

Conveying Your Message Clearly, Cleanly, Effectively

Presented by

Laura Behrens



Conveying your message

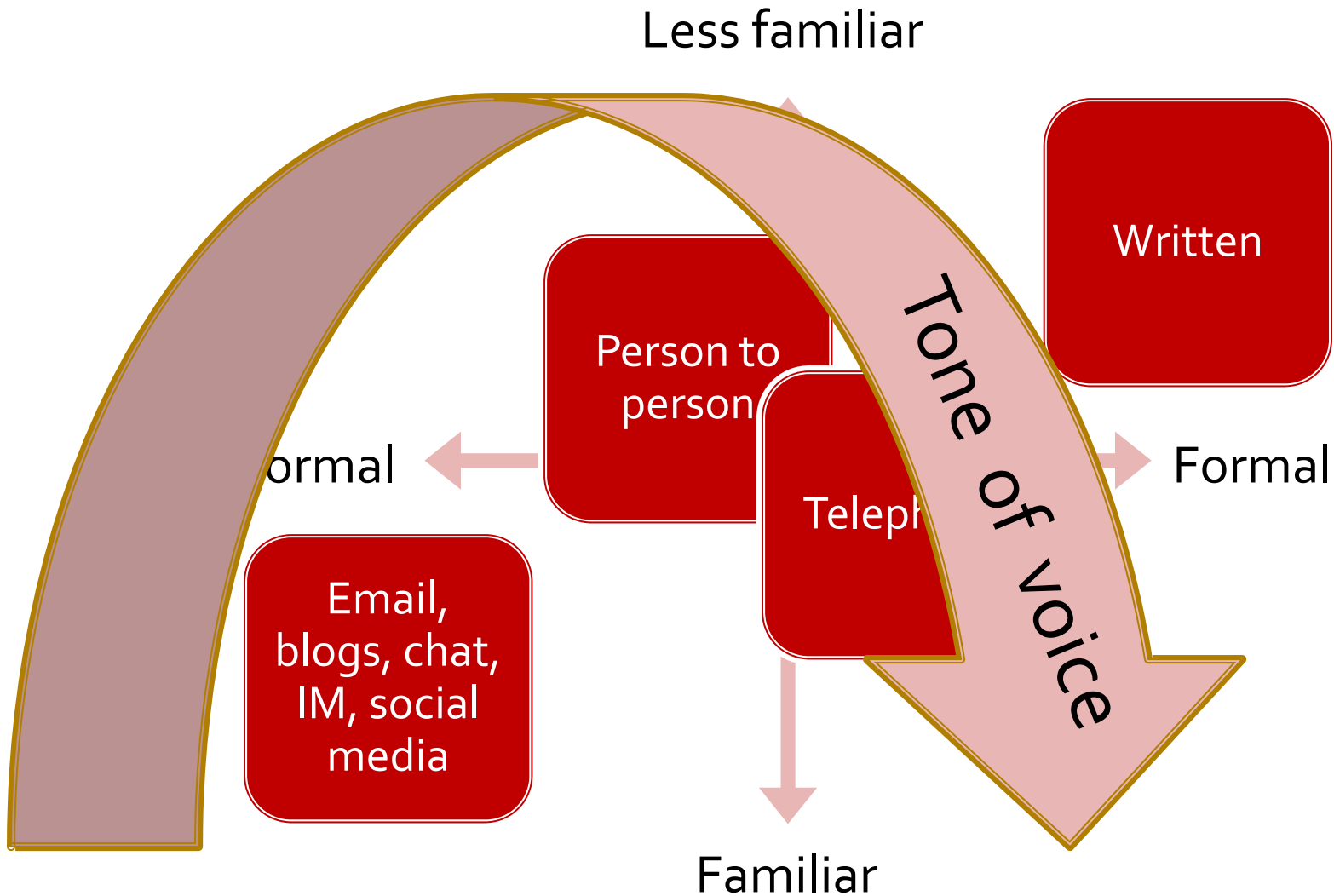
CLEANLY

CLEARLY

EFFECTIVELY

- Present uniform, professional message—you are *always* on
- Achieve inviting, engaging aspects of conversation

