

Get your way with words at work - overcome the common myhtakes

The headline you've just read probably breaks all the rules of English grammar. Tough. When we write in our work environment, it is because we want something - we write for effect. Here are some common myhtakes:

 By Sid Peimer 26 Jul 2004

The Myhtake: The reader must be fully informed.

The Reality: You are paid a salary to perform a function - I should not have to wade through your entire thinking process to get the picture. Your reader/audience only need to be adequately informed.

The Myhtake: People want to read/hear what you have to say.

The Reality: Your information is usually not their first choice of activity for the day. A brand review is a harsh reality that they need to accept - no need to increase the pain.

The Myhtake: Presentation is less important than content.

The Reality: They're equally important. Look at this excellent example Robert Gentle provides in his book '[Read This!](#)' - there's no way I'm going to plod through the unstructured ramble on the left.



[Click to view example](#)

The Myhtake: I know how to write - I learnt that at school.

The Reality: You know how to string words together into sentences. The result of your effort is the sentence, not the desired effect. You probably do write very well, and could probably publish a poem or two, but that's not what the game is about - writing for effect.

Here are some pointers

1. Keep it simple - no one ever complained that something was too easy to read. Don't try and establish yourself an expert through expert-sounding words.
2. Air is free - use it. A clean, uncluttered layout makes for an appetising read, which will be more keenly consumed.
3. Get your headlines to do some of the work. Instead of 'Introduction', dive straight in with: 'Repositioning the brand in a fast-food society'.
4. The more words there are, the more 'expensive' your communication (people are paying you with their time). Phrases like 'In the first instance' instead of '1' are warning signs. Or 'The research we have in our possession illustrates', where 'Research shows' would do.

ABOUT SID PEIMER

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