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The Business of Writing

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Abstract:

One of the greatest aspects of university study is the ability to learn from a wide variety of sources. Often, we assume that most of our knowledge about writing comes from our English classes. However, as a business student, I have learned many things that have helped me to become a better writer. In this essay I will address the importance of writing a purposeful thesis, creating a logical argument, using concision in writing, and making writing understandable.

The Business of Writing

Malcolm Forbes once defined diversity as “the art of thinking independently together”(psychologytoday.com). Diversity, as Forbes states, is not the differences that separate individuals from each other, but rather the different perspectives and thoughts of individuals that work together to create something more than could be created independently. The ability to communicate effectively is one of the most fundamental aspects of being successful in any area of work, and writing is a primary way that we communicate. Regardless of our background, it is important that we understand how to write effectively so that a reader can understand our purpose and act accordingly. As a business student, I have learned many things that have helped me in my writing to better able communicate my purpose in a clear way and create the type of response I want from readers. My business experiences have enabled me to become a better writer by helping me explain my purpose, creating a logical argument, using concision, and making your writing understandable.

Business writing emphasizes the importance of knowing your purpose. In a short amount of time, your main purpose in writing and its importance should be communicated to the reader. In English this synopsis of our purpose is called a thesis statement. A thesis statement is, “a short statement...that summarizes the main point of an essay, and is developed, supported, and explained in the text by means of examples and evidence”(dictionary.com). The thesis is the main driver behind the purpose of the essay and helps the reader to understand your goal. A well-defined thesis statement should clearly articulate the purpose of the essay and communicate to the reader where you are going. As a writer, when you are able to

clearly identify your thesis statement, it becomes much easier to have direction in your writing.

In my time working in the writing center, I have come to understand even more the importance of a clear thesis statement. Often, when I ask students to identify their thesis statement, they have a difficult time pinpointing it. This leads to essays that, while grammatically correct, often lack purpose and direction, leaving the reader confused. Being able to clearly explain the purpose of your essay is critical in being able to write effectively.

In an article entitled, “Good Writing is Good Business”, Melissa Brown writes, “Articulate your purpose...Be precise about it. Every single time I write a speech for a senior executive, I ask this question: ‘What do you want this audience to do as a result of hearing you speak?’ You should ask that when you’re writing for business. What result do you want to achieve?”(Brown). When writers can clearly identify their purpose, they have much more direction in their paper. Similarly, in many businesses there is a type of written statement that drives a company’s ideals, purpose, and goals. This is called a business mission statement. A business mission statement is, “a short written statement of your business goals and philosophies. [It] defines what an organization is, why it exists, and its reason for being”(entrepreneur.com). The business mission statement, just like the thesis of an essay, is the main purpose and driver behind the actions of the business.

Brown writes, “Whether its 's a single work team, a department, or a whole company, any group of people trying to get something done needs to understand its fundamental purpose”(Brown). When people understand their purpose, they are

able to have direction in the work. This is true for writing as well. Words, just as people, must work together to persuade the reader of your overall point.

The second lesson that I have learned is the importance of creating a logical argument. Often, business writing involves proposals for new projects involving spending the business's revenue. When a person writes a proposal, it must be persuasive but also logical so that management can understand why they should invest in this project and how it will benefit the company. Brown writes, "I've dedicated my working life to the pursuit of clarity. My premise is simple: Actions come from ideas. Ideas are expressed in words. And clear words have a much better chance of leading to correct actions"(Brown). If we are able to clearly explain what it is we are trying to do and why it is important, it will be much easier to lead the reader in understanding our overall purpose.

The third lesson is concision, or the ability to say what you need to in as few words as possible, is an important aspect of business writing. In business everything from multi-million dollar projects to a request to buy more pens should be able to be summed up in the subject line of an email and outlined in a one-page memo. The idea is to make your point quickly and persuasively.

Often, students have a tendency to over explain or use filler words to try to meet a certain word or page requirement. This, however, often leaves the reader confused or bored. Robert Scott wrote of concision, "There is a myth in our educational culture that a long essay is better than a short one. The art of brevity consists in removing all linguistic elements unnecessary to convey a particular message, just like marble sculptures are produced by removing excess rock (Scott).

The fourth lesson is understandability. In accounting the FASB (Financial Accounting Standards Board), a group of individuals who make the rules for the accounting world, has created a conceptual framework. One of the key aspects of the conceptual framework is the idea that all information released by companies must be able to be understood by a reasonably informed investor. For example, the balance sheet, an illustration of your business's net worth (Balance Sheet Definitions and Examples) is almost always limited to one page, even for multi-billion dollar companies. This concise summary of the company allows investors to understand the state of the company without having to comprehend the complex details of the daily goings on.

Additionally, another aspect of understandability is being able to take complicated information and explain it to others in a clear way. With accounting's debits and credits, finance's NPV and IRR, and marketing's loss leaders and price elasticity, it is difficult, even within the same organization, for each department to effectively communicate with one another.

One key aspect in being able to communicate effectively is to know who your audience is and what they understand. Brown stated, "You need to understand all you can about who you're writing to. The point is to think about the audience's needs and expectations. What they think, how they feel. And it can be very useful to have a clear image of one person to write to"(Brown). When we truly understand exactly whom we are writing to, what their expectations are, and what they need to understand, then we can clearly communicate with them.

In conclusion, as I have learned throughout my schooling, the ideas that often at first seem disparate and independent can help us to learn more about the world around us. These four ideas: being able to explain my purpose, create a logical argument, use concision, and making my writing understandable, helped me to become a better writer. Regardless of our interests or background, diversity of thought helps all individuals to achieve more than they could alone.

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