



# Communication Culture

SERVE YOUR FINEST LINES IN GOOD TIME

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

WRITERS, LIKE SOME FINE WINES, need time to breathe. They layer inspiration and craft, as wines unfolds its layers or aroma and colour while we watch it develop in the vessel it was poured into. Our patience is rewarded. In the meanwhile we enjoy the rich colour and bouquet that is maturing before our eyes, and the congenial company and conversation. The wait for development has turned our attention to other delights and engagements.

Writing is also a full bodied, sensual experience. We call on all our abilities to craft and transmit the most successful message – on in the right format, and with words selected to evoke emotions in our readers. This is true whether the writing is designed to inform, entertain or sell.

Now a question before we look into how to help mature our ability to express our ideas in language. Since the last column, did you take any steps to start writing or to add something to your writing experience? Did you get stuck or feel you needed more research or more skills?

Try this: Put your own ideas on ice and refresh yourself by drinking in the inspiration, lessons, and ideas of other writers. Yes, take advantage of one of the most neglected assists to the process of idea development and eventual publication: reading.

## What Are You Reading Now?

Writers are often wholly judged by the last

piece they wrote. One could say that you are only as good as the last handful of books you have read, or the most recent people with whom you have had stimulating conversation.

Early on in my career my young son remarked on all the ‘how to’ or work related books I had piled at every reading spot in our home. I simply needed to know what was happening in the world of media and communication in which I was writing and consulting.

Are you reading books and successful examples of the genre or project you’re engaged in? How about guide books and other relevant how-to material? This notion of expanding your knowledge base is as simple as it is profound.

Yet, many writers don’t dedicate time to ‘prime the pump’ or invite the creative muses into their routines. Similarly, people who want to launch websites, blogs, educational and advocacy programs, etc. do not visit, sign up for or explore the resources the real world of existing work in their fields offer.

## A Novel Idea

Great writers are great readers, and you don’t have to be writing the Great Canadian Novel. Any kind of writing and communication qualifies. Enrich your cultural grasp – whether it is general or special interest culture. Turning to another writer’s words, or even your competitors’ websites, brochures, blog or

mission statements may lead you to the notes and nuances that belong in your own unique bouquet of expression, or even organization.

**VIP** – Your very important point is – Read what you love and what attracts your interest. Stay connected to work and ideas that matter to you. It may help you to visualize what you want to achieve. Reading balances the tremendous energy and willpower needed to write. It enriches the mind and adds vital creative material to fuel any project you undertake.

Next time we’ll peek at trends that are shaping our communication culture. Keep writing. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

## Targeted and Supportive Business Reading

Read – authors and experts in the field you are interested in writing about. Or, the leaders who speak to audiences similar to those you want to reach. New writers fear losing their own voice or ‘copying’ content of others’ work – but the concern is greater that they will float without guidance or context. Read the E-zines, blogs, articles and books available to you.

Search out models – that exist or have been tested in the books and resources available. They serve as examples and they’ll provide direction and structure. Templates or models give you a starting point – you will naturally want to amend, reject or adapt as you learn.

Create your own book club by browsing the books and resources about publishing, writing, and the creative process.

Cross pollinate – dip into a broad range of stories, articles, research papers, blogs, and books to enrich your work. Your ideas will multiply and so will your approaches. You may surprise yourself and find unexpected connections and solutions while you take a ‘rest’ or breather from your own focus.

## Some spots to visit:

Poets & Writers Magazine  
<http://www.pw.org/>

Professional Writers’ Association of Canada  
<http://www.pwac.ca/>

Writer’s Digest Magazine  
[www.writersdigest.com](http://www.writersdigest.com)

Did you know you can access, work with and print off books published before 1923? Search in your favourite search engine to find the numerous sites that offer free books – as they are now in the public domain. Some ‘oldies’ are ‘goldies’ even in high tech times!

*Helena is a communication consultant specializing in business writing and conversation with elegance and speed. Get great tips on language use and communication strategy – free – at the sign up box for Express Lane Tipster at: [www.helenakaufman.com](http://www.helenakaufman.com)*

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