



Business Writing Skills *Workshop*

OVERVIEW

This workshop teaches participants how to consistently organize and easily write clear, compelling and concise documents and e-mails so their readers will be able to understand and/or act on them.

Number of participants: up to 12 participants with 1 coach.

Format: Workshop delivered in one half-day session.

Coaching is highly interactive and supportive. Participants will own and use the skills immediately through the combination of expert coaching, layered skill development, and easy-to-use retention tools.

Pre-Program Assignment: Participants are asked to bring a single-page written document or e-mail they have previously written. The purpose of that document should be to inform the reader about a topic or influence the reader to take action.



Workshop Outline

Welcome & Introduction: We share the agenda for the workshop and review what business writing is. We talk about how business writing evolved from the writing we learned throughout our education, as well as the prominent habits we see today.

Initial Skills Assessment: Each participant's pre-program document is reviewed on the screen against an 'Initial Skills Assessment Checklist'. The purpose of this is to level-set present writing skills from a readers perspective.

Writing Skills

- **Grammar Pre-Test with Partner:** Working together with a partner, participants take a short grammar test taken from the *Blue Book of Grammar* (which each participant receives). The four areas are:
 - Subject/Verb Agreement
 - Effective Writing
 - Commas
 - Writing Numbers... (Note: you can select different grammar sections from the book)
- **Working in teams,** each team reviews one of the above grammar areas from the *Blue Book of Grammar* and shares with the full group what the correct answers are and why.
- **Identify Your Reader:** Participants are asked to consider their reader based on the following topics:
 - Who specifically are you writing to?
 - Will this information be familiar or new to your reader?
 - What is their attitude toward the subject of the document?
 - Specifically identify, when the reader is done reading the document:
 - What do you want them to specifically **Know** or
 - What do you want them to specifically **Do**?



- **Organize Your Message:** Two message formats are shared with participants.
 - **Do This**, if your purpose is to have your reader take a specific action.
 - **Forms of Influence:** We introduce the key elements used to persuade others.
 - **Know This**, if your purpose is to inform, update or educate your read about a specific subject.

WRITE EXERCISE: Participants edit their pre-program document using the message organization formats.

Readability

- **Write your document so it is 'readable':** The three key components of readability are:
 - **Message Up Front:** Participants write their message 'up front' in the document.
 - **Tone:** Participants write as if they are 'speaking' to their reader. This includes using personal words & pronouns, direct vs. tentative language, being specific and minimizing or eliminating 'Zero Words'.
 - **Visual Format:** Participants use a mix of paragraphs, headers, bullets, bold and underlines, italics, highlighting, quotes, graphics and color so their document is more easily read and understood.
- **Writing e-mails and e-mail protocol are reviewed with participants:**
 - State the subject in the subject box.
 - Write the message in the e-mail preview pane.
 - We discuss attachments, CC's, BCC's, tone, Reply's, and when to pick up the phone.

WRITE EXERCISE: Participants edit their document again using the Readability techniques and review with a partner.



Review each participant's initial and re-written document against the Readability Checklist: In Word, both documents are displayed on the screen at the front of the room (side-by-side). As a group, the documents are reviewed against the Readability Checklist introduced earlier in the workshop.

Post Workshop Assignment (Kirkpatrick level 3): Each attendee is asked to e-mail a document (e-mail or Word) to the coach who will then provide written feedback on that document based on the skills learned in the workshop.

Program Evaluation, Retention Tools & Close

- **Retention materials each participant receives:**
 - The Blue Book of Grammar & Punctuation, by Jane Straus (spectacular, easy-to-use resource book)
 - Exercise packet
 - Jump drive with all materials and writing formats in electronic form
 - Tip Card summarizing all techniques shared during the Workshop