

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 for this week is how to add sparkle to your writing. You learn simple editing tricks to make your writing less dull. And you can experiment with these tricks to decide how engaging and how enthusiastic you'd like your writing voice to be.

Henrietta finds it really strange that her writing voice sounds so boring because when she talks to John (her ideal reader) she's engaging; she's enthusiastic. They're having fun together and there's never a dull moment.

But when John reads her blog post, he can't help himself but yawn. So why is this? When Henrietta 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 together 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."*

Phew. Have you fallen asleep yet while I was reading that?

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 which makes content dull – you can find more details about this in a separate PDF. 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 with the word "*you*" and asks you a question. That's how the writer engages you as a reader. The sentence also uses the power word *hell*—we talk about power words again next week.

So how do you go from dull to dynamic?

Your first step is making your text more readable and that means going from long and complicated sentences to simple and straightforward sentences. Each sentence should just communicate one simple idea. One point.

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 lecturing people, you engage your reader by using the word "*you*" and by asking questions.

In the reading material for this week you find more information about each of these steps. Now, I just want to briefly discuss readability before we finish this video.

Do you know whether your blog posts are easy to read?

There's an easy tool in Microsoft Word that helps you to check your readability stats. And if you don't use Word, then there's an online alternative mentioned in the notes. The notes also explain how to check your stats. Here I just want to quickly explain the different stats you'll see.

You'll see three different sections: counts, averages and readability. I don't really care about counts very much. We'll focus on the averages and readability here. The main average to consider is the number of 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. Don't worry if you have a couple of percent.

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. Anyone 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.

That's it for today. Have a look at your readability stats and post them in the forum.

Cheers!