

## **Random Writing Tips to Keep you Cranking**

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### Writing for Social Media

- With social media becoming "the latest marketing craze" make sure you don't lose sight of basic good business writing, especially if your followers are professional colleagues, current or potential clients. It's different if you're followers are friends so keep in mind who's receiving you're communication. For example, when writing your tweets ask yourself: How many acronyms, abbreviations, @s and #s will your readers be willing to skim through before getting frustrated and clicking the dreaded "unfollow" button? Just gauge your audience's tolerance for ambiguity and you're good to go! It may take you a little longer to craft your 140 character message but thoughtful messages are more appreciated by your followers anyway...right?
- Blog Writing
  - If you're writing a blog for your business, approach it like an opinion piece or guest column in a newspaper:
    - Make it authoritative and include some outside references or research so it's not entirely self-serving.
    - Give some insight into your company, industry or sector that the reader couldn't easily find on your website or in other communications materials.
    - Offer solutions, expert tips or words of wisdom (without being patronizing).
    - Occasionally invite an expert from within the company or from your industry to participate to add some variety and a little spice.
    - Ask your readers questions and otherwise engage them.

### For Authors

- This tip is specifically for authors planning on doing their own promotion and is more geared to advice on what to do after the [press release](#) is written. Handling your own PR requires careful planning and an understanding of how the media works:

[10 Steps for a Successful PR Campaign:  
A Do-It-Yourself Media Relations Guide for Authors](http://globalwritingsolutionsonline.com/uploads/10_steps_to_a_successful_PR_campaign.pdf)

[http://globalwritingsolutionsonline.com/uploads/10\\_steps\\_to\\_a\\_successful\\_PR\\_campaign.pdf](http://globalwritingsolutionsonline.com/uploads/10_steps_to_a_successful_PR_campaign.pdf)

Writing for Magazines

- When writing for online magazines even though the guidelines are sometimes few and far between and the style is sometimes loose and freewheeling, it's still a good idea to maintain a professional approach (you'll stand out). A great new resource recently published by Yahoo! is a good place to start - *The Yahoo! Style Guide, the Ultimate Source for Writing, Editing and Creating Content for the Digital World.*

Overcoming Procrastination

- Download this free ebook [Wordlube](http://www.wordlube.com) (www.wordlube.com). It's a great series of visualizing exercises to help unblock your writer's block and overcome procrastination.
- Never underestimate the power of an outline. No matter what you're writing, it's going to have a beginning, a middle and an end. If you have an overall idea of the flow of the piece (by starting with an outline) you'll be able to remain focused and stay on track.
- If you ever find yourself staring at the ceiling looking for inspiration while writing corporate communications content, try re-visiting the company's mission statement. If it's well-written and truly reflects the reason the company is in business it should put you back on track. If it doesn't, maybe you should be working on re-writing the mission statement first.

Good Basic Writing Habits

- When describing a product or service focus on benefits more than features. If you're selling mittens, don't just say they are "wool mittens." Say that "these al paca wool mittens from Peru will keep your hands warm even when the temperature drops below zero."

- Avoid tired clichés. Write original, thought provoking copy that draws your reader in.
- Tone of Voice - Choosing a voice or tone for your communications is the lynch pin to whether or not you'll effectively reach and hold your target audience. Sometimes a clever, comedic or racy hook may draw people in but would that be the best approach for a serious business organization like a bank or maybe a funeral home? Setting the right tone of voice in the written communications for an organization is as important as establishing the vision and mission. It goes hand in hand. The language used should always move the mission forward and help emphasize and solidify the brand and suit the corporate culture. The tone can be built through word choice, sentence structure and length along with choosing the right perspective or point of view. For example, is the communication coming from an individual(s) or from the company? Is the message directed at "you" or "the customer?" Sometimes a communications piece requires a personal approach where you'd use "I," "you" and "we." However, if a more removed, corporate feel is called for you might choose to use terms such as "the company," "customers" and "management."
- The nature of the communication can also dictate the tone the communication should take. Is it an announcement about the company picnic or is there a new company policy being introduced? Is the target market teens, young adults or retirees? Men, women or children? Well-educated? Busy? You get the message. Get into the mind set of the company and then think about how your target audience prefers to receive information and the right tone of voice will present itself.
- Global Communications  
When writing for an international market make sure you choose your words carefully (and remember any online communication can be accessed from anywhere in the world). When I was a kid growing up in Canada the room we played in was called the "rumpus room" and the hats we wore to keep our heads warm in the winter were "touques." I'm sure you could come up with a whole list of examples yourself.

Here are a few simple rules to keep in mind:

- Be careful not to use region specific words or colloquialisms (informal speech).
- Be aware of cultural sensitivities.

- Avoid using humour (unless you're very good at it and it's appropriate for your communications).
- Stay away from irony as the intent could be easily misunderstood.
- Avoid puns (little jokes) or euphemisms (descriptors that make something sound nicer than it is - for example, being "made redundant" verses being "fired").
- Avoid abbreviations and acronyms or spell them out fully at least the first time they appear in your copy.

### Press Releases

- When writing a press release, approach it like a journalist would write a news story. And, always follow the appropriate style. It's a good idea to consult a style guide such as AP Style or The Canadian Press Stylebook. Some media, such as the New York Times and the Wall St. Journal, have their own style guides. [Click here for more tips on press release writing.](#)

### Writing for the Web

- If you want to be found, when writing titles for web pages or headlines for online articles, always remember to keep it simple and searchable. A clever turn of phrase will rarely be input in a search engine.