

## In this issue:

Making the most of your brand strategy, demystifying the semicolon, how to use styles in Word, and more.

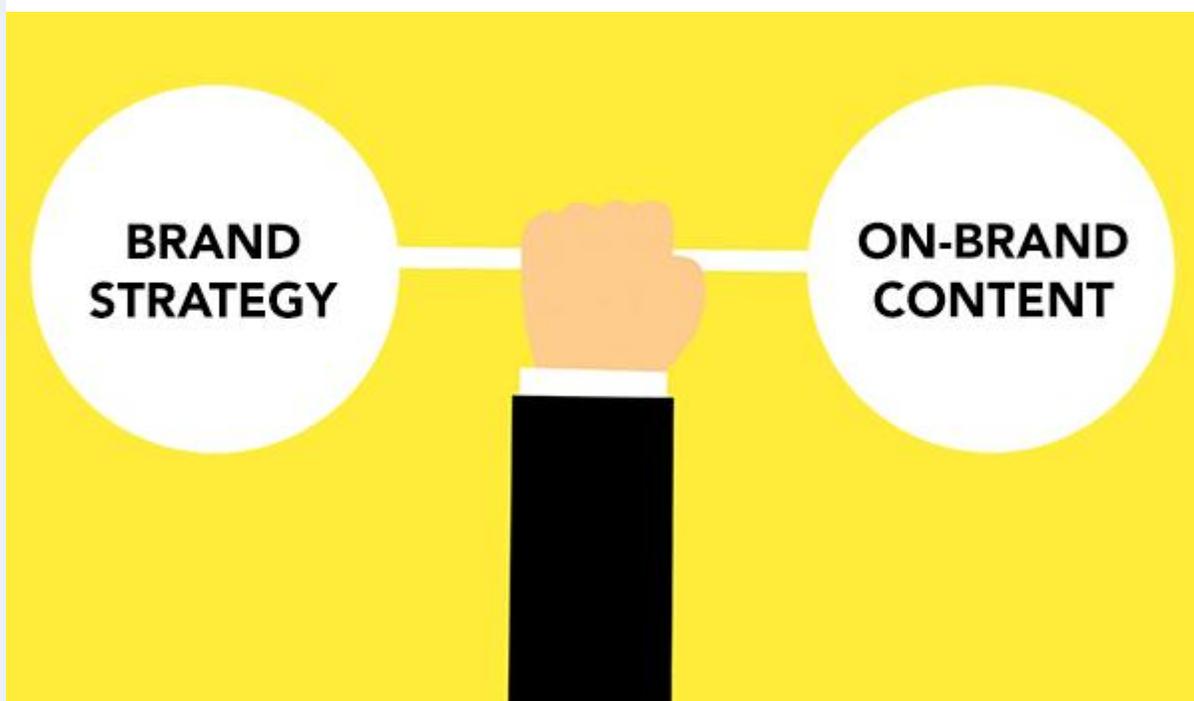
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## Insights and smart practices from your content team

Issue No. 18

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## CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN BRAND STRATEGY AND ON-BRAND CONTENT

A solid brand strategy helps organizations understand who they serve, who they compete with, what stakeholders want, and how to position themselves to achieve their goals.

The challenge for many organizations today -- companies, non-profits, government departments, associations -- is to apply that strategy to communications across a vast array of channels in high volume and in near real-time.

Since brand strategies tend to be built on brief, focused statements or descriptors, a key question is how to translate those nuggets into full-fledged messaging that resonates with audiences and embodies the character of the organization. Doing so successfully requires effort and focus.

In our experience, there are four keys to converting a top-level brand into meaningful, on-the-ground, in-the-pipe content:

### 1. EXPRESS YOURSELF.

A great brand strategy pinpoints your unique value proposition, how you stand apart from competitors, etc. The content challenge is to convert those concepts into messaging your audiences can relate to. Expressing the key concepts in "we" statements -- as a sort of manifesto -- is often a great way to start.

### 2. CHANNEL YOUR INNER BRAND VOICE.

As you convert brand concepts into messaging, think about your organization's personality. Are you gutsy, cheeky, conservative, irreverent? Choose words that reflect that. Have some fun. Play around with different ways of saying the same thing to see which fits best. Test options with an internal "focus group" of staff or a few trusted customers.

### 3. SOCIALIZE IT.

For your brand expression to gain traction, you need the buy-in of everyone inside your organization. Raising your team's awareness of the brand and what it stands for -- and giving them messaging tools to generate content that's consistent with what you want to project -- will help ensure it runs through all of your communications.

### 4. BE DISCIPLINED.

Set guidelines for ensuring content aligns with your brand tone and personality, and evaluate everything your team develops against those guidelines to maximize the value of your brand strategy and truly realize it.

*If you need help translating your brand into on-brand customer/stakeholder messaging, drop us a line: [dale@ascribeinc.ca](mailto:dale@ascribeinc.ca).*

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## Presentations that deliver

Slideshows are a go-to format for many marketers. But what makes the truly great ones stand out? Find out in our "[Presentation on Presentations](#)", the latest addition to the Ascribe Marketer's Toolkit.



## punc'd\*

### WHAT'S A SEMICOLON FOR, ANYWAY?

*PUNC'D tells the hidden stories of punctuation marks and how they make writing clearer and more powerful.*

The semicolon would definitely be a frontrunner in any competition for "most misunderstood or misused punctuation mark". Many people avoid semicolons entirely because they find them confusing or old-fashioned. Some of the semicolon's most famous detractors include Samuel Beckett, George Orwell and Kurt Vonnegut.

That said, when used properly, the semicolon can be a great tool for making things clearer or improving flow without adding words.

