doing here, and I know you've been wanting to visit your family.

Reasons (Be clear and professional.)

As you know, that's a busy sales time for us. And [NAME] has already asked for vacation that week.

Bad News (Use passive voice and propose an alternative rather than refuse outright.)

He/she submitted their request in before you, and we can't have the branch so short-staffed for the whole week. However, there may be a solution. If you'd be willing to work remotely for the week, I can arrange that.

Closing (Be positive and forward-looking; maintain the relationship.)

You'd still be working, but you would be able to see your family. I hope that works for you. Let me know; it's your choice.