



Company memo

A memo is a piece of writing used to communicate within an organization. It will generally be read by more than one person. It may be sent as a paper document, an email or as an attachment to an email. The style and tone of the memo depend on its purpose and the relationship of the writer to his/her audience.

A memo can have various functions:

- to report information
- to announce a decision which has been made
- to recommend action
- to make a request

A memo generally contains the following:

- a statement of its main point
- background information (context)
- a reference to future action



Persuasive writing: A company memo

- 1 **Springfields**, a major U.K. supermarket chain, has been under attack for its use of **unsustainably fished tuna**. Neil Jacobs, the company's environmental officer, is looking into the feasibility of replacing the unsustainable brands with sustainable tuna. Read his memo and answer the questions below:

To: Timothy Blake, CEO, *Springfields*
From: Neil Jacobs, Environmental Officer
Date: Date: February 21
Subject: Switch to sustainable tuna

MEMO

As requested, I have carried out an investigation into the feasibility of replacing our non-sustainable tuna fish products with tuna caught using sustainable fishing practices.

Background

In the last two years, various NGOs have published studies demonstrating that the stocks of tuna worldwide are seriously depleted and even threatened with extinction. Bluefin stocks, for example, have dropped by about 80% since 1978, while bigeye and yellowfin stocks are alarmingly over-exploited (cf. Appendix).

The consumer organization *Retail Watch* has ranked the environmental awareness of major U.K. retailers (cf. study at www.retailwatch.org/supermarketratings). We received the worst rating, while our competitor *Albert Stone* received the best. The result has been much negative publicity for *Springfields*.

Several of our stores have been picketed by wildlife protection organizations and, across the country, consumers have threatened to boycott our stores. Needless to say, this has had a devastating effect on our image and could eventually impact turnover.

Possible Solutions

Save the Seas has recommended reducing total tuna fishing by 50%. As our customers will continue to demand tuna, taking tuna from our shelves is not a realistic option. The alternative is to educate our consumers about the environmental costs of unsustainable tuna and offer them an environmentally friendly alternative.

The Institute of Marine Studies at Plymouth University has pointed out that it is possible to move our sources to tuna caught by pole-and-line methods. This would mean that within two years we would receive full certification from the Ocean Stewardship Council. This would give us a competitive advantage over all our rival chains, none of which offer tuna caught by pole-and-line methods.

Our new brand of sustainable tuna fish would be priced 30% above our conventional product. However, I am confident that the positive response among the public would more than offset any negative effect of the price increase.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Pressure from NGOs and consumer groups makes a shift to sustainable tuna inevitable. I urge *Springfields* to take immediate measures to contact suppliers. I am sure that we are capable of rising to the challenge. Not only is this move in line with our CSR policy, but I am confident that it will strengthen our position in the marketplace.

Appendix:

Graph: Depletion of tuna stocks worldwide

Report: "The Threat to Tuna Stocks", Prof William Smith, Institute of Marine Studies, Plymouth University

- 1 What claim is Neil Jacobs making?
- 2 What opposition does he anticipate?
- 3 Find the adjectives that support his case.
- 4 Which verbs have a persuasive function?
- 5 How does he involve the readers?
- 6 Which language is especially upbeat?
- 7 What makes his arguments credible?

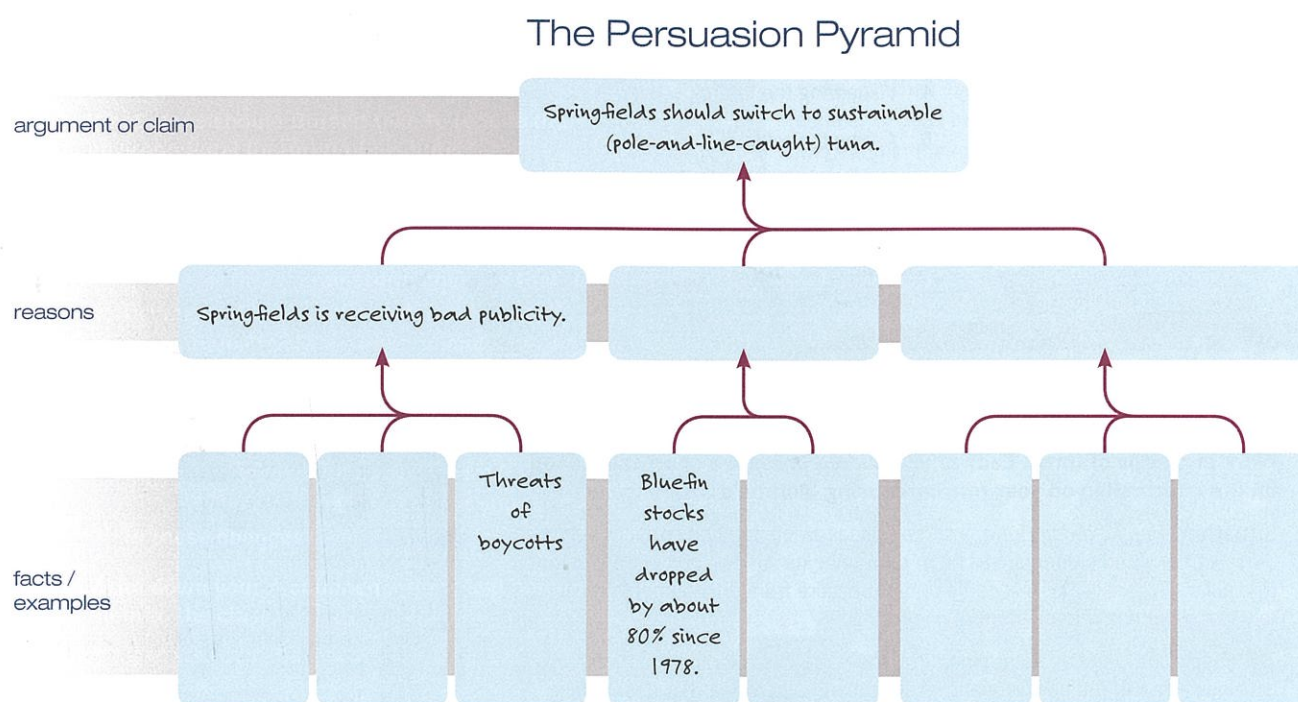
Business Skills

- 2** You can build a convincing case with the 5 Must-Do's in persuasive strategy. Find an example of each Must-Do in Neil Jacobs' memo.

The 5 Must-Do's in persuasive strategy	Example
1 Make an unambiguous claim.	
2 Use logic, numbers, facts and examples to support your argument.	
3 Appeal to your audience's emotions.	
4 Use graphs and tables to make your argument appear more convincing.	
5 Build a sense of urgency for your cause.	

- 3** With reference to Neil Jacobs' memo, complete the diagram below:

Another useful tool that will help you construct a strong argument is The Persuasion Pyramid. This diagram shows how the claim (or main argument) is supported by reasons, which are further supported by facts and/or examples.



- 4** Write a persuasive memo based on one of the following scenarios:

- 1 You are the CEO of a coffee chain writing to outlet managers. You want to persuade them to give prominence to the new advertising campaign (which includes brochures and free mugs) informing consumers about your company's environmentally friendly coffee brand.
- 2 You are the HR officer proposing a change in leave policy to the board. You think that the company should give all its employees an additional five days' leave per year for participation in a community environmental project of their choice.
- 3 You are the environmental manager of a beverage company. You have just read that the type of plastic bottle used in your company has been found to leak the dangerous chemical BPA. Write to the product manager urging him to consider a switch to recyclable glass bottles.

