

Do You Greet Your Prospects with a Message ... or an Avalanche of Words?

I've visited many Web sites. The ones I love tell me what I need to know right away on the landing page. When I can't immediately figure out what a company does from reading its Web page, I get frustrated and leave.

What I'd like to discuss today is the tendency of companies to recite what they do in long sentences complicated by jargon and stuffy words.

Imagine this: You're at a networking event, interested in meeting companies that provide human resource services.

Vendor A greets you with a limp handshake. After introductions, she says:

"Professional employer organizations (PEOs) enable clients to cost-effectively outsource the management of human resources, employee benefits, payroll, and workers' compensation. Utilize our multi-service offerings and you'll find you can focus on your core competencies to maintain and grow your bottom line."

Vendor B gives you a brief -- but vigorous -- handshake. After introductions, he says:

"If your company is overwhelmed with handling human resource issues, you're talking to the right person. We can take those payroll and benefit tasks off your hands so you can focus on growing your business."

Which vendor are you more comfortable with? The one that's easier to understand, of course!

Now I know there's a difference between how we speak and how we write, but if you write more conversationally, you'll discover these benefits:

- Writing is easier.
- Writing takes less time.
- You'll receive positive feedback on what you wrote. (That means people are reading it!)

If you suspect your writing is "dense" with long words, sentences, and paragraphs (not to mention the dreaded jargon or business-speak), here's a fun resource to download:

<http://www.fightthebull.com/bullfighter.asp>

Bullfighter installs as a toolbar in Microsoft Word®. After you write your first draft, just run Bullfighter like you'd run your spell-checker. (You *are* running your spell-checker, aren't you?) Bullfighter quickly scans your document and gives you three scores that rate your document's readability.

One more tip: Don't try to change the way you write *while* you're writing. That sounds like a contradiction, but it's not. Writing and editing are two different tasks that require two separate skill sets. Write your memo, article, or brochure quickly. If you have time, set it aside for a day or two, and then edit for brevity and clarity. You'll be amazed at what you can cut out and simplify.

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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.

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