



Jack E. Appleman

If your role includes helping people enhance their careers, be sure to explain to them that poor writing can short-circuit their ability to climb to leadership roles.

Don't Let Poor Writing Stifle Company Growth

Writing typically has been viewed as a soft skill that would be nice to improve, but not worth the time or money to invest in training. Most companies are more likely to invest in training for sales, project management, budgeting, or other skills that are easier to link to the bottom line. But in reality, poor writing equals low productivity. And in this economic recession, productivity is essential because employees are being asked to do more with less.

The latest studies reveal that employees who write poorly waste countless hours, which correlates to wasted dollars. Poorly written documents can cause employees to reread instructions, perform tasks incorrectly, and miscommunicate with their customers. The good news is that business writing can be taught on the fundamental principles of clarity, conciseness, and organization.

You, as learning professionals, are responsible for employee performance at your company or your client's company, so it is imperative that you pay attention to the overall writing quality of its employees. Managers at various levels and would-be managers can ruin their opportunities for advancement if they continually write documents that are unclear, riddled with grammatical mistakes, and offensive to their subordinates or clients.

You need to convey to people at all levels of the organization that writing clearly demonstrates that they can

- clearly understand the problem or situation
- see how it affects the big picture of the organization
- recommend logical, easy-to-follow next steps
- explain who should do what going forward
- empathize with subordinates, supervisors, and peers.

If your role includes helping people enhance their careers, be sure to explain to them that poor writing can short-circuit their ability to climb to leadership roles. If they can't articulate on their résumés their leadership qualities, then they'll write dull cover letters and miss out on opportunities to advance to the next level.

For the thousands of workers who find themselves faced with new assignments, more responsibilities, and too little time to worry about communication skills, the ability to write and communicate in a clear and concise fashion is essential.

Change the culture of the workplace and the attitudes of the employees by stressing the importance of good writing skills, because in today's competitive business market, employees need to deliver information quickly and accurately to a wide array of audiences. That's what separates good companies from great companies.

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Appleman is the author of *10 Steps to Successful Business Writing*, published by ASTD Press.

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T+D is published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)

090938.63250

