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Focus

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Taking the Time to be Brief

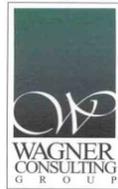
Mark Twain famously said, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." Does that apply to you? If it does, then consider this: taking time up front to create clear and concise communication saves time in the long run because people act more quickly on a concept their brain can easily grasp. Too many words and too much information slow down decision making.

Here are some simple tips to improve your written communication.

- Begin with an authoritative statement ("The roof will leak during the next heavy rain") if you are trying to sell a course of action.
- Use small words and short sentences. No more than two commas per sentence. The best opening paragraph is often a short sentence.
- Short paragraphs work better.
- Dense text intimidates the reader. Use bullet points, indentions, and bold or italicized text to bring attention to important points.
- Use active voice ("We fixed the roof" rather than "The roof was fixed").
- Minimize prepositional phrases, especially at the beginning of a sentence
 - ~~Because of this~~, the committee voted to adjourn, or . . .
 - The committee voted to adjourn because of this.
- Use power words: Imagine, facts, consequences, mission, value, respect, impact, and accountability.
- Provide context and explain relevance with "so that" phrasing ("We need to repair the roof so that we can continue our mission during the heavy rain.")

Finally, proofread. Ruthlessly remove weenie words (try, I'm only, I'm just, maybe, etc.) and unnecessary prepositional phrases (~~In order to fix the problem~~, we called a roofer [to fix the problem], ~~If you need help with that~~, call me [if you need help with that], etc.) until you whittled your comments down to tight, clear prose.

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I train people of all ages and job functions
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