

## **Write it Well: How Training Your Employees to Be Good Writers Can Save You Time and Money**

Writing well is critical for business, but many of us learn writing through trial and error, relying on our post-secondary or even high school writing skills. Business writing is a skill in its own right that needs thoughtful practice if we want to do it well.

When your employees write well, your entire organization benefits. With good writing, you have clear documents that people want to read and understand easily. There is a reduced need for questions, clarifications and rewrites. Customers and employees are happier when they read good writing.

### **The Challenges of Poor Writing**

It can be difficult to convert an organization's written documents into time and dollars. Most people are not full time writers, so it's hard to see how much of an employee's salary is spent on writing time. Because of this conversion difficulty, too often we don't spend enough time focusing on the writing skills of our employees. This can lead to multiple challenges.

#### ***Confusing, Difficult to Read Documents***

If your organization's documents aren't written well, they can cause confusion and be difficult to read. Have you ever read an email or report that wasn't clear? You likely had to read it multiple times. Maybe you had to go back to the writer for clarification.

If you misunderstand the message the writer is trying to convey, you might end up making a wrong decision. What if you read a proposal and the costs and benefits of the proposed action were unclear and incomplete? Or what if you read a safety manual that didn't contain clear steps? Unclear documents can cause frustration and more serious problems.

#### ***Unnecessary Revisions and Follow-Ups***

When documents are poorly written, they often need to be revised or rewritten. What if your communications staff prepared an organization-wide newsletter that was difficult to read? You would likely send it back for revisions, delaying the release of the newsletter.

Sometimes these poor documents don't get sent back, but are sent out to employees, customers or the general public. When readers see these documents, they often go back to the source for clarification. Your organization could be bombarded with calls and emails if your poor documents receive a wide release.

#### ***Upset Customers and Irritated Employees***

When poor documents are sent, customers may be upset. They might come to wrong conclusions about your products and your company. Maybe they will go to one of your competitors instead.

Employees also don't like to receive poor communications. It's irritating when people have to take time out of their busy days to re-read documents or follow-up with the writer.

### ***Loss of Time and Money***

All of these challenges can waste time and money for your organization. If your employees don't have adequate writing skills, they likely spend more time composing and revising documents. This is time that can't be spent on something else.

When you need revisions or have to answer too many follow-up questions, you are also wasting money. You are spending more money on staff time to have your employees make these revisions. You may have to re-print documents or set aside more employees to answer incoming questions. You may also lose sales if your documents are poor and unclear.

No organization can afford to waste money over poorly written documents. So what can you do to improve the writing skills of your employees?

### **Solution: Use Training to Help Your Employees Be Better Writers**

Most employees want to be good writers. Too often, they just don't have the skills. Most people's writing education comes from school—high school or post secondary. Writing essays is not the same thing as writing business letters and emails. Essays usually have designated word counts, so students learn to pad their documents with unnecessary information or repetitions to make sure they don't come up short. This is not what you want in a business document.

Our formal education often ends in our early twenties, but we'll be asked to write business documents until we retire. We can't be expected to keep up a skill without thoughtful practice. We also may not learn about new trends in business writing without taking formal training.

The best way for employees to learn consistent and practical business writing skills is through training. The training could be informal—self-directed or working with a mentor—or it could be in a formal course structure.

### ***What Does a Training Program Typically Include?***

A training program might focus on the following areas of business writing:

- Writing with clarity and conciseness

- Using effective grammar and usage techniques
- Writing with plain language
- Learning to write specific document types, such as reports or emails
- Using proper formatting to help make documents clear and readable

You may look for one training program that works for all employees. Or, if you have a larger organization, you might want to tailor training to the needs of smaller groups of employees.

### ***The Benefits of Training***

How does a training program benefit employees and your organization?

#### **Save Time and Money**

When employees have proper business writing skills, they save your organization time and money. They can write more quickly. They are also more likely to get it right the first time. This results in fewer revisions and follow-up questions. If your documents are clear, your existing customers will be happier.

#### **Improve the Credibility and Professional Image of Your Organization**

When you put out clear and concise documents, you improve your image with employees, customers and potential customers. These documents show a commitment to clarity and quality. They tell readers you know what you are doing and you will be easy to work with.

#### **Improve Employee Morale**

Improve morale with clear, easy to read documents. Employees receive many internal communications such as memos, emails, and policies and procedures. When these documents are clear, they are a pleasure to read. Removing a source of employee frustration—unclear writing that wastes times—can improve morale.

#### **Gain New Customers**

Potential customers are drawn to organizations with clear communications. If your website is hard to understand or your sales materials are too difficult to read, potential customers will turn away. No one wants to waste time trying to decipher unclear documents. On the other hand, clear and easy-to-read documents draw people in. If you avoid the legalese and business-speak often present in business writing, you will stand out to your potential customers.

