A
is for
audience

5
STEP GUIDE TO
EFFECTIVE EDITORIAL

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Blackwood

You've chosen your design agency and you've briefed the designer. But what about the words?

Good agencies will accommodate changes right up to the 11th hour but the design process will go more smoothly if you finalise the text of your editorial article before the agency starts design.

Here are 5 steps to ensuring that any content you're producing hits the mark with your audience.

1

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

This is fundamental to successful writing. Think about what your readers already know and don't patronise them with unnecessary information.
Tell them what they want to know first – get to the point quickly and clearly.
Above all, answer your audiences' 'what's in it for me?' question. Here's an example of how to tailor your messages for different audiences…

Imagine your company has invented a new widget that has the potential to halve the time it takes to make your products. How will this affect your different stakeholders? The public will want to know why the widget is groundbreaking. Your customers will want to know if they can get their product more quickly and if it will cost more as a result. Your employees will want to know whether it may lead to job losses or more orders and how it will affect their pay. You're conveying essentially the same information in three different ways.

STEP 1

Don't hide your message

IS THERE ONE KEY POINT YOU WANT TO GET ACROSS? INCLUDE IT AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE, EXPAND THROUGHOUT THE ARTICLE AND REINFORCE
IN YOUR CONCLUSION

2

SET THE RIGHT TONE

Take your lead on tone of voice from your company's corporate guidelines. Is your company cheeky and irreverent or serious and thoughtful? Adopt a tone of voice that suits the company. Plain English is key: using everyday speech will make your content clear and accessible.

Does your company have an editorial style guide as part of its brand guidelines? This should cover issues such as how you refer to the company, whether job titles and departments are upper or lower case, and whether to use full names, first names or surnames when referring to people in print.

Journalists usually opt for lower case for job titles and refer to people by surname but whatever choice you make, be consistent.

3

REMEMBER LESS CAN BE MORE

Be clear - particularly if you have a serious point to get across. Get to the point quickly. Use short sentences. Readers (especially corporate audiences) rarely have the luxury of time, so don't make them work hard to understand your point or they'll switch off or move on.

Keep your sentences short. Average business sentence length is 15-20 words. Studies show that readers find sentences of 8 words or less very easy to read; 11 words easy; 14 words fairly easy; 17 words standard; 21 words fairly difficult; 25 words difficult and 29 words or more, very difficult.

STEP 3
FOR CORRECTING COMMON GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES
WE USE GRAMMARLY.COM

4

CLARITY AAG*

It's best to avoid acronyms if at all possible. Very few are understandable at first reference and most are only of use to a specialised audience that has seen them several times before. In addition, many mean different things to different audiences so context is everything.

For example ICE could mean Institution of Civil Engineers or International Currency Exchange. Where possible replace the acronym with a noun such as the committee, the organisation, the inquiry. If you must use an acronym spell it out the first time you use it. Exceptions are the ones that need no explanation, eg BBC, NATO etc.

*At a glance
abbreviations.com/acronyms/generalbus/

STEP 4
IF YOU ONLY HAVE TIME TO READ ONE BOOK
WE SUGGEST

The Elements of Style
by William Strunk and E.B. White

5

BE FUTURE PROOF

Allow yourself time to take a break and come back to your article before you submit it. Proof reading before you start the design process will save you time and money in the long run.

Check your facts, and then double-check. Chances are, some readers will know the subject better than you. Get your facts wrong and you will lose credibility with them. If in doubt, leave it out.

If you need help and advice on any aspect of editorial, talk to your agency. Whether you need someone to help you write, or just an independent eye for proofreading, they will be able to help.

STEP 3
IF YOU ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO EMPLOY THE PROFESSIONALS
WHY NOT TRY A SHORT COURSE?
CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE.

5

STEPS

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