

The Importance of Good Writing Skills for the Manager

**Saying What You Mean
To Busy People**

□ Bob Atkins, 2010

100% of an AC/S job is Communications

- Know your Audience.
 - Know why are you writing.
 - Include W, W, W, W and H.
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Consider Your Words

- The 3 C's

- Clear
- Concise
- Compelling

- Eschew Obfuscation

- No Jargon, Acronyms,
Technical Terms - Define
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Basic Rules

- Limit text to 1 page, 2 if you must

 - Put your Request or Direction up front
 - Use Subject: or Regards:

 - Use Active Voice

 - Remember to close with contact information
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What Your Mother (Boss) Should Have Told You

- Take Good Business Writing Or Report Writing Classes
 - Practice Writing
 - Ask for assignments
 - Have Someone else review and edit
 - Let it cool before you reread
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Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

- 1. Weak language-** “we *hope* to complete the project by xxx.” Or “we will *try* to xxxx...” We don’t “hope” or “try.” Instead, we plan, schedule, work toward, estimate or any number of other more active, assertive verbs.
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Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

- 2. No reference to when** an accomplishment or activity occurred or why we chose to update the Board now instead of last month or next month.
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Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

3. Incomplete information. Material that raises questions in the readers' mind without answering them is incomplete. Example 1: Two facilities were recently permitted for XXX...Later in the item, it mentions that three facilities were inspected without mentioning the status of the third facility...is it pending, denied?? Example 2: Dept Y trained volunteers for a certain important task but didn't include how many volunteers were trained or when it happened.

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4. Not sensitive to Board sponsorship of or interest in projects... Never describe a project a Board member is interested in as something the Department is pursuing (they're pursuing it at the direction of the Board). Don't let a department or a director sound bigger, more high-profile, more visionary, etc. than the Board who directs them.

Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

- 5. Don't use this memo to surprise people with bad news.** If a project is experiencing problems – especially a project that a Board member or members is interested in – the monthly update memo may not be the best place to break that news. Make sure the GM, ACAO, CAO know about issue and decide whether this merits a briefing or separate memo. Remember – no surprises!
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Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

6. No active verb in the heading.

Like a headline, the heading should tell the reader something about the item so they can decide if they want to read it. Just listing the subject isn't good enough.

Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

7. Flowery writing. Remember, you're writing material the CAO will send to the Board of Supervisors. This isn't an article for San Diego Home and Garden...Flowery language when describing our facilities and program is appropriate in materials geared more to marketing (brochures, news releases, etc.) Examples include descriptions of lovely settings and stonework, enjoying the beauty of nature, or other phrases the CAO would not use in a memo to the Board.

Frequent Faux Pas in Board Updates

8. Content isn't appropriate for this document and should be reported out elsewhere. This doesn't happen too often, but sometimes departments try to include material on their media coverage or employee recognition. Media coverage should be directed to DMPR for inclusion in their media contacts report which goes to the Board, CAO and exec team. Employee recognition is done in other venues such as County News, CAO kudos letters, etc.
