ME 5286: Robotics

Memo Writing Guidelines

Engineers make extensive use of reports and memos to communicate with management and colleagues. The ability to write an effectively is a necessary skill in industry, so it is well worth the time to develop writing skills. Both initial job description and the final report will be in the form of a memo.

Memo Format

The general format of a memo is shown below. Styles vary from one organization to another, but they will all contain the same elements.

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MEMO

DATE: date written
TO: recipient list
FROM: originator + group name "MIA"
SUBJECT: subject of memo (memo “title”)

<Body of memo>
<Appendices>

Attachment list (if any attachments)
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Memo Guidelines

Memos are used to make announcements or requests, or to report findings or current status. These memos should be a quick read: get to the point in the first paragraph – the first sentence if possible. Use “newspaper-style” writing, i.e. short paragraphs (4-7 sentences typical) that use short sentences (20 words or less). Separate the paragraphs with a blank line rather than indentation.

At times it is convenient to issue short (2-4 page) reports in memo format. Reports are divided into sections, and each section is given a short section title that is set off in bold type. Figures are properly labeled and referred to by name in the report. Citations and footnotes are common:
make sure to properly cite all sources. Appendices are included as necessary, in order to offload
details or calculations and make the report more readable.

Reports generally are not a quick read, so it is not necessary to follow the short memo's
“newspaper-style” format (i.e. short paragraphs and short sentences).

Memo Example

MEMO

DATE: May 4th, 2012
TO: Dr. Frank Kelso
FROM: Frederick Dahlglesch
SUBJECT: Summer Internship Job Description

ABC Corporation
St. Paul, MN
CC: Greta Tomson (Supervisor)

My summer internship at ABC Corporation will be spent in the metallurgy lab where we are
currently investigating print head failures. This investigation is very high priority because
the problem is costing our company thousands of dollars in field service calls and
replacement parts.

The print head is fracturing at the base of the flange, where it is bolted to the arm structure. My job so far has been to prepare metallurgical samples for the metallurgist, and assist in recording data and observations from the SEM inspections.

I expect to be learning a lot, primarily in the material science and forensic engineering areas.