

## **Five Tips for Clear, Concise and Powerful Business Writing**

You spend a lot of time and resources on written communications. But are you getting the results you seek? Or...

Are your important letters and e-mails too wordy?

Does your website copy require lots of scrolling? Or is it simply not bringing in new business?

Do your communications generate more questions than answers?

Do your materials lack punch?

Congratulations on being honest with yourself. *If you don't think your written materials are good, neither will your audience.*

But don't trash what you've already written. Take another stab at your draft with these five simple tips in mind. You'll be able to salvage your hard work and send your ideas into the world with confidence.

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### **1. The Boring Twins: "It" and "There"**

*Sentences that begin with either "It" or "There"  
are as powerless as a banana in a bar fight.*

Scan your draft for sentences that lead off with "It" or "There." Rearrange the sentences by placing the key subject or desired action up front. Once you make this switch, the rest of the words will either fall into place or be eliminated.

There are flattering ways for any woman to wear stripes.

*changes to*

Any woman can wear stripes in flattering ways.

*(Any woman = the key subject)*

It is important that you buy a house now rather than wait for the market to drop further.

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*changes to*

Buy a house now rather than wait for the market to drop further.

*(Buy = the key action)*

### 2. Only Meaningful Words Need Apply

*What's an easy way to cut costs?*

*Save ink by eliminating words that don't mean anything.*

Cut the words “basically” and “actually.” Your meaning will not change, and your point will be much stronger.

Basically, the commodities market has peaked.

*changes to*

The commodities market has peaked.

The coffee beans are actually grown in a special soil found only in Columbia.

*changes to*

The coffee beans are grown in a special soil found only in Columbia.

### 3. Pin it Down

*You've heard, “Good girls go to heaven, bad girls go everywhere else.”*

*Well, vague communications go lots of places, too—  
the trash, the recycling bin, Outlook's “deleted items” file,  
and, our all time favorite, in-one-ear-and-out-the-other.*

Look for words such as “many,” “numerous,” and “various” and replace them with specific qualities and quantities.

I know numerous reasons to buy bonds before the end of the year.

*changes to*

I know 10 tax-saving reasons to buy bonds before the end of the year.

*(10 = quantity; tax-saving = quality)*

## **Five Tips for Clear, Concise and Powerful Business Writing**

I apply various search engine optimization strategies to help Internet surfers locate your website.

*changes to*

I apply the five most powerful and foolproof search engine optimization strategies to help Internet surfers locate your website.

*(Five = quantity; the most powerful and foolproof = quality)*

Now your reader will know exactly what you mean and, more importantly, why he will want to work with you.

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### 4. Butt Eye Halve Spill Chick!

*(Need we say more?)*

Your reader doesn't need an English degree to know when a word just doesn't seem right. And spell check doesn't help when you accidentally type the wrong word, yet spell it correctly. You want readers to get your message, not get distracted.

Watch for these especially tricky words:

#### Then/Than

"Then" refers to a timeframe.

*He will read the report and then send comments.*

"Than" implies a comparison.

*His report is more complicated than hers.*

#### Your/You're and Its/It's

"Your" and "Its" indicate possession.

*Please collect your report.*

*The cat plays with its toy.*

"You're" and "It's" serve as the subject and verb of a sentence.

You're = You are. It's = It is.

*You're supposed to pick up your report.*

*It's an orange cat with white stripes.*

(Although, from Tip #1, we know to avoid "It" at the start of a sentence!)

### 5. Little Things Add Up

***One M&M has only 10 calories. Little words can fatten up your writing, too.***

Re-word phrases that begin with "of," "for," "in," and "to," and your material will get leaner instantly. (If only dieting could be so easy!)

The process of applying for a line of credit linked to your home's equity...

*changes to*

The home equity line of credit application process...

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A class for the improvement of practices used in business...

*changes to*

A business practices improvement class... *or* A class to improve business practices...

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