



Communication Culture

INSPIRING ACTION

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

“HURRY UP AND WAIT.”

This phrase often describes the process on a movie. Live action and accomplishment is expected, yet the process often calls for many stops to adjust lighting, costuming, rewrites and rehearsals on each set.

The process of effective writing is similar. Today’s communication, most especially business communication, must work hard to get it right in order to get and keep a reader’s attention. The production of such a piece of content, or copy writing, mirrors the filming process with all its preparation and then revisions.

How are you dressing and presenting your lead characters in your paper production? Let your most powerful actor, the verb, perform in as many scenarios as possible and see the results. Adjust the roles of your supporting players to add meaning to the persuasion, influence or sales work your verbs are contracted to deliver. (See side bar for review of key roles.)

Active Agent

Avoid scene stealing and space wasting verb phrases and forms. Too many words with ‘ing’ and ‘tion’ are signs of ‘has beens and wannabees’ on the set, with little energy.

Use the simple forms and send your messages confidently with clear, correct and strong verbs. Verbs carry the action and can transmit the visuals and the feelings that are embedded in all our messages. Transmit

memorable and inspiring images. Make the best choice.

Action verbs are mature and strong. They show you have control. Imagine these words in a piece of writing on line, in an ad or a letter designed to attract your attention. Check out how they make you feel.

- Avoid, apply, act
- Overcome, explore
- Build, boost, ignite
- Master, save, realize,
- Profit, plan, prevent, gain

Do they stir you to action? Do they imply strong accomplishment? Test out how you feel when you add ‘ing’ to these words.

Tip

Cut out unnecessary fillers – like adjectives. Read some of the world’s most famous speeches and you will see that adjectives had ‘bit parts’. Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address contains only 35 adjectives out of 268 immortal words – only 13.1%. Winston Churchill’s famous “Blood, Sweat and Tears” speech features only 12.1% adjective ratio (81 adjectives from 667 words). Similar ratios are found in The Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution. Boost the effectiveness of your message with more verbs, not adjectives

Clear copy and lively verbs cut through the noise of competing messages and move readers to action. Begin a sentence with a verb and follow it with an explanatory line.

VIP – Keep your verbs high impact by using the most direct and simple form. In addition, use the active voice, not the passive. “It was done to me,” is not as strong as “I did it” Let your subject (I) shine. Stick that object (It) at the end

Next time we’ll see how punctuation dresses up your writing for success and uncover the hot debates in punctuation today.

Key Character Roles in Your Sentences

Noun: name of person, place or thing. It is usually the subject of a sentence.

Verb: a word showing action or being. It is the predicate of a sentence.

Adjective: modifies a noun or a pronoun, describes it or makes its meaning more specific.

Adverb: modifies a verb or an adjective – tells how, when, where, why, how often, or how much.

Object: receives the action of the verb, it is ‘acted upon’.

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