Module 3. Get rid of a corporate voice

This is the third module of your Enchanting Business blogging course and this week we talk about how to get rid of a corporate voice. There are two sides of getting rid of a corporate voice: one is choosing the right words—that's what we talk about next week. This week we talk about how to write engaging and dynamic sentences.

The question this week is really how can you keep your readers spellbound and Henrietta finds this really strange because when she talks to John (her ideal reader) she's engaging, she's dynamic, she's enthusiastic. They're having fun together and there's never a dull moment.

But when she writes her blog post, John can't help himself but yawn. So why is this? When she writes she imagines herself talking to John, but her writing is still dull.

This has to do with editing. You can't write dynamic content in one go, you really have to edit your text so it doesn't sound like dull writing and you have to make it more dynamic. So that's what we work on this week.

Let's have a look at an example; this is a very bad corporate sounding sentence. *"A corporate tone of voice is difficult to read, boring for your readers and is generally recognized by the frequent use of complicated words, the appearance of particularly long sentences, and a passive voice."*

Well, did you fall asleep yet? I nearly did. This sentence has 34 words which is far too long for a sentence. You have words like *generally* and *particularly* that are unnecessary. You have a passive voice, I'll explain this in more detail in a separate PDF but the passive voice really sounds corporate and dull. And then of course there's hardly any "*you*" in this sentence. It doesn't feel like the text is speaking to you as the reader.

So how can you improve it?

Well, let's have a go …

"How do you recognize a corporate tone of voice? It's boring as hell because it uses long sentences, difficult words and a passive voice."

Why is this so much better? Well, the first thing is, that it's shorter and it has only eight words per sentence, that makes a huge difference. It also immediately addresses you as a reader with the word *"you"* and asks you a question, that's how it engages you as a reader. The sentence also uses the power word *hell*—this is a topic we talk about next week.

So how do you go from dull to dynamic?

There are three steps you have to take. The first is making your text more readable and that means going from long, undulating, and complicated sentences to simple and straightforward sentences. Each sentence should just communicate one simple idea.

The next step is to make your text more energetic. Rather than have monotone blocks of text where each sentence has the same length you add a few ultra-short sentences— these add rhythm to your writing.

Lastly, you make your text more engaging. Rather than sound like you're on your soap box holding a monologue you engage your reader; and you do this by using the word "*you*" and by asking questions.

So this is what we focus on this week, we're going to make your sentences more dynamic by focusing on these three steps.

These are this week's assignments: Today I want you to check your readability stats and post them in the forum and I'll talk about this in a second. Then tomorrow we work on making your content more readable. Wednesday we make your content more dynamic by using ultra-short sentences. And on Thursday we learn how to include questions to engage your reader.

So do you know are your blog posts easy to read?

There's an easy tool in Microsoft Word that helps you to check your readability stats. And if you don't know how to do it check out the PDF that's below this video. Here I just want to quickly explain the different stats you'll see.

You'll see three different sections: counts, averages and readabilities. I don't really care about counts very much. We'll focus on the averages and readability here. And when you look at the averages the main one to look at is the words per sentence and you really want that to be lower than 14. Sometimes I get my blog post as low as 9 words per sentence on average. The fewer words per sentence you have the easier it is to read your text.

The next point we work on this week is passive sentences. You want the passive sentences to be as close to zero percent as possible. In many cases you will be able to get it to zero percent.

Two more stats you might find them interesting, so let me just quickly explain this.

This statistic (Flesh Reading Ease) is a percentage and 60 percent means plain English. Anything above 60 percent is good. In this case I had nearly 70 percent which is excellent. You should be happy when you get to 60 percent or more.

And this statistic (Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level) has to do with the U.S. grade system. You want a score of 7 or lower. A grade 7 is a 12-year old, and you want to write at a level that 12 year olds find easy to understand. That doesn't mean your writing is childish, it just means that everybody, including grownups, find it easy to read.

Go and check your readability stats and post them in the forum. See you there!