



Colour Coded for Success

DESIGN YOUR COMMUNICATION | *Successful business writing series continues*

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

Can we design our communication so that even words written on a silent and unmoving page can represent us and our interests to a reader?

Written messages inspire images. The words and how we lay them out on a page can create the same energy, look and tone that in person interactions communicate. Yes! A written piece can convey our story and a sense of the message being sent out.

More than simply word choice and proper grammar, an effective writer is wise to consider the impact of both the quality of content and overall aesthetics of any written piece. Common to all of today's successful messages is a good script and a presentation that works.

Writers' Tool Kit Tips

1. *The look of your document*

That first glance by a reader should reveal an un-crowded page. Can you get your message onto one page? Give yourself enough time to compose your message, rest it and return to edit.

2. *White space*

That space at the top, bottom and sides of your documents that remains uncluttered by words and graphics is the rest you give your reader from the text. It also makes your document more appealing and lets your reader process your message. Trust me. Less is more.

3. *Paragraphs*

Your first opportunity to create white space is by grouping your content into paragraphs.

Each one forms blocks of sentences that present a particular point, idea or topic. Paragraphs always begin on a new line, with a line between them, and are usually 3 – 4 sentences long.

Your Opening and Closing paragraphs are the most important.

4. *Sentences*

They transmit an idea using correct grammar with a subject, verb and object of their actions. Learn the grammar rules before breaking them, but be bold and interesting. Vary the length and type of sentences you use – this creates interest and paces your reader accordingly. The rule of thumb is 14 – 20 words, but you have flexibility.

5. *Words*

Develop a good vocabulary, not so much to impress others, but to express yourself as clearly and persuasively as you can. Editing can help you eliminate every 6th word, at least. Select vibrant and powerful words and focus on the power engines of a sentence – the verb. Too many adjectives and adverbs describing how things look or act respectively will simply drown your message.

VIP – Your very important point is to plan your message. Sketch it out first. Trying to get too many points onto a page may result in a cluttered and heavy document. It will confuse or turn your reader off! Stay to the 'must have' points. Create more breathing room for readers with a well designed message that looks inviting and reads well.

As always, I invite you to send in your questions and comments to www.theafronews.com.

Tip Tutorial on Paragraphs

Opening – capture the reader and write your subject based on what interests the reader most. Be aware of not taking too much time to get to your point.

Middle – present most of your facts here, logically organized. Write to support your opening paragraph and prepare the reader for the close. Balancing the information that you must present keeps your reader from being confused or fatigued. Provide the detail your readers need so that they don't have to scramble or research to fill in blanks.

Closing – paragraphs take your points to a conclusion. Now is not the time for adding new and unnecessary bits. Try not to repeat all your points, rather, round them out and write a call to action

Tip Tutorial on Sentences

If you can't read your sentence out loud in one easy breath, guess what? It's too long. Shorter sentences are more powerful and create better flow and comprehension.

Helena is a Vancouver based business writer and communications trainer. To sign up for 3x a month tips on writing and speaking delivered to your email box, sign up at:
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