Lecture 14

Revising Business Messages

In this lecture you will learn to

• Edit your messages for content and organizational style and readability.
• Choose the most correct and most effective words to make your point.
• Rewrite the sentences to clarify the relationships among the ideas and to make your writing interesting.
• Identify the elements of paragraph.
• Choose the best design for written documents.
• Rewrite paragraphs using the appropriate development techniques.
• Proof your message for mechanics and format.

Editing your message

• Content and Organization
  – Stick to the point, the main idea, in the first paragraph.
  – In the middle highlight the key features of your stance.
  – Eliminate redundancies.

• Style and Readability
  – Re-word to stress the ‘you’ view point.
  – Clarify the relationships among ideas through placement and combination of phrases.

• Moderate the excessive Enthusiasm
  – Eliminate words that seem unfamiliar.

• Mechanics and format
  – To avoid confusion spell out the abbreviated phrases.

Evaluate your content and Organization

• After a day or two review the message for content and organization.
  – Is there a good balance between the general and the specifics?
  – Have you provided enough support?
  – Have you double checked the facts and figures?

Review your Style and Readability

• Once satisfied with the structure, review style and readability.

• Readability depends on
  – Word choice
  – Sentence length
  – Sentence structure
  – Physical appearance
Access your word choice
• The two key aspects of word choice are
  – Correctness
  – Effectiveness
• If in doubt, check it out!

Example

• Instead of
  – The data on our market share is consistent from region to region.
• Use
  – The data on our market share *are* consistent from region to region.

Plain English
• Plain English is close to spoken English and can be more easily understood.

Functional words and content words
• Functional words include
  – Conjunctions
  – Prepositions
  – Articles
  – Pronouns
• Functional words express relationships among content words.

Example

*Some objective observers of the* biscuit market *give Rio the edge in quality,* but *Gala is lauded for superior distribution.*

(the content words are in italics)

Connotation and Denotations
• Content words have both a denotative (dictionary) and a meaning and a connotative (associative) meaning.

Example

1. I have uncovered some interesting *dirt* on that Police officer.
2. My land has a fertile and dark *dirt*.

• Both sentences use ‘dirt’ but in different connotations.

Abstraction and Concreteness
• The more abstract a word, the more it is removed from the tangible, objective world of things that can be perceived with sense.
Example

- Try to Re-write the sentence without using the words in italics.
  - We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness.

Words that Communicate

- Wordsmiths are people who are concerned with being clear, concise and accurate in their use of language.
- When you edit your message, try to think like a wordsmith.

Strong Words

- Verbs and Nouns are more concrete than adverbs and adjectives.
- The more dynamic and specific the verb, the better.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid Weak Words</th>
<th>Use strong phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy businessman</td>
<td>tycoon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business prosperity</td>
<td>Boom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard times</td>
<td>slump</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Familiar Words

- You will communicate best with the words that are familiar to your reader.
- At the same time keep in mind, words familiar to one reader might be unfamiliar to another.

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid Unfamiliar Words</th>
<th>Use Familiar words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ascertain</td>
<td>Find out, learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consummate</td>
<td>Close, bring about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peruse</td>
<td>Read, study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short words

- Short words are usually more vivid than long ones and improve the readability of a document.
Last year the company sped up operations.

During the precedent year, the company accelerated productive operations.

Use Short words

Avoid Long Words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid Long Words</th>
<th>Use Short words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During the precedent year, the company accelerated productive operations.</td>
<td>Last year the company sped up operations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Camouflaged Verbs

- Turning verbs into nouns and adjectives weakens your writing.
- Watch for endings like –ion, -tion, -ing, -ment, -ant, -ent, -ance and –ency.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid Camouflaged Words</th>
<th>Use Verbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The manager undertook implementation of the rules.</td>
<td>The manager implemented the rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification of shipments occurs weekly.</td>
<td>Shipments are verified weekly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bias-Free Language

