

To Write More Clearly, First Focus on the Words

Last month I talked about the problem of greeting prospects with too much verbiage and business jargon. (["Do You Greet Your Prospects With a Message ... or an Avalanche Of Words?"](#)) Now I'll explain exactly how you can write more clearly.

I've promised to keep Monthly Makeover brief, so I've broken up this subject into four parts:

- Part 1 - Words
- Part 2 - Sentences
- Part 3 - Paragraphs
- Part 4 - Reading Level

Today I'm covering Part 1 - Words.

Tips to Simplify Words

Once you've written your first draft, edit it with word length in mind. Exchange multisyllabic words for shorter words.

A thesaurus can help. You can use:

- A book, such as one of the Roget's thesauruses.
- An online thesaurus, such as the one provided at <http://www.m-w.com>.
- The thesaurus provided with your word processing software (like Microsoft Word®).

Your goal should be to find replacements for seldom used or multisyllabic words. Of course you don't want to replace every multisyllabic word -- just the ones that can easily be replaced with something similar and simpler.

You should also explain any industry-specific words that you use. This is easier said than done; you probably use business jargon without being aware of it. To get around this, have someone outside of your industry read your work and highlight the terms that confuse them.

If this isn't possible, you should still carefully examine each business term you use. And it isn't necessary to go into a long-winded description. Sometimes you can get away with placing the description in parentheses (like this).

Before and After Examples

To illustrate this better, I found a "before" example on the Web. As usual, I've changed it slightly to protect the innocent:

"His ability to articulate the compelling value proposition that our company delivers will greatly contribute to our company's continued momentum."

Here's how I would rewrite it:

"His skill in communicating the valuable services our company offers will leave our competitors in the dust."

That's it for this month! I hope you're enjoying your summer. Stay cool!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary

P.S. As usual, I would be flattered and honored if you would forward this email to any co-workers or colleagues you think would be interested.

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If you have a writing project coming up, I'd love to talk to you about it. Please contact me for a complimentary 30-minute consultation.

678-697-2555 ★★★★★ maryms@5starwriting.com