Sharpening Business Writing Skills

Effective writing captures and keeps reader's interest. Paying attention to stylistic elements like word choice, punctuation, sentence structure, and coherence can bring polish and clarity to writing. The following tips will help achieve this goal.

1) Define the Purpose

Be clear on the one central point you are trying to communicate. Content should remain focused and relevant throughout to keep the reader on track

2) Organize and Prioritize

Outline the central point and supporting messages. For such things as memos and emails, prioritize and order the information to make the most salient points first.

3) One Thought per Sentence

Shorter sentences are easier to read and comprehend. Keeping sentences the same length will give the writing a coherent rhythm.

4) One Theme per Paragraph

There should be one main idea per paragraph. Start a new paragraph to provide the reader with distinct transitions.

5) Transition is Key

Each paragraph should maintain a natural flow of thought from one before it. It may be helpful to start the first sentence of a new paragraph by referring to the last sentence of the preceding one.

6) Format for Readability

Keep writing easy to follow. Check punctuation. Use bullet lists to aid comprehension.

7) Eliminate Wordiness; Keep it Simple

Be concise. Only write what adds value to your work. Avoid using "fancy" words when a simpler one will do. Avoid clichés.

8) Consistent Voice

Write with a consistent voice to help it flow better and prevent confusion for your readers. Proofread to verify the same use of language tense and personal pronouns. Keep the writing in active voice; avoid passive word use.

9) Check Punctuation

Use semicolons to join two complete sentences that are closely related. Colons help introduce examples and lists to expand an independent clause, but only when preceded by a complete thought. Dashes isolate phrases for emphasis. Commas provide brief pauses to help the reader assimilate thoughts. Break up run-on sentences with periods.

10) Polish Writing

Ensure that what you have written captures the true essence of what you sought to convey. If possible, wait at least one day to take a fresh look. This will help to catch spelling or grammatical errors and provide an opportunity to evaluate tone and to wordsmith accordingly.

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