

992 views | Feb 25, 2020, 07:50am EST

Improving Your Business Writing



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Entrepreneurs

Writing is one of the fundamental ways that we communicate, and yet for its importance, so many of us are tentative about using our writing to communicate with others beyond the audience for our emails.

Undoubtedly there's some trepidation upon seeing and reading those who are so proficient in the medium — compared with them, the rest of us are just thrashing away at a keyboard, trying to string two sentences together, or apart. We think that writing is best left to the writers, and our energies are better devoted to efforts where we're more proficient and more directly helping our companies with the day-to-day.



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Writing may feel unproductive or unnecessary in a business context beyond what you put on your website and marketing materials, but it's a valuable tool for getting your name and your message out into the world. After all, you're reading this article at the moment, just as millions upon millions of other people will read various stories across the internet on a given day. Perhaps you feel like you simply don't have the ability or talent to write effectively, but it's a tool that we all have that simply needs to be sharpened and honed in order to make you an effective communicator, and communicating effectively is ultimately what writing is about. If you feel lost in your efforts to try and improve as a business writer, here are some tips to start.

Start with an outline. It would be lovely if we could simply sit down to a blank page and put forth a complete collection of words and sentences and paragraphs exactly as we wanted them in a way that is cogent on the first try, without any forethought. That's a skill reserved for those with a preternatural gift for writing. For us mere mortals left to toil at our words, devising an outline is a great way to lay a framework upon the page from which we can work. It allows us to plan what we want to say and lay our writing out in an order that makes the most sense and flows in a logical manner as others are reading. You'll be amazed at how much easier writing can be when you're not staring at a blank page, and when you have an idea and a plan.

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Strive for brevity and clarity (and avoid jargon). Less is often more, and that's frequently the case in writing. People often make the mistake of thinking that a 2,000-word post must be twice as good as a 1,000-word one and that the more you can say on the point you're trying to make the more you'll drive it home to the reader. And perhaps that's true, provided that what you have to say requires the 2,000 words to make the necessary points and arguments. But there's a misconception that more words automatically makes for a better sentence or better article.

Before everything else, we should remember that writing is about communicating, and the best communication is that which conveys your message in a way that is easily understood and absorbed by the intended audience. You don't need to go fishing for more adjectives when one will do, or throw in words that will have readers reaching for the thesaurus simply to prove you're someone of intellect; simply tell audiences what you want them to know.

On the point of clarity, when you're writing about your business or industry, it's always best to operate under the assumption that the reader might not know all of the jargon and acronyms that you're bandying about unless you're writing for a very specific audience as knowledgeable as you in the area. Save that level of assumed knowledge, you should spell out and define the terms you're using as though you're explaining it to someone with no knowledge of what you're doing or the field you're working in. We can get so wrapped up in our own worlds that we forget that there are those who don't know anything about the work we devote our lives to.

Practice. No one is a particularly good writer at first, and if the great writers of history had given up with their terrible first stories we would be deprived of their incredible works. Writing takes time and practice for you to become better and more comfortable with the craft, even if you're not to become a titan of literary fiction. That may seem like an obvious point, but it's worth remembering given that so many of us are horrified at the notion

of being bad at something and then letting others see us be bad. Simply refusing to write is a great strategy for preserving your pride, but like any skill it's not going to improve without work to refine it. If you want to be good eventually, you have to live with being, if not bad, then not so good for a while when you start out.

Writing is a great exercise for those who want to say something to the world, but it's only available to you if you take advantage of the tools you already have and the opportunity you create for yourself. It's also a way to get your name in front of people you want to make an impression upon, but that can only happen if you're willing to put yourself out there on the page. #onwards.

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