

Document Revision

Peoples Dominion Gas
Company



Summary

The following project is a revision of the 2003 notice from Dominion Peoples Gas Company. I modified the layout of the information provided and revised any stylistic issues, such as lack of actions and characters that made information unclear for the company's audience.

Furthermore, I included an analysis that explained my reasoning behind each revision and a letter to a fictional CEO. The goal of the analysis is to clarify my choices in hopes that company writers could implement these stylistic tools in future documents.

Intended Audience

Client:	'CEO Dave Anderson' - Dominion Peoples Gas Company
Recipient:	Dr. Stephanie Larson - Carnegie Mellon University Assistant Professor of Rhetoric - Style Course Professor

Completed Tasks

- Conducted a preliminary analysis
- Noted all stylistic issues
 - Characters/Subjects
 - Actions/Verbs
- Revised stylistic issues
- Wrote an analysis
 - Clarified reasoning
 - Illustrated findings

Developed Skills

- Research
- Critical Thinking
- Writing Communication
- Proposal Writing
- Proofreading and Editorial Skills
- Expository Writing
- Technical Research Interpretation
- Content Adaptation for Audience

Analytical Report on the
Dominion Peoples Gas Company Notice
of Proposed Rate Changes

November 20, 2018

CEO Dave Anderson

Dominion Peoples Gas Company 2300 Fifth Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Dear Dave Anderson,

After a preliminary analysis of the Proposed Rate Change Notice, I determined possible alternatives that provide your customers with a document that illustrates vital information, clearly and effectively. I found that due to a lack of character/subject, your notice does not clarify to whom this information pertains. Therefore, the main points and intentions of the company's notice are lost to your targeted audience. I must add that the notice lacks main actions/verbs in the same position to show what is happening to whom and what can be done about the information in the notice.

Based on this analysis, I began a more thorough revision process and am now providing you with a report that illustrates the stylistic methods I focused on to improve the original text. This report will also include my reasoning for some choices, together with original examples and their revised formats. Take this report as a resource to prevent future stylistic problems, should the Dominion Peoples Gas Company provide further or future notices.

Please consider that my revision is carefully thought out, all choices are based on previous experience as a Professional Writer and former real estate company employee that handled such matters. As I have worked with that company in providing notices to general audiences, both staff and agent/clients alike, I hope that you consider my revisions to implement in future work. As the agent between the company and it's customers, I aim to provide a coherent revision that both satisfies your intent and the assessment of your particular audience.

Sincerely,

Ana Karina Van Nortwick

Audience and Purpose:

The purpose of the notice is to inform the customers of the Dominion Peoples Gas Company (DPGC) of impending increases to DPGC gas rates. As customers of DPGC, your audience, will want to understand and voice any concerns they may have with proceedings for the rate change. The content in this notice should allow all DPGC customers to understand the information that could potentially affect their usage. The DPGC goals, therefore, should be to provide a notice that does not hinder user understanding.

As DPGC customers, they will want to know what could affect their usage specifically. For this reason, this analysis provides reasoning for all revisions. If used for future notices, DPGC can offer customers tailored information. The customer goals are to assess the provided information and determine the best course of action regarding the changes made by the DPGC. Furthermore, because of the DPGC customers' years of loyal service, the company should aim to supply a notice that clarifies what the proposal entails at all stages of their user contract, be it residential, commercial, or industrial.

This document provides the executives and managers of the DPGC with an analysis of the stylistic issues found in the earlier notice with clarification for each revision. These revisions aim to fix any confusion or uncertainties through a series of stylistic solutions. The document thus explores why the notice should strive for clarity on a sentence-level; revisions adjusting the precision of vital information and accuracy in supporting details.

Stylistic Problems: Characters

In the original notice, sentences were structured in ways that made it difficult for customers to understand and assess information. One reason this occurs is that the previous writers did not adhere to main character/subject rules that would allow the customer to do so. Therefore, this portion of my analysis will provide sentence-level clarity by delivering a subject that is also a character. By doing this, the audience (customers) should understand who said what and to whom any information pertains.

To clarify, sentence subjects should typically be characters; wherein, a character is a flesh and blood subject or living person/s. In other words, an audience will adhere more towards a subject/character (in reference to this notice) such as executives, you, they, and customers.

Nevertheless, not all sentences strictly adhere to a direct flesh and blood character, such as board members (in relation to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission or PPUC), but still closely resemble that it does not create any confusion. To provide plenty of references for further examination, characters will be addressed on a phrasal and sentence level.

Exhibit A: Sentence

Original:

The timely *filing* of a formal complaint entitles you to participate in a hearing at which you may present testimony and question witnesses of the Company.

