

Communicating Credibility With Your Business Writing

If they believe what you are saying,
they will buy what you are selling!

- Achieve business success with effective, efficient writing
- Enhance your image and your reputation as an expert
- Make yourself more promotable with powerful business writing
- Attract clients and build business with persuasive writing
- Get outstanding results and accomplish your goals

Alicejane Lippner, MD, JD

Boca Raton, FL

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info@communicatingcredibility.com

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Part I.

Introduction

Communicate credibility

Why read a book about business writing—about communicating credibility? Why should you care about your writing? Because writing well is crucial to your business success! Surveys consistently identify communication skills at the top of abilities important to executives. Your writing reflects you and your company.

Want more reasons to hone your business writing skills?

- Excellent written and oral communication skills are critical job requirements for executives and high-level managers.
- Your writing is often the first (and only) impression people get about you.
- Everything you write represents you—how professional you are, how well you think, how effectively you make decisions.
- Other people (not in your intended audience) see your writing and evaluate you, too.
- Decisions about promotion include consideration of how well you write.
- Effective writing—the ability to communicate clearly—enhances your image and reputation as an expert.
- Good writing gets you published and promoted in academia, so you don't perish.
- Outstanding communicators are trusted, respected, successful—and rare.
- Successful writing communicates credibility and gets results—persuades readers to buy what you're selling, to take action, to accept your viewpoint.
- Skillful writing promotes you, your ideas, your products and services, and your company—sets you apart from your competition.
- Clear communications provide your staff with the need-to-know information and knowledge they need to perform their jobs.
- Effective communication connects with readers, evokes credibility, establishes a relationship, builds business, and boosts profits.

Writing affects how you're perceived

Your writing affects your reputation. Your primary personal asset for achieving success is how others think of you. Your writing showcases your ability to communicate, to think, to make decisions, to get results. Even if your ideas are brilliant, they won't do any good if nobody "gets" them, if they're not communicated clearly and persuasively.

What's "brand you" like? What's your niche—your specialness, unique expertise? How are you positioned in your company? Your industry? How well do you communicate brand you? What do people think and say about you? When colleagues and customers hear your name, what do they think? Are you special in the minds of your audience? Do they feel your passion and enthusiasm for what you do? Is your writing helping—or hindering—brand you?

Poor writing is costly

Ineffective writing harms your company, harms you. Fuzzy messages and fuzzy thinking are disastrous. If you write without clarity, you risk your credibility. Readers start to question if you know what you're talking about. Maybe, you're hiding something. Or, your thinking is faulty, you just can't write well. Poor writing—poor impression. Don't tarnish your reputation or damage your business by writing poorly.

What do you think of the paragraph below? It's an exaggeration to make a point, to have fun. But, how many times have you received correspondence that was almost this bad?

Writing if crushull to your suxcess. How well do you Write? Its really so very very much of a pain to reed bad stuff. Ain't it? Their's no xquse not to get it write every time. Sure you don't need to no nuttin else? Do what I tell you cause its important to listen to me. I'm all ways write. Its a slam dunk, yeh?

If you received a note like this, what would you think about the writer? How much credibility would the person rate? Are you convinced to take action? If this were a cover letter with a résumé, would you hire this person? Or, waste time on an interview? What about a note from a colleague that reflects lack of attention to detail, faulty thinking, inadequate writing skills? How would your impression of your colleague be affected? A poorly written letter, a poorly presented speech—they all damage credibility.

I'm sure your writing is much better than the sample paragraph above. But, even small errors can be jarring in communications from a person at your level of experience and expertise. Consider each contact with a prospect, client, colleague, industry expert, company executive, as if you were going for a job interview or sales presentation. Your reputation is at stake with every word you write. Use your writing to establish and enhance your credibility with everyone you encounter in your business life.

