

## Three Responses to an Employee Suggestion<sup>1</sup>

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Your company has a suggestion system that encourages workers to submit suggestions that will save the organization money or improve safety, customer service, or morale. You chair the committee that makes the decisions.

Today, you must tell Wayne Andersen that the committee has rejected his suggestion to buy a second photocopy machine for the sales department.

No one on the committee liked Wayne's idea.

Below, you'll see three versions of a message to Wayne, announcing the committee's decision. Which do you like best and why?

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Wayne,

The committee which evaluates cost saving suggestions has rejected your proposal of purchasing a second copying machine for the sales department. While your argument is logical, it does not fit the needs of our company.

We believe that informal employee interaction is a hallmark of our success. Such interaction fosters a cooperative work environment, company loyalty, and stress relief. The communal copier on the sales floor, as you point out, encourages such dialogue.

Our company is also short on capital. The cost-saving suggestion program was implemented to reduce capital expenditures, not create new ones. There is little quantitative evidence other than your personal calculations to indicate that such a substantial investment will yield adequate cost savings.

However, we appreciate the time that you took to investigate this cost saving measure, and encourage you to continue to investigate other options.

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<sup>1</sup> Scenario adapted from Kitty O. Locker, *Business and Administrative Communication, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition*

Wayne,

Thank you for your creative suggestion to save the company money. You obviously put a great deal of effort into developing your proposal and calculating future savings for the firm.

While the committee does believe there is practical merit in adding an additional photocopier machine for the sales department, there was much debate as to the extent of the actual savings and the effect that a second copying machine would have on the company's culture and work environment.

It is difficult to actually determine whether a second photocopier machine would improve productivity enough to justify its purchase. After all, this purchase would be a significant investment in a difficult economic time. The intended effect of your proposal would likely work for hourly workers; however, our employees are paid on salary and thus there is no clear financial incentive for them to speed up their work so long as they get it done.

As a matter of convenience, I do agree that shortened lines for the copying machine would relieve stress in busy times. However, a second copying machine may have the effect of discouraging the level of informal conversation that makes our work environment so special and enjoyable for all. We would like to preserve that element of camaraderie and maintain employee morale at work.

Your proposal is a fine suggestion; however, in weighing the pros and cons of its potential effects, the committee has ultimately decided to deny your suggestion at this time. Perhaps you can develop an alternative proposal in light of the committee's feedback? I hope that you continue to investigate ways for the firm to save money.

Thanks again for your hard work.

Wayne Anderson,

We greatly appreciate the interest you have shown in proposing ways to help our company cut costs.

We have reviewed your proposal for a new photocopying machine for the sales department. After an extensive discussion, our committee has decided that it would not be feasible at this time for the following reasons:

- We do not have the financial means to purchase a new photocopying machine at this time.
- While we expect our employees to be productive and efficient, we also encourage our employees to build interpersonal relationships with one another. Our company promotes a cooperative, friendly working atmosphere.

Thank you for your suggestion. Your input is greatly appreciated.