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Hurley Write Newsletter

Empowering professionals to write with skill and confidence

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Writing as Problem-Solving

For many people, writing is an arduous, if not downright painful, task. However, there are strategies you can use to make the process more productive and less painful. We're not suggesting that these strategies will necessarily make you enjoy writing, but they can ease the stress.

First, think about writing as problem-solving. For instance, the problem that you're trying to solve may be how to convey the message so that the reader understands it upon first reading. So, if we think about it this way, we have to have a systematic plan whereby we can begin to solve the problem. That strategy should involve various pre-writing techniques including, but not limited to, freewriting, brainstorming, clustering, and/or outlining (for more information about these techniques, contact us).

Second, we should consider our readers; that is, who we're targeting and what we know about them. In the classes we teach, we always urge writers to create an audience rubric that allows them to figure out what they know and don't about readers and what's important for their readers.

Finally, writing a purpose statement or an objective is key. Too often, writers simply don't stop to consider what they're trying to achieve with their writing, believing instead that the reader will figure it out or know what the reader means. Not so. In fact, we call this concept the "and" factor—the reader gets to the end of a document and says "And?" If the "walk-away" message isn't clear, you won't achieve your goal and your readers may be confused in terms of why they're reading and/or what message you're driving to drive home.

So, consider using prewriting strategies, creating an audience rubric, and

Client's Writing Problems Solved

Problem: A client recently contacted us about a problem its staff was having writing letters that were concise and to the point. The organization was using several templates, the letters were organized such that readers had to work very hard to find the information relevant to their needs, and they contained information unrelated to what the reader needed. In addition, the templates were inflexible in that writers had to include certain information in a particular order.

Solution: We helped the client create new templates that considered readers' goals in terms of the kind of information they needed and when they needed it. In addition, the new templates allowed the writers to think for themselves about the function of the writing (that is, what they were trying to accomplish) while at the same time allowing them to organize information based on what readers actually needed when they needed it.

Result: A six-month follow-up to our writing class showed that our solution was successful. The writers felt more in control of their writing, and consequently, better able to figure out their readers' needs. The letters produced were less verbose and easier to read and understand. Perhaps most encouraging was that the organization received fewer questions from their readers about the information contained in the letters; in addition, several readers commented on the how much easier it was to find the information and take the required action.. To get a copy

writing down what you hope to achieve via the writing to solve the "problem" of writing.

For more information, contact us at pam@hurleywrite.com

Writing Pet Peeves

We asked you in a previous newsletter for your pet peeves, and boy, did we hear about them! Here's a sampling; continue to send them to us and we'll continue to print them.

1. Using clichés such as "utilize" or "reach out," when "use" and "contact" work just as well.

2. Not using the serial comma (the comma before "and" in a series)

3. Putting periods and commas outside of quotation marks (this is done only in British English)

4. Using "currently" or "in the future" (how the sentence is constructed will tell readers if it's "current" or if it will happen)

Interested in a Public Workshop?

Because we've gotten several requests over the past few months to conduct a public workshop, we're asking for your input. Would you be interested in a public workshop? If so, what type? We're asking folks who might be interested to complete this short, non-obligatory survey. We'll let you know the results soon! http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/publicworkshop

Word of the Day Added to Our Site

We've added a link to our website that provides a new word every day! Now you can bedazzle your friends and family with your ever-expanding vocabulary! Click here.

Just for Fun!

Funny and insightful quotes about writing: http://www.icantgetpublished.com/writing_quotes.html.

of the entire article, contact us. For information about our onsite courses, click here.

Name Our Newsletter! We're counting on our clever readers to come up with a name for our newsletter.. We've come up with "Hurley's Writings," which we're not too keen on. Send your entries to us at pam@hurleywrite.com. We'll vote and the person whose entry is selected will win the opportunity to take either the five-week "Writing Fundamentals" class or the four-week "Writing Standard Operating Procedures" class (both are a $499 value). Send your entries soon!

Thinking About Taking an Online Course?

We'll be raising the rates for our online courses January 1, 2011, so if you've been thinking about taking one, now's the time. Click here.

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