asterisk *

Insights and smart practices from your content team

INSPIRING ACTION: FIVE KEYS TO PERSUASIVE WRITING

A strong, clear call to action is critical to any marketing piece. But how do you motivate readers to take that next step: to contact your sales team, download your white paper or try out your new software?

Effective copy is persuasive copy, inspiring action and influencing how your audience thinks about your product, service or brand. Apply these five principles to give your writing some persuasive punch:

1. Present the problem
Reflect back the challenge, issue or concern facing your audience that your product or service is designed to solve. That way your audience can see themselves in your copy — and your offering as the answer to their problem.

2. Spell out the benefits
It's not enough to list out what your product or service does and then leave it to your readers to draw their own conclusions. Be clear about the value of any features you touch on when describing your offering. What are the benefits? How will it make their life better or easier? Ultimately, those benefits are what they're buying from you, not a list of features.

3. Keep the focus on the reader

Address readers directly in your copy, in the second person (i.e., "you"), rather than speaking in general terms about their industry or businesses like theirs. This helps create an engaging tone that's closer to an in-person conversation than a sales pitch. And remember to always bring it back to your audience. Your business may have been around for decades, or you may be a leader in your field offering best-in-class products and services — but what does that mean for potential customers or clients?

4. Give them the facts
Stats and figures that support the need for your offering (or its effectiveness, if it's a product or service) add legitimacy to your writing. This is especially important if your audience skews toward the analytical, such as those in C-suite or senior leadership positions. Just be sure that any sources you cite are reputable.

5. Show (social) proof
A well-placed testimonial from an industry peer will do more for your case than your words alone. Online reviews or your company's social media channels are good places to mine these. Alternatively, ask your sales team to identify and reach out to enthusiastic customers who may be eager offer public praise.

These techniques will put you well on your way to writing that inspires action. If you'd like to talk further about how well-crafted copy can get results for your business, reach out at info@ascribeinc.ca.

team announcement*

ASCRIBE IN 2023

The past year for Ascribe was one of both change and consistency. While we introduced a new leadership team, we continued to maintain our same excellent writing team and the processes that set Ascribe apart. Moreover, we expanded our team to include a new writer and project manager, further increasing our capacity and client service capabilities. We also recruited two former Ascribe writers to boost our output while continuing to deliver the excellent work that is our hallmark.

With these changes in place, we have entered the new year with tremendous momentum. This wouldn't be possible without our great clients, whose support and confidence in us throughout our leadership transition have been nothing short of amazing. Thank you for your faith in Ascribe and for the amazing breadth of work you give us the opportunity to work on. We look forward to working with you throughout the upcoming annual report season and the rest of the year.

style watch*

PLAIN-LANGUAGE PRINCIPLES FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION

It's always tempting to try to dazzle readers with your vocabulary and wit. But in doing so, it can be easy to miss the point of communication: to share information and be understood. Here are a few tips for writing in plain language to help you communicate clearly and in an easily consumable way:

1. Use the right type of language
A common misconception about plain language is that it's simply about writing in small, easily understandable words. While it's true that overly complex or precise words may be best replaced with several simpler words, there's more to plain language than that. Because most content we consume is now digital, it's easier than ever to lose readers' attention. To keep them engaged, remove jargon where possible or provide a short explanation on first mention if you have to use it.

2. Keep it simple
Long sentences and large blocks of text can be intimidating or confusing. Use short sentences and paragraphs to convey one or two thoughts at a time so you don't lose your readers.

Avoid elaborate turns of phrase, colloquialisms or metaphors. While they may energize your writing, they could easily confuse readers with different linguistic backgrounds.

Pay attention to the tone of your writing and its suitability for your audience. While a more conversational tone is generally preferable, it may not always be appropriate.

3. Present your content with readers' needs in mind
Consider how best to present, format and organize your content. Varying the size of your font and including meaningful headers improves scannability so your readers can easily find the sections most relevant to them.

Avoiding overly large blocks of text, using figures where appropriate and including tables to present numeric information can all help improve readability.

content matters*

BUILDING SMARTER COMMUNITIES

As our world becomes increasingly connected, businesses, event venues and municipalities are all getting on board with smart community initiatives. By leveraging connectivity in new and innovative ways, they're making their operations more sustainable and delivering better experiences. BAI Communications is one of the companies helping them do it, with advanced technologies and a business model that makes it possible to bring cost-effective connectivity to more places than ever before. BAI recently conducted research on companies' attitudes and plans for smart communities, and we were pleased to support the project by writing the full research report and a series of companion blog posts.

practice point*

CRAFTING CLEAR, ENGAGING AND MEMORABLE POWERPOINT DECKS

More than 30 million PowerPoint presentations are created every day — and we see many them in our day-to-day work. The best ones tell a story, bring content into focus and help teams deliver messaging in a consistent way. Whether they're intended to promote products or explain ideas, here's what we've learned from our experience writing and editing presentations:

1. Start with an outline. Having clarity of purpose from the very start about what you want to say (and how you'll say it) is key to ensuring your audience can quickly internalize your content — and then carry it forward into action. When it comes to structure, remember to tell a story: having a beginning, middle and end will help your presentation stick in people's minds. You should also tell a story with your titles and headings instead of using simple wayfinding labels.

2. Keep it lean. Too much information can obscure your key takeaways. Your presentation should be a highlight reel with as few slides as possible, not an exhaustive account of every last detail. The most effective and engaging slides are highly scannable: direct and to the point, with just a few short sentences and bullets rather than walls of text.

3. Make it complete. By keeping each slide tight and concise, a lot of the extra details will likely end up in the speaking notes field. But don't rely on the speaker to do all the work: when created right, a presentation should stand on its own, without needing a live person to deliver it, so it can be used in more places and for more purposes.

shout-out*

KINAXIS SCORES BIG IN 2022

Just before the NHL season started, Ascribe client Kinaxis announced it would be the helmet sponsor of the Ottawa Senators, with their logo appearing on the team's white helmets for the next three years. That's big-time visibility for the Kanata-based leader in supply chain management software, which in June opened its new headquarters just a slap shot away from the Sens' home rink. Kinaxis was also named one of Canada's Top 100 Employers for 2022. After such a big year, we can't wait to see what's next!

wordplay*

SPOT THE FAKE WORD

Love it or hate it, snow and ice are facts of life for many of us. But if you can find ways to enjoy them, it makes it much easier to get through the winter. You can go skiing, skating or sledding — or you can watch the snow from inside with a cup of hot tea and a puzzle. Here's a quick puzzle to get you started: can you guess which one of these icy words we made up?

- **Ballycadders** (noun): Saltwater ice that forms in the area between high and low tide.
- **Congeliturbation** (noun): The churning or other action of soil caused by freeze-thaw cycles.
- **Medisol** (noun): The layer of frozen ground between the permafrost and the active layer.
- **Pogonip** (noun): Ice crystals that form on objects or snow surfaces above ground level
- **Thermokarst** (noun): Uneven, irregular topography (such as sinkholes and caverns) caused by the melting of ground ice.

Highlight below for the answer:

Questions? Suggestions? Send us an email. To find out more about us, visit www.ascribeinc.ca.

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