

Read a
Sample Chapter



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Writing in the Workplace

***Strategies to Plan, Write, and Revise
(almost) Any Document***

Chapter 1:

Writing Well Makes a Real Difference

Here's the bottom line: *Effective writing saves time and money, can improve customer service, results in increased sales, and helps employees do their jobs more effectively and efficiently.*

Joseph Kimble, chair of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School's Research & Writing Department, proves this in his book, *Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please*. Kimble's research focuses on organizations that have benefitted from improved writing. His book includes a variety of case studies of organizations that have saved time and money and improved business practices by making their copy easier to read, reinforcing the clear benefits of good writing. Some of his findings include the following eye-popping statistics:

2x as likely	The US Army rewrote a memo to 129 officers suggesting that they perform a certain task; those who received the more readable memo were twice as likely to act on the task on the day they received the memo.
5 re-assigned	In 1977, the FCC rewrote regulations in plain language, resulting in the organization being able to reassign five full-time staff members whose job was to answer questions about the regulations.
\$375,000 saved annually	GE rewrote its software manuals, resulting in a decrease of 125 calls per representative from customers asking questions about the software. With its revised manual, GE estimates that it saves up to \$375,000 a year for each business customer.
\$400,000 saved annually	FedEx saved \$400,000 annually when it rewrote its operations manuals. The goal was to ensure that users spent 80 percent less time looking for information.
\$37 million saved annually	The US Navy rewrote its business memos to officers and saved \$27 to \$37 million a year in officer time because they could read the revised memos in 17 to 27 percent less time.

Kimble's book has many other examples demonstrating the advantages of effective writing, including how organizations improved their bottom line simply by reassessing and rewriting their customer-facing documents.

And Kimble is far from the only source of examples of the impact of good writing and effective communications versus the costs of poor writing. Many studies and research projects have found that poor communication and inadequate writing are incredibly costly – and thus, when corrected, provide incredible return on value.

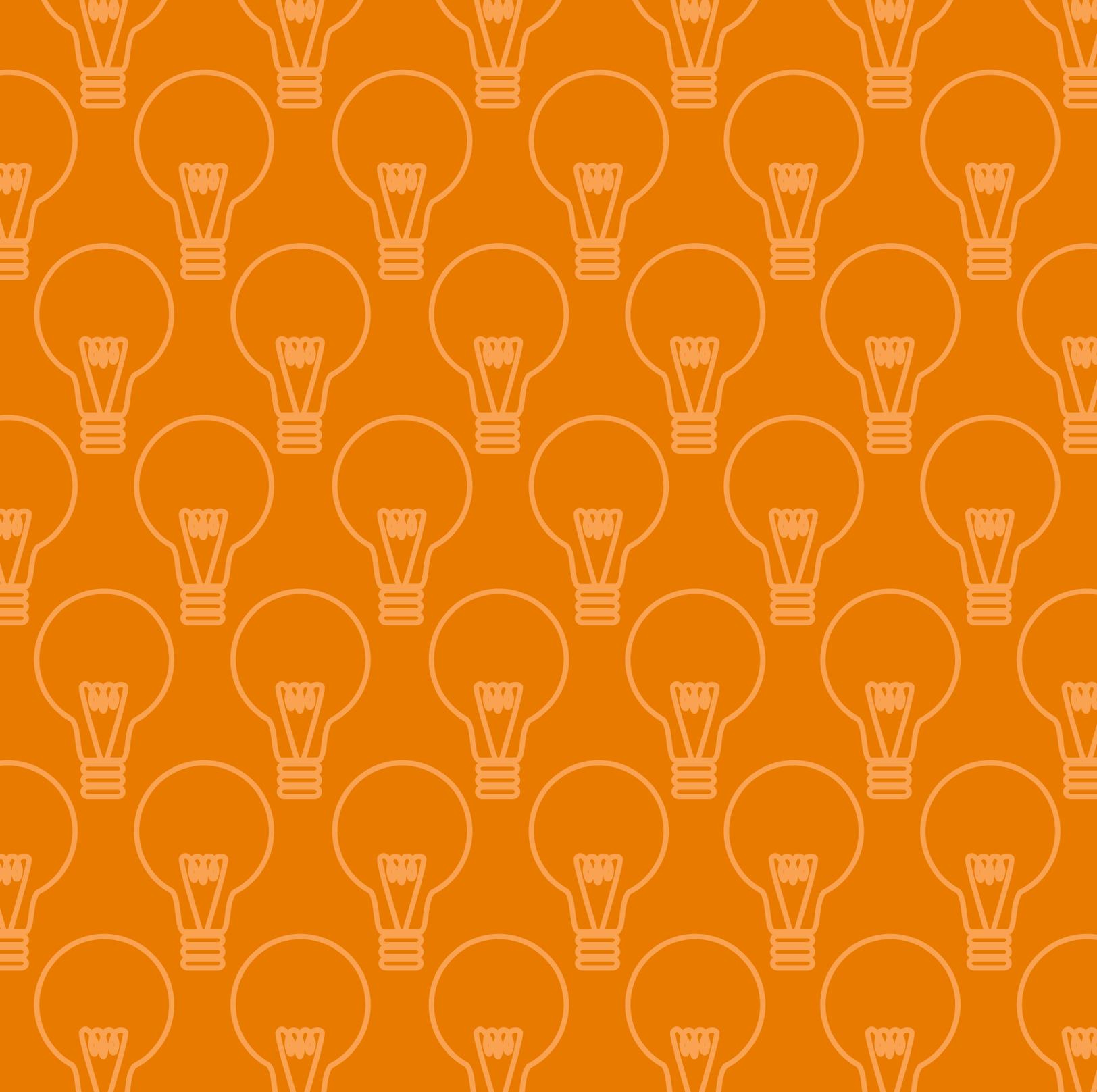
So, what exactly is the kind of bad writing that can compromise benefits like these? Josh Bernoff, a former Senior VP at Forrester Research and best-selling author, says such writing may be “too long, poorly organized, unclear, filled with jargon, and imprecise.”

Those problems force readers to slow down to work through what the author is trying to say. In other words, bad writing takes valuable time to decode. By contrast, good writing:

- Saves potentially huge amounts of money;
- Saves hundreds or thousands of hours of time per organization;
- Facilitates action and positive, desired outcomes; and
- Improves productivity and streamlines operational efficiency.

In fact, as the following chapters illustrate, writing well yields a bounty of benefits for both individual writers and the organizations that employ them.

25% more productive	McKinsey and Company estimates that improved communication and collaboration could raise worker productivity 20 to 25 percent by making them more efficient at dealing with email, collaborative tasks, and more.
81% affected	Josh Bernoff studied the cost impacts of bad business writing. He found that 81 percent of people who do a lot of reading for their work agree that poorly written material wastes much of their time.
173 hours saved annually	One study of 4,000 employees found that almost half (46 percent) did not understand instructions provided by their manager, and employees estimated they wasted as much as 40 minutes a day trying to get clarification. That adds up to 173 hours per year per employee of time wasted.



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