- Avoid biased language that might offend the audience.
  - Cultural Bias
  - Gender Bias
  - Racial and Ethnic Bias
  - Disability Bias

Example of gender Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Preferable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mankind</td>
<td>Humanity, human-kind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man-made</td>
<td>Artificial, synthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manpower</td>
<td>Work force, human energy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of Racial and Ethnic Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Preferable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantaged Sindhi children</td>
<td>Children from lower income families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali is a unusually tall Punjabi.</td>
<td>Ali is tall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example of Disability Bias

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Preferable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crippled workers face many barriers on the job.</td>
<td>Workers who have physical disabilities face many problems on the job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rewriting your Message

- As you edit your message you will find yourself
  - Rewriting passages
  - Sentences
  - Or even whole section

Create Effective Sentence

- Every sentence contains a subject (noun or noun equivalent) and a predicate (verb and related word)

The three types of Sentence

- To give your sentence variety use the three types of sentences
  - Simple
  - Compound
  - Complex

A Simple Sentence

- A simple sentence has a single subject and a single predicate.
  - Profits have increased in the past year.

  Subject is colored and predicate is underlined.

A Compound Sentence

- A compound sentence expresses two or more independent but related thoughts.
  - Wage rates have declined by five percent, and employee turnover has been high.

  Subject is colored and predicate is underlined

A Complex Sentence

- A complex sentence expresses one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.
  - Although you may question Ali’s abilities, you must admit that his morals are strong.

  Subject is colored and predicate is underlined
Sentence Style

- Break long sentences into shorter ones to improve readability.
- Active sentences are stronger than passive ones.
- Use passive sentences to soften bad news, to put yourself in the background, or to create an impersonal tone.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoid Passive Sentences</th>
<th>Use Active Sentences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales were increased by 32% last month.</td>
<td>Sales improved by 32% last month</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eliminate Unnecessary Words and Phrases

- Be on the lookout for
  - Inefficient phrases
  - Redundancies
  - Unneeded relative pronouns and articles

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confusing</th>
<th>Clear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project manager told the engineer last week the specifications were changed.</td>
<td>The project manager told the engineer last week that the specifications were changed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emphasize key thoughts

- Emphasize parts of a sentence by
  - Giving them more space
  - Putting them at the beginning or the end of the sentence
  - Making them the subject of the sentence

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Emphatic</th>
<th>More Emphatic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We are cutting the price to stimulate demand.</td>
<td>To stimulate the demand, we are cutting the price.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Develop Coherent Paragraphs

- Paragraphs are functional units that revolve around a single thought.
- Elements of a of the paragraph
  - Topic sentence
  - Related sentences
  - Transitional elements
Five ways to develop a paragraph
- Five ways to develop a paragraph
  - Illustrations
  - Comparisons and contrasts
  - Cause and effect
  - Classifications
  - Problems and solutions

Producing your document
- Written documents require decisions about design elements.
- Design elements include
  - White space – free of art text and art work.
  - Margins and line justifications – Left justified and rugged right gives the document an open feeling.

Design Elements
- Headings and Captions – Headings help the reader quickly identify the content.
- Type Face – refers to the physical design of the letters.
- Type styles – avoid using type styles that slow your readers down.

Example of Type face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serif Typeface</th>
<th>Sans-Serif Typeface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Times Roman is often used for text.</td>
<td>Helvetica is often used for headings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMES ROMAN IS HARDER TO READ IN ALL CAPS.</td>
<td>HELVETICA IS A CLEANER FACE EVEN IN ALL CAPS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Design Decisions
- For effective designs pay attention to
  - Consistency
  - Balance
  - Restraint
  - Detail

Proofing your Document
- Credibility is affected by your attention to detail and format.
- Use grammar and spell checkers wisely.
Today we learned to

- Edit your messages for content and organizational style and readability.
- Choose the most correct and most effective words to make your point.
- Rewrite the sentences to clarify the relationships among the ideas and to make your writing interesting.
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