

## Writing Your Way to Success in Business



Writing successfully in business means writing purposeful content that conveys relevant and pertinent information to the reader in a clear, concise, and effective manner. The content may include client proposals, letters, reports, memos, emails, requests for proposals, grant writing, and business plans. Proficiency in business writing is a critical aspect of effective communication in the workplace, which is critical to success in business. Why? Business, in any regard, is about getting other people to buy into your strategic vision.

Communication may take many forms, whether it is speaking, video conferencing, visual constructs, texting, email, advertising, blogging, or others, doing any of these things well requires good writing skills. Good writing is fundamentally good thinking which follows a logical path and is easy for someone to follow. Writing one's intent naturally creates an organization of thoughts, but good writing is more than logic in action. It also must touch the heart of the reader, listener, or viewer emotionally. Otherwise, the content will not connect or lead to the behavior you may be trying to achieve.

How does one write their way to success in business? Here are some writing superpowers to aid in your success:

**Knowing and applying the rules:** Trial-and-error, learning, unlearning, knowing, and applying the rules of grammar require writing routinely. Business writing evolves with time, so does grammar and conventions. For example, emoticons, when used judiciously, are gaining acceptance in business writing. A good writer needs to stay updated with the conventions to hone their skills.

While a grammatical error may come across as unprofessional, good grammar portrays both attention to detail and skill, traits that are highly valued in business. Consider this... the difference between a masterful painter and someone who paints abstract art is that the master first learned how to paint representational art. He had a starting base, and as a result, his abstract work has a balance and harmony that the person who paints will never possess. Picasso said he had to first learn to paint like Raphael before he could paint like a child. The same is true for writing successfully in business (or in any other discipline, for that matter). Know your business, apply that knowledge, and then write about it using the rules of language.

**Clarity of thought:** It is impossible to write well without thinking clearly. You must understand what you want to say and articulate it. This is not the same as intelligence. A dull person can write better than a brilliant one if he clearly understands what he wants to communicate and is committed to it without adding unnecessary words or thoughts. In fact, smart people are sometimes quite poor writers because their desire to show off can muddy the message.



**Clarity of purpose:** Thinking about the content before writing is extremely important. Too often, writers think while writing instead of before beginning. This process makes the writing less structured and redundant. Business writing requires the skill to reduce long, rambling sentences into concise, clear ones. Maintaining clarity of purpose gives direction to the writing and develops its tone, structure, and flow.

**Read, a lot:** Simply knowing the rules of grammar and how to spell does not make you a writer. You must read to know what good writing looks like. Read a variety of good writers, which makes it less likely you'll simply parrot someone's style. Writers should read widely—not just good literature, but also good non-fiction on a variety of topics, such as history, biography, science, politics, art, and technology. Another good rule of thumb is to read what you've written out loud to reveal flaws and gaps in your arguments. Welcoming constructive feedback from peers can be a great guide in the revision process for improvement.



**Heart:** As the saying goes, no one cares how much you know until they know you care. A lack of empathy for others, especially for the reader, is to blame for most of the bad writing in the world. It leads to pompous drivel. To be a good writer, you must be able to get inside the heads and hearts of others; you must get outside of yourself. This will allow you to do two important things: 1) say something interesting because you are able to juxtapose the thoughts of others with your own thoughts (and putting together things in novel ways is the foundation of creativity); and 2) tap into the emotional intelligence that fuels all good writing.

The primary goal of business writing is to convey valuable information. Inaccurate or irrelevant content affects the purpose of the document. For effective business writing, information must be value-additive and complete. The main thing is to find a path to good writing that works for you because nothing is more important to success in business or in life. Thinking clearly is fundamental to success in any venture and learning how to write will teach you how to think. Proficiency in business writing can be attained through regular practice. Paying attention to the vocabulary, sentence structure, and style of writing while reading can help to develop the same instinct while penning one's own thoughts.

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