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510/724-9507

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jeff@thenewletterguy.com

WRITE WELL TO SELL! — PROSPECTS AND CUSTOMERS LEERY OF LOOSE LANGUAGE

By Craig Harrison and Jeff Rubin

Despite their attention to dazzling four-color brochures, letter-perfect newsletters and exquisitely designed, double-sided business cards, business people constantly undermine their opportunities for new customers through sloppy language skills and inappropriate word choices in their communications.

STOP BEING SLOPPY . . . PRECISION IS PREFERRED

Professionalism counts in the business world. Using language properly shows

good taste, good schooling and an understanding of professional protocols.

• **Affect vs. effect:**

Affect is a verb meaning *to change or influence*: "Good writing skills can affect your ability to get new business."

Effect is a noun meaning *a result or outcome*: "Your language skills can produce the desired effect."

Effect is also a verb meaning *to bring about*: "You can effect a positive outcome by demonstrating good language skills."

• **Unique:** Sadly, very unique isn't. *Unique* means *one of a kind, unparalleled, without peer*. Adding "very" in front of unique is as meaningless as doing something 110%.

• **Figuratively vs. literally:** When you say you could eat a horse, you are speaking



CRAIG HARRISON (L) AND JEFF RUBIN SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT GOOD LANGUAGE SKILLS WHEREVER THEY TRAVEL. IN THIS CASE, IT'S AT WRIGLEY FIELD IN CHICAGO.

figuratively. Only the Donner party meant it literally. One consultant told his client he literally killed to get a past

job. Really? Who wants to hire a murderer?
• **Degrees** are important. So is understanding the

degree to which you are in favor or opposed to something. When you tell people you are 360° opposed to something, they won't hire you since you obviously failed geometry. 180° denotes complete opposition. Once you've come 360° you've come full circle and are back where you started — without passing Go!

• **More than vs. over:**

Over is a preposition and generally refers to spatial relationships: "The plane flew over San Francisco." Use *more than*: "Silicon Valley has more than 10,000 programming jobs."

• **Myriad vs. a myriad**

of: *Myriad* means *many*: "He has a myriad of problems" is incorrect. That's saying, "He has a many of problems." Instead, say, "He has myriad problems, not the least of which is a lack of command of the English language."

• **Money is important:**

Don't ask about *renumeration* if you want to be paid. There's no such word. The correct word is *remunerate*, which means *to give someone money or to be paid*, which you will be when you use it.

• **Irregardless** is not a word. Regardless of what you've heard, the correct word is *regardless*.

• **Interred vs. interned:**

Interned refers to serving time behind bars, as in a jail or prison. As bad as that is, being *interred* is worse, because that means you were buried. You'll never get

ahead if you're already six feet under!

• **Presidents and Olympians**

are forever. When you speak of a United States president such as Bill Clinton, George Herbert Walker Bush or Jimmy Carter, they're still President Clinton, Bush or Carter.

When you refer to Olympians Mary Lou Retton, Billy Mills or Peggy Fleming, they're still Olympians (not past or former Olympians). Even Olympic competitors who don't win a medal are Olympians because they were on the Olympic team.

ON PRONUNCIATION . . .

These days alternate pronunciations are plentiful: *harassment* (accent on the first syllable, which is correct, or the second syllable, which is not), *nuclear* (nuclear is acceptable until 2008), and *database* (pronounced DAH-ta-base or DAY-ta-base).

By the way, the singular of *data* is *datum*, the plural of *stadium* is *stadia* and *media*

is plural for *medium*.

TV is a *medium*. Radio, too. Print (newspapers) is another. TV, radio and newspapers together are forms of *media*.

Customers do business with those they know, like and trust. Speaking and writing well builds trust with customers. It's a sign of your professionalism, suggesting you will adhere to other standards of good business: honesty, fairness and service.

When you speak and write well the world respects you and wants to do business with you.

Professional speaker Craig Harrison founded Expressions of Excellence!™ to help people at all levels express their excellence as leaders, communicators and professionals. He may be reached at www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com, e-mailed at excellence@craigspeaks.com or called at 510/547-0664.

Reach Jeff Rubin, The Newsletter Guy®, at 510/724-9507, 877/588-1212 or jeff@thenewletterguy.com. There's lots of free information on newsletter writing and design at www.thenewletterguy.com.

Jeff is also the founder of National Punctuation Day, which is celebrated September 24. Check out incorrectly punctuated photos at www.nationalpunctuationday.com.

I'D APPRECIATE A REFERRAL

I'm trying to build my business and I need your help.

Will you refer me to a company that needs help with its existing newsletter, or a business, association or non-profit you've worked with that has talked about doing a newsletter but hasn't done one?

I'm looking for companies, associations and non-profits that are seeking more effective ways to communicate with their employees, customers, members and donors.

I would not only appreciate your referral, but I will reward you handsomely if it turns into my customer. Thanks for your help.

— Jeff Rubin

TEN GUARANTEED-TO-WORK BUSINESS GROWTH STRATEGIES

- 1 Don't be cheap. Present a polished image.
- 2 Get in front of your customers at least six times a year.
- 3 Return calls promptly.
- 4 Identify and sell your value.
- 5 Be a problem solver.
- 6 Set fair rates that attract the clients you want. This way you won't have to charge for every breath you take.
- 7 Be reliable.
- 8 Maintain high standards of integrity, ethics and quality.
- 9 Say thank you.
- 10 Be patient. It takes time to grow, so take a long term view of your business.

Spend less time chasing money and more time building relationships. Successful businesses depend on relationships, and relationships take time.

Craig Harrison's Most Popular Communication Presentations



Inspiring Stellar Sales and Service Leadership



• Speaker • Trainer
• Consultant



Develop Your Workplace Communication Quotient (CQ)!

Enhance your **credibility** in the workplace through more **confident and credible communication**. Make honesty your policy, learn how to give and receive constructive criticism, learn to turn rejection into redirection, manage upwards and enhance your reputation in the workplace.



Listening — The Forgotten Communication Skill

Miscommunication as a result of **poor listening skills** costs millions of dollars, countless hours of wasted time. Have we gotten your attention yet? Learn about listening vs. hearing, uncover the meta-message in communications and learn how gender and other variables alter listening skills. Learn to become a powerful listener.



Mastering E-Mail Communication

Learn to send **effective, service-oriented E-mails**. Learn its advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses. Develop your checklist for when you should (and shouldn't) use E-Mail, learn the best use of subject lines, signature lines, white space, CC and BCC, and actually edit real life e-mails for readability and simplicity!



Effective Meeting Management Avoid An All-Meet Diet

Whether you're leading, facilitating or just suffering from meetings, this presentation teaches you everything you need to know to plan, stage and recover from **meetings**, be they weekly, board or the shareholder variety. Addresses agendas, rules of order, addressing challenges, and how to manage meeting monsters!



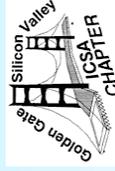
3151 Eton
Avenue
Suite 102
Berkeley, CA
94705
USA

Direct:
(510) 547-0664

FAX:
(888) 450-0664

Craig@
ExpressionsOf
Excellence.com

www.
ExpressionsOf
Excellence.com



Past President
International
Customer Service
Association
for the SF Bay Area
&
Silicon Valley



Past
President
National
Speakers
Association,
Northern California
Chapter