

Ten Ways to Bring Out Your Writer's Best



In my 25 years of writing just about every type of marketing and corporate communications, my clients have taught me many things, including what to do to bring the best out of any writer. Here are the top ten lessons they have taught me:

1.) Orient your writer with the basics of your assignment.

What's the medium of your message? Will it be print, video, live performance or electronic? Each has its own requirements for effective communications, from style and tone to form and content. For optimum efficiency, your writer needs to be thinking in those terms from the outset.

Who is the end-client? Even if your writer is a sub-contractor, don't be afraid to let your writer know who the end-client is. No experienced, reputable subcontractor will even consider approaching your client for work. Letting your writer know who the end-user potentially connects your writer with a wealth of background and cultural information available online and otherwise.

What's your deadline? Ask your writer candidly if it's a deadline they can meet. Any writer who values their reputation will give you an answer you can trust. There's nothing for them to gain by promising something they cannot deliver.

2.) Explain the context of your assignment.

What's the purpose of your project? Is it advertising? Marketing? Public relations? Internal communications? The purpose of your project informs your writer about every aspect of the assignment, down to the grammar, vocabulary and even punctuation!

What are the demographics of your readers or viewers? Who are they? What's their age, education and economic status? What are their tastes and sensibilities? What are their interests and expectations? What do they want from your product or service?

3.) Detail your expectations.

What do you want your audience to take-away? What do you want them to think? How do you want them to feel? And, most importantly, what do you want them to do?



What style and tone would you like to see employed? Are you looking for a light-hearted approach or a dignified, authoritative approach? Would you like it to read like the Wall Street Journal or a bedtime story? One of the most effective ways of ensuring the style and tone you seek is to provide

your writer with an example written in the style and tone you're looking for. The more precisely your writer knows what you are looking for, the better able they are to meet your expectations.

4.) Give your writer the information they need to make an accurate bid.

What's the desired length of your communication? Knowing your needs in terms of word count, pages of print, video running time or minutes of speechmaking is a critical factor in making an accurate estimate.

How will you give your writer input? Will your writer need to conduct interviews, review printed materials, do Internet research or some combination of all three. This is the most variable factor in estimating how much of your writer's time will be required and how much that will cost.

5.) Specify complete production details.

What's your layout? In the case of print or website writing, the layout determines the amount and organization of copy needed. If it's a four-page spread, information will need to be organized into four segments. For a website, it's the sitemap that tells your writer how to organized the content.

What's your production budget? In the case of video scriptwriting, your writer needs to know what level of production values to write into the script. Is there budget for an on-camera spokesperson? A celebrity narrator? 3-D animation? A good writer knows how to tailor production values to fit your budget whatever it is.



6.) Provide all the input you can.

You can't provide a good writer with too much input. An experienced writer is skilled in sorting through stacks of information and pulling out those pieces most relevant to the task at hand.

7.) Put your writer in direct contact with the end-client.

Whether your writer is in-house or you've hired a writer as a sub-contractor, it's in your best interests to put your writer in direct communication with the project's end-client. Your writer's most useful input comes directly from the end-client.

Giving them direct access almost guarantees a higher quality final product and more efficient use of your writer's time.

8.) Present first-draft feedback from all reviewers at once.

If more than one person needs to review and approve each draft of your communication, presenting your writer with input from all parties involved at once saves time and money. Making three or four revisions takes three or four times as longer as making one revision.

9.) Correct the content, comment on the style and tone.



When reviewing your writer's work for any needed revisions, using editor's marks and inserting alternative wording for accuracy or legal compliance saves your writer time – but rewording for style and tone may be counterproductive. If you're uncomfortable with the style or tone your writer has employed, stating your concerns may be more productive than re-wording, as your writer may shut down their own creativity rather than offend your sense of authorship and the quality of your project may suffer.

10.) Share the results of your project with your writer.

If you intend to use the same writer again, let them learn. Letting your writer know how well their work met your objectives informs your writer about your audience and your market, verifies or corrects their assumptions and enables them to serve you ever better next time.