### **What to Look for in a Business Communications Training Provider**

There are many training companies out there eager for your business, but not all are created equal. When looking for a company to help improve your organization's business writing, here are six things you should consider.

### ***Needs Assessments***

You want a provider who will come into your organization and do a thorough needs assessment. To create effective training, the provider first needs to know what type of documents employees produce and what skills employees already have. This ensures the course design will respond to the specific needs of your organization.

### ***Tailored Training Solutions***

Some providers only offer “canned” training. They do the same training with every organization, regardless of that organization's needs. Training costs your organization money, so it's important to get it right. Ensure you choose a provider who can tailor its content for you. You want customized training that reflects your environment.

### ***A Variety of Training Methods***

To get the training you and your employees need, look for a provider who offers multiple solutions for training delivery. Some providers only offer in-class or online solutions. You want one with flexibility to deliver training in multiple ways. This helps ensure the training is customized for the needs of your organization.

### ***Qualified Trainers***

The provider you select should use qualified trainers with experience in business communications training. You want professionals with exceptional skills who can provide practical examples to help your employees. If you are unsure about the background of the trainers employed by your selected provider, ask about their experience, education and certification.

### ***Multiple Levels of Evaluation***

The work isn't done once the training is over. If you want to understand what your employees have learned and how they are using their training, you need to do multiple levels of evaluation. Many providers only do one level of evaluation—learner reaction.

While it's important to know how employees feel about the training, it isn't enough. You want to know what they've learned and how they are applying their learning. This will help you determine your return on investment—was the training worth the cost?

## ***Support of Learning Outside the Classroom***

There are providers who leave after the training is done and you never hear from them again. Instead, choose a provider who is willing to help with the transfer of learning from the classroom to the practical working environment. Choose someone willing to be a resource after the formal learning is done. This will help ensure your employees can apply what they've learned.

## **The Eclectic Communications Training Program**

Eclectic Communications has been providing business communications training solutions for almost 20 years and uses high quality trainers and instruction methods.

The advantages of our training program include:

### ***Needs Assessments***

Every training program starts with a thorough needs assessment. We come to you and meet with your employees to ensure we create the training you need. We can create online questionnaires to confirm the experience and skills of the employees who will participate in the training. This needs assessment also serves as the foundation for our evaluation program.

### ***Tailored Training Solutions***

Our training is always tailored to the needs of the organization. We customize the content to make it reflect the organization's environment and realities and make it applicable to the actual performance requirements of the learners.

We offer blended learning solutions with clear learning objectives. We do in-person class sessions, which can be as short as a half-day and up to as many days as you need to accomplish your objectives. We offer much of our content in online courses that can be completed at the learner's pace. We offer webinars and have created a series of books that can be used as a reference by learners after the training is complete. Finally, we also offer one-on-one coaching.

Our training is not just talking at learners. We offer interactive courses, where your employees will have the chance to contribute their knowledge and practice their new writing skills. They will receive immediate feedback about their performance. This helps them to remember and apply their learning once they get back to work.

Here is a sample of topics that Eclectic offers:

- Learning to write with plain language, clarity and conciseness
- Writing effective letters
- Creating effective reports, proposals, and policies and procedures
- Writing email that works
- Using proper grammar and usage techniques
- Learning effective editing skills
- Writing effective meeting minutes

### ***Qualified Trainers***

Eclectic works with qualified trainers with multiple years of experience. Most of our trainers also hold the Certified Training and Development Practitioner (CTDP) designation from the Canadian Society for Training and Development (CSTD), Canada's largest training organization.

### ***Four Levels of Evaluation***

Our work does not end when the training is done. We offer four levels of evaluation:

- Reaction
- Learning
- Performance
- Results

Reaction measures how learners feel about the training, and we do this after every session. Because we offer practical, hands-on training, we can also measure how well employees have learned, and are able to apply, new information.

We can help an organization evaluate how employee performance has changed after training. This in turn can be tied to results. You can learn how changes in employee performance have improved the results of your organization. With four levels of evaluation, an organization can better determine if training was worth the cost and effort.

### ***Support Beyond the Classroom***

Finally, Eclectic will also support the transfer of learning outside of the classroom. We create learner manuals that are easy to reference to help employees use their new skills when they go back to work. We also offer tip sheets, a blog and a newsletter that learners can access after the training. We make our trainers available for questions and support after training is completed, even months down the road.

## **Contact Eclectic Communication**

To begin the first step in improving the business communication skills of your employees, please contact us at [administration@eclectic.ca](mailto:administration@eclectic.ca) or (204) 221-0584.