In this paragraph, the simple subject (*italicized*) is not a real character (bold). When the simple subject is abstract, it does not carry the importance of the verb (action).¹ The audience thus cannot help but notice that the subject is not a named character, in other words, the information is difficult to detect. The writer leaves the audience to guess the information from the provided context.

Rephrased:

Customers who file promptly before the proposed first hearing on Oct. 15, 2003, may be invited to attend, in which *they* may present their concerns in front of the PPUC board members.

In this sentence, the simple subject *timely filing* from the previous notice is replaced with *Customers* a character. This allows the audience (the customer) to find the information that pertains to them directly and what they can do in this matter. Because the effects of the sentence change with two characters/subject revisions, it is essential to understand how each subject/character in a phrase can provide clearer information.

Exhibit B: Phrase

Original:

The proposed *increase* is subject to examination...

The subject *increase*, though viable, does not provide the audience with a character. If there is no flesh and blood character, those that read the phrase will have a harder time discerning who is examining the proposed increase and what this examination means for them. For this reason, there are two possible revisions, the first indicating a viable alternative to the one provided in the final revision.

Rephrased:

The *PPUC board members* examined the proposed increase...

Final Revision:

The *PPUC board members* will assess these...

The *subject/character* at the start of this phrase lets the audience discern who will review the increase proposed by the DPGC. These alternative revisions also illustrate how sentence meaning can change based on providing a character in the subject position for each phrase, extending to clauses then sentences as a whole.

1 Explained in the next section.

Stylistic Problems: Actions

Another major issue found within the first notice is that the material did not provide main actions as key verbs. The lack of direct verbs hinders the audience by being wordy and in-concise. What the previous writers could have done is place all main actions as key verbs, creating a link between the characters/subjects and the actions/verbs. When done effectively, the audience can then determine if the information is directed to them and what is being done or what they can do in regards to what they understand/interpret.

Exhibit A: Sentence

Original:

The timely *filing* of a formal complaint entitles you to participate in a hearing at which you may present testimony and question witnesses of the Company.

In the sentence above, the main action (*italicized*) is not the key verb (bold). A lack of a key verb as the main actions creates an action that is vague in comparison to a sentence that holds a word as both. Take for instance the reworked sentence.

Rephrased:

Customers who *file* promptly before the proposed first hearing on Oct. 15, 2003, may *be invited* to attend, in which they *may present* their concerns in front of the PPUC board members.

Here the writer ties the characters/subjects directly to the *action/verb*. If the notice uses concise language that directly links subject to verb (character to action) the information becomes straightforward. In the reworked portion, a character is doing the action, which is a key verb vs. a presumed action. Therefore, the audience can understand what they can do if they should have a concern and who will address the matter. Even if the revisions added BE verbs, in this case, the fact that the audience potentially could attend is clearer and illustrates that attending is possible, but not guaranteed. Furthermore, as with the section on subject/characters, the sentence benefits from attention at a phrasal level.

Exhibit B: Phrase

Original:

The proposed increase *is subject* to examination...

The main action is subject, is not a strong verb in this case. For one reason, the BE verb which serves as a linking verb weakens the action. Second, it is not the action the sentence needs to relay information to the audience. For improvement, the main action should be the normalized form of "examination"; converted from a "nounified" verb (-ion suffix or verb used as a noun) into an action.

By revising the nominalization into the verb "examined," the phrase gains an action that relays directly to the audience. If done correctly, the more powerful action will directly tie to the subject, eliminating the vague interpretation of what the sentence action is.

Rephrased:

The PPUC board *examined* the proposed increase...

The word *examined* can be changed even more to the form *assess*, as the examination is yet to occur and will occur only after the increase is proposed.

Final revision:

The PPUC board *will assess* these...

The verb thus allows for a more rounded form of examination. Here the board's action is yet to occur, but they will do so. To illustrate the potential of clean and effective writing, the section below analyzes characters/subjects and actions/verbs on a paragraph level.

Stylistic Example: Actions & Characters

For this section, the analysis provides the overall effectiveness of actions and characters as the main verb and subject. The paragraphs provided below, present the original text as well as a revision, and the final revision used in the revised notice.²

Original:

Dominion Peoples is filing a request with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission to increase your natural gas rates as of Oct 1, 2003. *This filing* is designed to recover the cost of natural gas the Company purchases.

Here, the subjects (*italicized*) and the main actions (**bold**) are not as useful as they could be. For instance, though *Dominion Peoples* could serve as a viable character, it does not entirely relate to the notion of the character as a flesh and blood entity.

Therefore, *Dominion Peoples* relates more to the 'company' than those in the company that are proposing the rate change. Moreover, this filing is a subject that does not have any close "association" to a flesh and blood character, and does not address who the filing is for and whom it affects.

