

# Communicate to Influence and Get What You want

# THE POWER Checklist

*“The only people in the world who can change things are those who can sell ideas”*

-- Lois Wyse

## Purpose

You write to influence others. You want them to accept your business case, agree to your new policy, follow rules or look favorably on you and your organization.

## Audience

Understanding the audience is critical. You can't influence someone unless you know what will influence them. Speak their language and speak directly to them. Focus on issues and information that will matter to them, not what you like and are comfortable with.

Written communication is a one-way discussion so it's important to give them the information they need, since they can't ask questions and you can't clarify things that aren't clear.

## Message

Develop your Single Overriding Communication Objective (SOCO) and incorporate it throughout your writing. Repeat and support the main message using structure.

## Content

- ★ Is the first sentence or paragraph of the document and each section likely to make the reader continue reading?
- ★ Do the graphics add to the writing or are they just filler?
- ★ Are you avoiding technical terms and acronyms?
- ★ Did you answer questions the reader is likely to raise?

## Format & Structure

- ★ Use an appropriate format, medium and length to suite the audience and the purpose. A memo, posting on a wall, policy or business case require different strategies.
- ★ Use visuals such as headings, tables, diagrams, bullet lists, scans/screen shots and even white space to enhance concepts and relationships. Do not over use.
- ★ Use Introductions and Summaries to help the reader know where they are and where they are going.
- ★ Break up long paragraphs to make it easier to absorb.
- ★ Use signposts to help the reader know where they have been and where they are going such as headings and symbols.
- ★ Structure information so it's easy to follow. This applies to sentences, paragraphs, sections and the entire document.

## Style

- ★ Use Active language to show action. Passive language is harder to read and understand.
- ★ Use plain language and simple words to get your point across.
- ★ Don't try to impress with your writing. It hides your message.

Writing is more about influencing others than it is about writing style. With a few fundamental techniques, your writing will be clearer and more effective. Start with the more important part of communicating: the audience, message, content, format and structure that will get the results you need, then deal with grammar and spelling.

## PREPARE

- ★ Establish the purpose.
- ★ Create your SOCO (Single Overriding Communication Objective)
- ★ Analyze the audience
- ★ Identify possible objections and questions.
- ★ Collect your facts and supporting information

## OUTLINE

- ★ Develop the overall structure and headings you need to convey the information.
- ★ Identify the important information that needs to be highlighted with effective structure
- ★ Establish where tables, illustrations, bullet lists, etc. need to support the writing.

## WRITE/WAIT

- ★ Use the outline to start writing. Follow it, but prepare to deviate as needed
- ★ Don't self edit initially. Get all your thoughts down on paper.
- ★ Periodically go back and compare to the purpose and outline
- ★ Set it aside for at least a day if possible.

## EDIT

- ★ Read your original writing from top to bottom.
- ★ Do a rough edit on content, structure and format. Be brutal. Don't be afraid to delete material (copy to another document just in case)
- ★ Do a final edit then check style and spelling.
- ★ Have someone else review it and give you feedback on whether it delivers your message and is likely to influence the reader.

## REVIEW

- ★ Re-read your newly edited material. Be critical.
- ★ Compare it with your purpose, SOCO's and what you know about your audience.
- ★ Edit it again if necessary.

## Make Your Message Stick.

- ★ Keep it Simple - language, terms and message.
- ★ Keep it Real - examples, illustrations and stories.
- ★ Keep it Honest - evidence, explanations and no fluff.
- ★ Keep it Relevant - benefits, links and address their needs.



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