Some people are "experts" at destroying credibility

Want another lesson in destroying credibility? Years ago, I attended a half-day presentation for attorneys about writing a non-fiction book. The concepts were good and they were presented effectively. Recently, I serendipitously discovered the speaker's website. I bought his expensive, unnecessarily bloated book. I didn't receive everything I ordered. He never responded to e-mail or phone messages. But, I began to receive his e-zine every few weeks, surprisingly with some useful information. Then, he apparently discovered affiliate marketing. E-zines arrived every one to two days, with sales pitches for other people's products. The connection to his product was often loose, at best. The so-called articles in his e-zines were ads. Instantly, he destroyed any remaining credibility with me. His communication skills (or, lack thereof) ruined my perception of this "expert." I can only imagine how others reacted and responded.

Rate your writing

What about your business writing? Are you satisfied with how well you communicate? What effect does your writing have on your reputation, on your image in your niche and your company? Does your writing demonstrate your competence and knowledge? Is your credibility enhanced or harmed by your writing?

Do you accomplish your goals with your writing? What's the impact of your writing on others? Are you making a connection? Establishing rapport? Do you sound truthful? Do readers understand your message? Do they take action?

How believable are you? Does your writing convince readers they're making the right decision by listening to you, doing what you ask, buying your viewpoint or your products? Does your target audience buy what you're selling—your products, services, viewpoint, opinions?

Words are your tools. How well do you use your tools? Are you a handyman or skilled craftsman? Are you a word artist? Do you use your words to display and showcase your expertise? Or, do you get performance anxiety when you need to write? Suffer page paralysis, word worry? Can't seem to get going? Don't know how to develop your writing skills?

Do you find these metaphors about writing a bit exaggerated? I've used them to illustrate an important device to create interest, help readers understand, make a point, get attention. Do you use writing devices? What techniques do you use to convey your message with clarity and impact?

Schools don't teach writing skills

Most businesspeople haven't been properly taught the critical skill of writing. Writing is taught ineffectively in most schools and universities, including business schools. Students learn about the mechanics. They often learn about writing creatively. But, they don't learn the skill of writing. Mastery of results-oriented writing is virtually ignored.

Students don't know how to write to communicate—to present a clear, easily understood message, one that persuades, gets results. They lack a system, a writing process, the tools to write well, efficiently, effectively—and painlessly. Schools foster quantity, not quality. What's probably even worse, the educational system makes writing unpleasant—no wonder most people dislike writing.

What's your writing like? Take the quiz to see how much you need help—now.

Writing Self-Quiz

How much do you need this guide? Take this self-quiz. Compute your writing score.

- | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|
| (1) I have too much writing to do. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (2) I don't have enough time to write. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (3) I have trouble getting started. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (4) I don't bother planning my writing. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (5) Organizing thoughts is a problem. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (6) I'd like to write more persuasively. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (7) I don't know how to rapid write. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (8) Writing client letters is challenging. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (9) My proposals don't get funded. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (10) I want my speeches to get results. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (11) My writing is boring. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (12) I try to squeeze a lot on one page. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (13) Nobody has given me feedback. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (14) Nobody has praised my writing. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (15) I hate writing. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (16) I want to communicate credibility. | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (17) I need help! | Yes _____ | No _____ |
| (A+) My writing is perfect. | Yes _____ | No _____ |

Your Score

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Yes to item (A+) | Stupendous Writer: I don't believe you. Writing is never perfect. |
| Yes to 1 to 3 items | Expert Writer: Read this guide at your leisure. |
| Yes to 4 to 6 items | Average Writer: Start reading this guide now to get help. |
| Yes to 7 to 9 items | Salvageable Writer: Read every word immediately, do what I say. |
| Yes to >9 items | Pathetic "Writer": Don't read—memorize every word! (Kidding!) |

By using the writing process and the methods you'll discover in this guide, you'll soon be on your way to better business writing. Even if you score well on the quiz, you can improve your writing. Races are won or lost by a difference of fractions of a second. Similarly, small changes in your writing—tweaking it—can make large differences in the results you get. Nobody's writing is perfect. All of us can improve. But, the goal isn't perfection. It's effective business writing—communicating credibility, successfully accomplishing your goals, getting the desired results. Let's get started!