Similarly, the actions in the paragraph are not as strong as they could be, nor are they the main actions that help the audience understand why the information is provided and what is the reasoning for the proposal. The paragraphs would benefit from stronger actions than *is* and *is designed*. If the actions become verbs that better illustrate the main action of the sentence, the audience would benefit from a clear and adequate notice. Below are two example revisions, the first illustrating simple modifications that resemble the original sentence structure more closely.

Rephrased:

Executives at Dominion Peoples Gas Company have provided this notice to notify you of our proposal to increase natural gas rates with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PPUC). DPGC executives will recover the costs of natural gas purchases with this proposal.

In this revision Dominion Peoples and this filing (subjects) have been replaced with the flesh and blood characters Executives and DPGC executives. By doing this, the audience is able to ascertain that the executives have provided the notice and why they have done so. Main actions (have provided and will recover) are a bit stronger than the original revision but are not quite there. For this reason, the final revision is provided below.

Final Revision:

The executives at the Dominion Peoples Gas Company (DPGC) provide this notice to inform you of our proposal with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PPUC) to increase natural gas rates. Under Pennsylvania law, DPGC executives plan to file this request on Oct. 1, 2003, with the intention of recovering expenditures for all natural gas purchases.

Here the subject/characters were left as in the previous revision, but the main actions/verbs have been modified a bit more to illustrate actions that directly link subject to verb (character to action). If done correctly, the audience should understand that the executives are providing the notice and that they (executives) plan on filing. The final revisions illustrate the potential stylistic choices that DPGC can use to provide clear and effective notices in the future.

Conclusion:

Once the writer clarifies the sentence structure, the rest of the information begins to fall into place. In other words, the revisions adjust the precision of vital information, allowing customers to find information which applies to them and clarifying the company has already done. After that, the accuracy of supporting details becomes clearer. The customer can see the small bits of detail and act as they need. The customer finds clarity after the writer creates it.

The main points of this analysis, and what to keep in mind when drafting future notices, is that a writer should use key verbs and main actions in the same position, and simple subjects as characters. With the subject and actions shown at the sentence level, the writer allows the customer to get what they wanted from the provided notice. The most critical information is conveyed to the reader. Thus, the most effective notices follow good stylistic choices.

DOMINION PEOPLES GAS COMPANY

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RATE CHANGES

January 23, 2003

To Our Loyal Customers:

The executives at the Dominion Peoples Gas Company (DPGC) provide this notice to inform you of our proposal with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PPUC) to increase natural gas rates. Under Pennsylvania law, DPGC executives plan to file this request on Oct. 1, 2003, with the intention of recovering expenditures for all natural gas purchases.

DPGC executives understand that any approximate increases may affect customers and have therefore, provided the following information on rates that may vary depending on total thousand cubic feet (mcf) of usage.

Projected Customer Rates¹

- Residential: projected yearly increase - \$82.55 to \$102.29 per 104 mcf²
projected monthly average - \$19.74
- Commercial: projected yearly increase - \$330.81 to \$417.93 per 458 mcf
projected monthly average - \$89.12
- Industrial: projected yearly increase - \$4,861.25 to \$6,313.28 per 7,650 mcf
projected monthly average - \$1,452.03

As loyal customers, you may request any information regarding the effects of this proposal on any rate changes by contacting the company. You may also access specific DPGC customer information at the DPGC offices located nearest you.

Offered Service Information

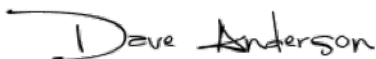
- DPGC's copy of the proposed "Natural Gas Rate Change" file
- Current "Customer Rates and Usage Agreements"
- Projected Rate Change Analysis for the individual customer

You are entitled to petition any concerns or issues with the proposal by filing all complaints with the PPUC in Harrisburg, Penn. 17120. Customers who file promptly before the proposed first hearing on Oct. 15, 2003, may be invited to attend, in which they may present their concerns in front of the PPUC board members. The PPUC board will assess these testimonies and the information the DPGC executives have provided for proof of reason in their proposed rate changes.

The PPUC board and DPGC executives will review your rate change and provide an increase that reflects the actual gas costs on a quarterly basis. If any customer has a case rate that differs from the proposed rate by more than 2%, the rates are subject to change depending on the PPUC agreed upon percentage.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact us at:

customerservice@dominionpeoples.com or 1-800-GAS-DPGC (1-800-427-3742)



CEO Dave Anderson

¹ All projected rates & estimations are not exact rates. For more information on specific usage rates contact your nearest office or email: customerservice@dominionpeoples.com
² 104 mcf. is equivalent to heating up a 2,210 sq. ft. home. Commercial and industrial increases depend on usage & building type (i.e. warehouse or office building).