Forms of workplace communication



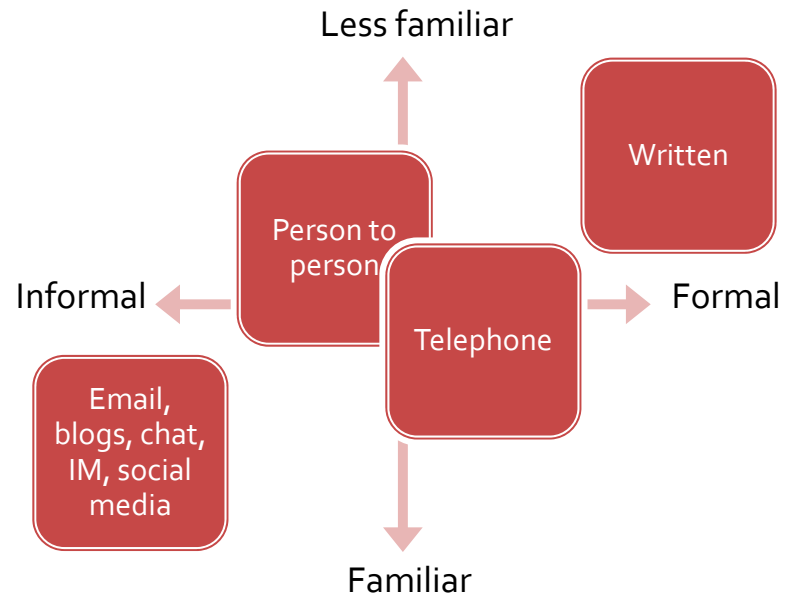
Electronic writing

- Email, blogs—asynchronous, one-way
- IM, chat—two-way, real time
- Text—hybrid
- Social media—all of the above
- *All depend on the written word*

Conveying your message

Goals:

- Present uniform, professional message—you are *always* on
- Achieve inviting, engaging aspects of conversation
- Clean and clear—get out of our own way
 - First, be direct
 - *Always*, be correct
- *Then* add
 - Powerful words
 - Powerful sentences



First, be direct

- Observe the social graces, then get to the point.
 - Getting in—hi, how are you, now let's get to business.
 - Getting out—sign off, but without the insincere “have a nice day.”
- Use words economically.
- Speak the language, but don't hide in jargon.

Economy—long words

utilize = use

approximately = about

assist/assistance = help

initiate = start, begin

innovative = new

purchase = buy

multiple = many

additional = more

vehicle = car, truck, bus

provide = give

arguable = perhaps, maybe

cognizant of = aware

following = after

lacerations = cuts

contusions = bruises

“He was transported by emergency vehicle to a medical facility where he was treated for lacerations and contusions.” (18 words, 46 syllables)

“They took him by ambulance to a hospital where he was treated for cuts and bruises.” (16 words, 22 syllables)

Economy—extra words

in order to = to

in regards to = about

in respect to = about

in the wake of = after

in the aftermath of = after

on a regular basis = regularly

one year anniversary = first anniversary

If you are in need of immediate assistance...
= if you need help right now

No jargon

- Avoid “official-speak”
 - He was transported by emergency vehicle to a medical facility where he was treated for lacerations and contusions.
- Avoid trendy phrases
 - Going forward, reaching out
- Beware acronyms and abbreviations
 - OSA, SEO, SSA, IRA, SBA, SRES, ADHD

Always, be correct

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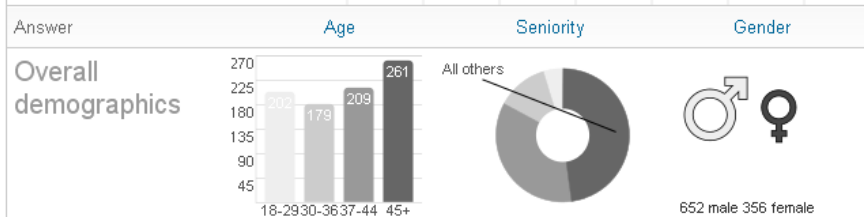
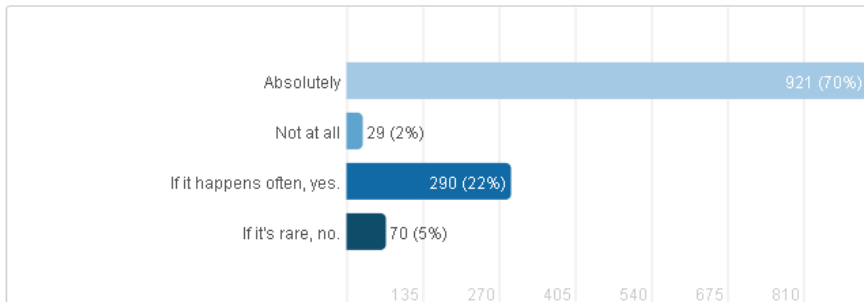
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Do grammatical/punctuational errors and/or bad writing change your opinion of the way a company operates?