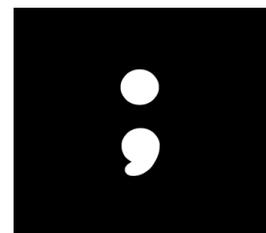
One of its simplest uses is as a "super-comma" to break up a list that already includes commas -- to clarify which items go together. For example: Toronto, Ontario; Vancouver, British Columbia; Montreal, Quebec.

Another key use of the semicolon is to connect ideas -- showing they have a relationship. For instance:

- I'm exhausted. My new neighbour is a rock drummer.
- I'm exhausted; my new neighbour is a rock drummer.

Using the semicolon makes it clear that the new neighbour's musical pursuits are responsible for the speaker's difficulty sleeping.

Today, the semicolon has taken on new roles beyond the "grammar" zone. It commonly appears in cheeky text messages and has also become a popular ink tattoo -- a message of affirmation and solidarity against suicide, depression and other mental health issues.



## content matters\*

### A NEW ONLINE HOME FOR THE NATIONAL VOICE OF DOCTORS IN CANADA

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA) represents physicians and physicians-in-training across the country on key health issues. Last year, our team contributed to the CMA's brand refresh, developing messaging that emphasizes the association's focus on health advocacy and the many ways it supports Canada's doctors. That led into a full rewrite of the CMA website based on interviews with subject-matter experts from across the association. Check out the new [cma.ca](http://cma.ca).



## pop\*

### WHAT OUR PEOPLE DO WHEN THEY'RE NOT AT WORK

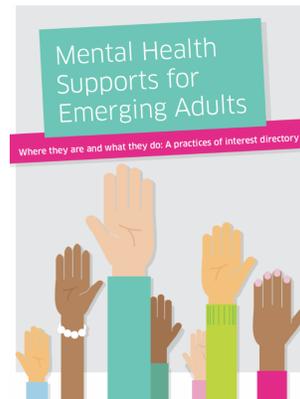
One of our jobs at Ascribe is to find fresh expressions for well-established ideas. Our writer/editor Brenda Solman got up to something similar this winter when she staged a pair of plays that update and offer new spins on the classics *Macbeth* and *Dr. Faustus*. Brenda and her partner, Don Fex, co-founded Theatre Kraken in 2016. Up next they're putting on yet another, even older classic: Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, in which the women employ an unusual strategy to bring an end to their men's endless wars. Check it out at [theatrekraken.ca!](http://theatrekraken.ca!)



## shout-out\*

### SUPPORTING BETTER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE TRANSITIONS FOR YOUTH

The handoff from child and youth-focused mental health care to adult supports has long been identified as insufficient in the mental health system. The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) recently published two new tools to help service providers meet the needs of emerging adults (people aged roughly 16 to 25). Ascribe was proud to have a hand in creating a two-page report and a "practices of interest" directory of model programs, initiatives, research and resources across the country. To learn more about the MHCC's work on this initiative, visit [mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/mental-health-emerging-adults](http://mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/mental-health-emerging-adults).



## practice point\*

### DO IT WITH STYLE(S) IN WORD

When you have a long Word document with many different elements -- headings, subheads, pull quotes, etc. -- it can be a painful process to change them all manually. Fortunately, Word's style feature is a convenient way to make global changes all at once.

Making the most of styles in Word takes some upfront planning, but investing that time can save you tons down the road. Before starting on any lengthy document:

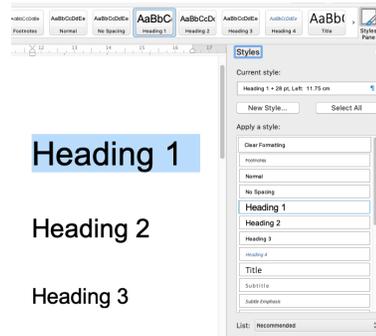
**1. Decide how many header levels your document will need and format them** via the Quick Style list or Styles Pane, both accessible through Word's Home ribbon. Just right-click on the appropriate preprogrammed styles (e.g., "Header 1" for your document's core section headers) and choose Modify.

**2. Decide how the text in the body of your document should be formatted** in terms of font, size, spacing between paragraphs, and so on. Then modify the "Normal" style via the Quick Style list or Styles Pane to match.

**3. Apply your header styles consistently** as you work through the document by highlighting the text and clicking on the appropriate style.

With these items covered, you can then quickly change the formatting for all your document's headers, subheaders and body text by modifying any of the styles you've applied. If this doesn't happen automatically, right-click the style in the Quick Style list or Styles Pane, choose "Select All X Instance(s)" and then click on the style again or choose another from the list.

Mastering this feature in Word can turn hour-long tasks into quick changes that take mere minutes to apply. Now *that's* doing it with style!



Heading 1

Heading 2

Heading 3

## moments in storytelling\*

*This is where we look back at some of the big milestones in storytelling history. If you're interested in learning more about our take on stories, check out our [Story Book](#).*

As winter finally shows signs of coming to an end, we're looking back at some classic tales of this coldest of seasons.

### c.700 BCE

Hesiod's *Theogony* is one of the first written records of Greek mythology, including the story of Persephone, goddess of vegetation and grain -- and how her forced return to Hades and the Underworld for three months each year marks the start of winter. (Yeah, those three-month Greek winters must be brutal.)



### 1734

One of the earliest personifications of Jack Frost nipping at our noses appears in Dick Merrymen's *Round about our coal fire: or, Christmas entertainments. With memoirs of old Father Christmas; shewing what hospitality was in former times, and how little there remains of it at present.* (This year's winter certainly stretched on... but not as long as this book's title!)

### 2011

Not surprisingly, stories set in winter are often all about survival. In *The Grey*, Liam Neeson's plane crashes in the Alaskan wilderness, requiring him to fight off both the elements and a pack of hungry wolves with nothing but his wits and his bare hands.

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