



Getting Started on Your Business Writing Projects

By Dr. Linda Hancock

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Hancock has written a regular weekly column entitled “All Psyched Up” for newspapers in two Canadian provinces for more than a dozen years. Over the years, her readers and clients have said that they have benefited from her common-sense solutions, wisdom, and sense of humour. Dr. Linda Hancock, the author of “Life is An Adventure...every step of the way” and “Open for Business Success” is a Registered Psychologist who has a private practice in Medicine Hat. She can be reached at 403-529-6877 or through email office@drlindahancock.com

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So often I meet very intelligent individuals who claim that they have problems putting their thoughts on paper. I read articles and reports from professionals at times and either don't understand what the work was about or end up being confused by the end of it because of poor structure or complex language.

As a newspaper columnist, I am aware that most editors aim to write at a level that the average twelve year old will understand.

Warren Buffet, the billionaire businessman, reformed the way that Annual Reports for his companies were crafted. He instructed his staff to imagine that they were preparing a report for his sister, who did not understand anything about business. He challenged them to write in a manner that would help her to know exactly what was happening in the companies after returning to the country from a two year vacation. He wanted it to be very simple for any person who ever picked up an Annual Report to learn from it.

There are several things that you can do to improve your written work as follows:

1. **Change your self-talk** - I have found it very interesting over the years to note that my psychology clients tend to say what they do not want instead of what they do want. Then they are surprised when they get it! Stating "I can't sleep" or "My marriage doesn't have a chance" or "I will likely always be broke" can be self-fulfilling prophesies. Try saying what you do want and notice the difference that this will make in your life. "I am improving my writing skills every day" is a far better message than "I am a horrible writer". Remember, it is important that you say what you want instead of what you don't want.
2. **Set up an appropriate writing environment** - Make sure that you have the proper tools to do your writing. If you prefer using long-hand, have notepads and good pens for the job. Those who prefer writing while typing need to have a computer and printer that have features which will save you some time and produce a professional product. You will also need a physical space that offers a clean work area, comfortable chair and silence. Don't try to convince yourself that writing at the kitchen counter while making dinner, typing into an iPhone while riding a bus or jotting notes between clients will give you satisfaction or the results that you desire. Oh, and those who think that they work better with a television or radio playing in the background are just kidding themselves. Any form of noise is a distraction that will not help you.
3. **Choose a time when you will not be interrupted** - I prefer to write all of my reports after the professional building (where I have an office) is closed for the day. This prevents traffic from just "stopping in" for a casual chat. I never answer my telephone, reply to emails or take text messages when I am writing. Choose a time of the day when you are most alert and schedule your writing into a block during that timeframe.