



Communication Culture

CRITICAL SKILLS TO COMMUNICATE WELL INTO THE FUTURE START NOW

By Helena Kaufman, *The Afro News Vancouver*

DO YOU FEEL THE YEAR END’S natural pull towards review of the past? Are you participating in the tradition of making resolutions for some kind of improvement? Communication Culture will follow this propensity and will bracket the arrival of 2010 with a look at what’s been on the communicative minds of our readers, this December and beyond.

Behaving Good? Well?

“Grammar is the study of the way language behaves,” said Frank McCourt in his lilting Irish brogue in his book ‘Teacher Man’. I know it was brogue, because I had the pleasure of hearing McCourt own voice as he read his book on a library loan CD.

Early in the years of teaching English Literature classes to teens in New York City’s school system, McCourt captured their attention on a point of grammar by defining gibberish. “Gibberish is language that makes no sense. Psychology is the study of the way people behave. Grammar is the study of the way language behaves. If someone talks in a funny way so you can’t understand them, then you are thinking about grammar.”

Getting Off Message

Let me add the word ‘distraction’. When you read or hear poor grammar, see incorrect spelling, or hear a bad pronunciation it then distracts from receiving the message the sender hopes you will receive and remember.

Our wondrous brain instantly corrects wayward words and searches for the right references. In today’s communication culture, however, enough of these little missteps in any message can take it miles away from its target. It reduces reception and retention. With more than 7,000 messages bombarding us daily, there is too much competition to risk losing our chance at reception success with careless mistakes.

Filters

In addition to the static in the communication channels, our messages must also pass through filters. Given the opportunity of communicating in person, we use certain devices to advantage. We have words, gestures, body language, facial expressions and tone of voice.

Our communications, however, are now often conducted via remote devices. Screens carry email, IMs (instant messages) and phone calls relay voice, photos and text messages.

On receipt of messages we apply yet more filters. Our personal filters include our culture, level of language familiarity, challenges on the brain or body, energy and how crowded our field is at the time any message is perceived. Just to name a few.

You can see how even the most well intentioned conversation partners slide into – gibberish. And the most well crafted messages may still only be 50% comprehended. Paper at least gives us a chance to return and absorb or reconsider information.

us the WHERE and HOW and WHAT of what you see ‘out there’ that people need help with.

What will your communication goals be?

Seen these Top 10 Mistakes in common use in letters, in social media posts and in emails?

Spelling checker programs won’t catch them if they’re spelled correctly, yet, are not the right choice of word.

Can you claim any of these errors as your own due to rushed writing or unconscious carelessness?

1. Its vs. It’s
2. I.e. vs. E.g.
3. Loose vs. Lose
4. You’re vs. Your
5. Choose vs. Chose
6. Effect vs. Affect
7. Who’s and Whose
8. To vs. Too vs. Two
9. Know vs. No vs. Now
10. There vs. Their vs. They’re

** What about how you use I and Me?

Too rushed to reference them? Write me at contact@helenakaufman.com and you’ll get a sheet with definitions and examples so you always use them correctly in 2010!

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2010

Making a Living Making a Life

Black History Month Opening: Art Exhibition at Vancouver Museum
Saturday, February 1, 2010 - 6 pm - 8 pm
Location: 1100 Chestnut St Vancouver, BC V6J 3J9

Come, Explore the Arts that Speak- Sculptures by Carlyle Mathew, Visual Expressions by David George, Conversational Arts by Garrett Campbell & Tess I. Kingston

VIP – Got peeves? Send questions and suggestions and we will feature them as topics in upcoming columns. Spelling? Speaking? Writing you’ve received. Tell

Helena specializes in successful business writing and conversation coaching for executives and small group training. Get her tips on language use and communication strategy weekly. Sign up for Express Lane Tipster at: www.helenakaufman.com. Twitter, Face Book HelenaKaufman.

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