By **Meredith Hodge** Ally Development Marketing & Communications Professional at Bright Hope International • 1310 votes • 91 comments • Ended 31 Mar 2011



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Always, be correct

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4 months ago | Flag comment Voted for Absolutely

 Heidi


Heidi Walther • Copy writing is a serious skill. Now that I am writing a lot of webcopy, I have become less forgiving of bad writing. While anyone can write without spelling and grammar mistakes, good writing is more than flawless copy. It allows the audience to enjoy the reading experience and addresses them on an emotional level. The spell checker won't help with that. A lot of corporate webcopy I see is just stringing key words together to improve SEO. Resist the temptation!

4 months ago | Flag comment Voted for If it's rare, no.

 Johnna

Johnna Freud • Yes in marketing materials and reports...first and last impressions count...but I overlook them in emails, especially if I know the person and the emails are flying "fast and furious" to meet a deadline

4 months ago | Flag comment Voted for Absolutely

 Jenny

Jenny Greenleaf • A couple of years ago, I would have been in the "Absolutely" category, but now that I write web copy, I'm a bit more forgiving. When writing is in print, I expect something close to perfection, but web copy is often produced under unrealistic deadlines that don't allow for proofreading and using primitive tools that don't really support total accuracy. As a professional writer, I've certainly made my share of mistakes, some of them quite embarrassing. I admit, I do have a different standard for typos vs. grammatical errors. A small typo here and there indicates that humans are doing the work; grammatical errors and bad writing indicate that humans not trained to write are doing the work.

4 months ago | Flag comment Voted for If it's rare, no.

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Most common errors

- Subject/verb disagreement
- Comma splicing and other run-ons
- Wrong words and expressions
- Spelling, punctuation, capitalization as visual cues

Subject/verb disagreement

What's the difference between driving alone or with a passenger?

If the driver is 16 or 17, the difference is a significantly increased chance of being involved in a car crash — as much as three to five times as great, according to the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Increased restrictions **on passengers** is just one of the changes the Iowa Health System would like to see made to the state's graduated driver's license for teenage drivers younger than 18.

Dude, where's my funding?

Actor and Eastern Iowa native Ashton Kutcher has gotten notice lately for his investments in start-up companies, mostly social networking ventures based in California.

The University of Iowa biomedical engineering dropout's investments include Foursquare, Blekko and Flipboard. At least one **of his bets** have paid off big — he invested in Skype in 2009, and Microsoft bought the company last month for \$8.5 billion.

Run-on sentences

“We’re arguably the fourth most populous county now,” Pulkrabek said. “And we have the 15th largest jail, that tells you in the simplest math, we have not kept up with the growth.”

“One of the comments we got from people who attended that event was ‘you have to bring this back, we just loved it,’” Elles said.

After the show The summit closes after sunset, check out the Visitor Information Station (at 9,300 feet for its stargazing program (808-961-2180; ifa.hawaii.edu/mko/). —Bill Newcott

Wrong words and expressions

- Homonyms
 - Their/they're/there
 - Your/you're
- Spell check failure
 - Do/so/to/go
 - Lead/led
 - Desert/dessert
 - Lose/loose
- Plain old wrong
 - Perspective/prospective
 - Convicted/convinced
 - Jive/jibe
 - Libel/liable
 - Track/tract
 - Take a different ~~tact~~/tack
 - ~~Hone~~ in/home in on
 - ~~Chalk~~ full/chock full

Visual cues

- Spelling

B. Static Bark Control Collar

Electronic bark control collars **area** safe and humane solution when you need to take that extra step **in order** to control excessive barking. The static bark collar corrects your dog with an audio tone followed by a static vibration. Features include an automatic shutoff to prevent the risk of overcorrection, three correction modes to fit your dog's temperament, 10 levels of correction, tone-only button, and long-life rechargeable battery with charger. Waterproof and submersible to 25'.

Visual cues

- Spelling
- Punctuation

regulatory newspapers
CHARLOTTE, N.C. —
There's a hallowed rule in U.S. housing policy: If you own a home, you get a tax deduction on your mortgage interest.
But there's also a growing push to sacrifice this sacred cow, and the reasons are disparate.
Some critics argue that the policy should be changed because it doesn't really encourage homeownership as it's supposed to. Others say the government shouldn't be encouraging homeownership anyway.
Some contend the government can't keep giving out such a big tax break

Visual cues

- Spelling
- Punctuation

sumers to access vital medical information and local medical services on their smartphone. The free application, can be downloaded on smartphones or by logging onto stlukescr.org/itriage-app.

iTriage enables consumers to search medical symptoms, learn about possible causes and find the nearest location for treatment on their hand-held device. Eastern Iowans now have immediate on-the-go access to healthcare and facilities information from St. Luke's Hospital and its clinics.

