

In this issue:

Getting to "so what", style wars, Game of Thrones, riveting headings and more.

asterisk



Insights and smart practices from your content team

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HOW TO HELP YOUR AUDIENCE ZOOM IN ON WHAT MATTERS

The pace of business and daily deluge of information can make it hard for any of us to know where we should focus our attention next. When we do zoom in on something, if we're not clear why it should matter or what we're supposed to do about it, we're probably just as quick to tune out and move on.

Since people don't have the time to read at length, interpret information and draw conclusions, it's up to communicators to facilitate their thinking -- to guide them to what matters and help them appreciate the "so what". If we're promoting a solution, we need to get right to the ways it's going to make people's lives easier. Instead of presenting research findings, we need to spell out the implications.

Be bold

To get to the point quickly, you need to own your topic and address it with confidence. That means a few things:

Know your purpose. Be ultra-clear about why you're communicating and what you want to achieve. Everything you write should be in service to that goal.

Think about the reader. Know with certainty why they should care about your message -- and tell them directly. Build the piece around that "so what".

Take a position. It's easy to share information responsibly, but that puts the burden on the audience to figure out where you stand. Step out in front and write with authority. Tell people what you believe. To be credible, that means you have to know your content inside and out.

Do the reader a service

Consider the act of writing content a way of serving the reader: guiding his or her thinking instead of just passing along information. See the difference:

<i>Informational</i>	<i>"So what"-driven</i>
How to choose a backup solution vendor Read our new guide to find out what kinds of questions you should ask a backup solution vendor and how to evaluate the different products available on the market today.	Keep your data safe Your business data is too essential to your operations -- and reputation -- to risk. By asking the right questions up front, you can be confident your next backup solution will deliver the business continuity you need.

When you own your subject, take authorship and tell the audience what matters, the only work readers have to do is agree with you.

If you'd like help making sure your marketing material is focused on what matters for your readers, drop us a line: dale@ascribeinc.ca.

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.



style watch*

THAT'S NOT HOW YOU SPELL THAT

Introducing Style Watch, a new section of asterisk that weighs in on common style dilemmas.*

Like many points of style, spelling can spark passionate debates. Sometimes there's a definite right or wrong answer (you never get sent to the *principle's* office but you could end up in the *principal's*, for example). But often spelling decisions depend on which authority you choose to follow or who -- and where -- your audience is.

One word or two?

If you really want to see style hardheads go at it, ask them if they think a word like "healthcare" should be one word or two ("health care"). There are arguments for both ("healthcare" is compact; "health care" may be clearer) and official manuals of style come down on both sides of the question. In fact, the

Canadian Press Stylebook says it should be two words and take a hyphen when it's used as an adjective ("health-care system"). The *Associated Press Stylebook* begs to differ. At the end of the day, the decision on issues like these comes down to your organization's preference. What's most important is to be consistent.



Which side of the pond?

Many spelling preferences are regional. As Canadians, we really like to make things confusing by picking and choosing between British and U.S. conventions willy-nilly (but never willie-nillie). Examples: Canucks and Britons end "offence" and "defence" with -ce. Americans go with -se ("defense"). But Canadians and Americans stand united on "realize" and "recognize" versus the British "realise" and "recognise". A good principle in cases like these is to go with the spelling that's most common where your audience lives.

Have a style question you'd like us to cover? Let us know on Twitter [@ascribeinc](https://twitter.com/ascribeinc) or [#asteriskStyleWatch](https://twitter.com/asteriskStyleWatch).

content matters*

CHARTING A NEW COURSE

Over the winter of 2018-19, the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada organized a five-city series of roundtables to hear from stakeholders how to maintain the country's world-leading position in the highly competitive and technologically advanced aerospace industry. Ascribe's writing team was proud to support the Association's effort by covering the meetings -- chaired by the Honourable Jean Charest -- and by writing the final report, which debuted at the 2019 Paris Air Show in June. You can read the final report at: <https://aiac.ca/vision2025/>



pop*

GECKO OF THRONES

In TV, a "gecko" ending is when a series based on a book or other property runs out of source material and has to make up its own conclusion. The saying was inspired by the gecko lizard, which, when it gets into a tricky spot, can lose its tail and grow a new one.

Fans saw this recently with the massively hyped *Game of Thrones* finale. The series ran out of books to draw on. In that case, the writers were able to ask author George R. R. Martin to tell them the main points they needed to hit before wrapping up.

Most times, series writers don't have that

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](#).

Nothing gets people talking like a series finale, whether it's the latest hit TV show or a... novel?

2019

Game of Thrones comes to an end after eight seasons, but not all fans are satisfied with the way things wrap up. Though maybe it was not as controversial as the finale to that other long-awaited epic, the Mueller Report -- and who knows what spinoffs might come out of that one!



1983

Nearly 106 million people (and 77% of all televisions in the U.S.) tune in for the series finale of *M*A*S*H*. It becomes the most watched telecast in history, not beaten until the 2010 Super Bowl -- and still remains the all-time most-watched episode of any TV series.

1861

The 36th and final chapter of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* is published in *All the Year Round* magazine. Serialization was so standard at this time that authors built an episodic structure into their novels, with short chapters and cliffhangers designed to keep readers' attention from issue to issue.

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