"We're excited to bring iTriage to Cedar Rapids to increase the accessibility of accurate medical information for residents throughout the region," said Joshua Pruitt, MD, St. Luke's Emergency Department physician. "At St. Luke's, we firmly believe in educating patients about the care they receive so they become active participants in their treatment. By giving patients on-the-go access to health information

iTriage harnesses the power of mobility and the Internet to improve access to healthcare information. By bringing the tool to Cedar Rapids, St. Luke's offers individuals' immediate access to details about St. Luke's Physicians & Clinics, contact information, wait times, hours of operation, directional maps and more.

"iTriage is a great tool but it is certainly not meant as a substitute for emergency care – if individuals think they are having a heart attack, stroke or other medical emergency they should go to the nearest emergency room immediately and iTriage can give you turn-by-turn directions to the closest ER," said Dr. Pruitt.

Built by emergency room doctors this app is available to millions of consumers in over 80 countries.

Visual cues

- Spelling
- Punctuation
 - *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves* by Lynn Truss
- Capitalization
 - Resist the temptation to capitalize too much

Effectiveness—key principles

Simplicity

- Simple ≠ sloppy
- Simple ≠ dumbing down
- Simple (usually) ≠ long
- Simple ≠ magic bullet
- *Simple ≠ easy*

Precision

- Vehicle = car, bus, truck, ambulance, humvee
- Vast majority, landslide: 52%? 97%?
- At a fraction of the cost: 2%? 20%? What is the meaningful fraction?

Powerful words

- Action verbs—almost anything other than
 - To be (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been)
 - To have (has, have, had, having)
- Action verbs *convey more information*
 - I am here:
 - You stand here.
 - They sit here.
 - I lie here.
 - She walks here.
 - He talks here.
 - I have this:
 - I hold this.
 - She squeezes this.
 - They drink this.
 - We eat this.
 - I drop this.
 - You throw this.

Powerful words

- *New*

- **NOT** innovative

Dictionary.com:

in·no·va·tive[in-uh-vey-tiv]

Adjective: tending to innovate or characterized by innovation.

- *Now*

- Replaces currently, presently, at this point in time, at the present time, at the moment, etc. etc. etc.

Powerful sentences

- Write in a straight line—subject, verb, (object)

We ate.
(subject verb)

We ate oranges.
(subject verb object)

Not such powerful sentences

What's the difference between driving alone or with a passenger?

If the driver is 16 or 17, the difference is a significantly increased chance of being involved in a car crash—as much as three to five times as great, according to the Iowa Department of Transportation.

Increased restrictions on passengers are just one of the changes the Iowa Health System would like to see made to the state's graduated driver's license for teenage drivers younger than 18.

The group, which consists of hospitals across the state, including St. Luke's in Cedar Rapids, is lobbying the Legislature for several stricter measures for instructional permits and intermediate licenses.

Not such powerful sentences

Increased restrictions on passengers are just one of the changes the Iowa Health System would like to see made to the state's graduated driver's license for teenage drivers younger than 18. (31 words)

The Iowa Health System would like to see changes made to the state's graduated driver's license for drivers younger than 18, including more restrictions on passengers. (26 words)

The group, which consists of hospitals across the state, including St. Luke's in Cedar Rapids, is lobbying the Legislature for several stricter measures for instructional permits and intermediate licenses. (29)

The group of Iowa hospitals, including St. Luke's in Cedar Rapids, is lobbying the Legislature for stricter rules for instructional permits and intermediate licenses. (24)

Making the good better

...But don't take their word for it. Take mine. I served seven years in the best Army in the world. I've driven all over this Great Country of mine and even overseas in Germany, Paris and Bagdad. Believe me; there is no other comparison to Iowa when it comes to safety.

If after reading this information; you still do not have the desire to move here, I understand and respect that. Keep in mind though; this is a 6 month contract position that has the potential to go up to two years...

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It works because

It's a *conversation*

- It has the *rhythm* of speech
 - Mixes long and short, simple and complex sentences
 - Sentences begin with conjunctions—transitions, just like we talk
 - It uses pronouns *you* and *I* conversationally
- It uses action verbs
 - Take, served, driven, believe, reading, care, understand, respect, keep
 - Only one use of *has* and two of *is*
- It puts thoughts in a straight line surrounded by appropriate social and linguistic grease

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Resources

- Resources tab at [Red Pen Communications](#)
- More like this:
Kirkwood Continuing Education
 - Writing for the Web—March 26
 - Crafting Effective Email—April 9
 - Tailoring Your Message for the Channel—April 23

Conveying your message

Questions?

Thank you!

www.redpencommunications.com