

How to Break Through Reader Tune-Out

I'd guess that for nearly all of us, writing is something we do by default – sort of like driving. The communication (or driving) lessons we learned long ago have become habitual, and we depend on them without thinking to get the job done.

But now more than ever you need to rethink your approach to writing communication. In a single day, your readers have to process hundreds of “Read Me!” messages in email, on billboards – even on bathroom stalls! If you write by default with common phrases and clichés, your reader won't read your message – or won't remember reading your message.

Steps to Get Out of Your Writing Rut

1. Before you start, pick your ideal client or decision-maker. Be specific, such as “CIO of a \$20 million food manufacturing company” or “Office manager of a 10 - 15 person dental office.”
2. Write just to that person. Consider this while you're writing: *What is their goal/problem/desire? How would they most likely express it?*
3. Set the project aside for at least one day.
4. Review what you've written, replacing what's old and tired with something that captures the intent in a new and fresh way.

Example #1

Before	After
You can build an e-commerce website easily and affordably!	Forget hiring an expensive web designer! It takes just 30 minutes to build your own website.

“Easily and affordably” is not only vague, but also a common descriptive phrase. In this example, I quantified the benefit with an actual time to build, “just 30 minutes” (which I made up, but you shouldn't).

Since this software product is targeted to the do-it-yourself website builder, I tapped into their fear of over-paying for services by mentioning “an expensive web designer.”

Example #2

Before	After
At most companies, the management of faxes, forms, and documents is a manual and error-prone process.	Stop touching paper, and increase your profit margin 10% – 35%. Automate and streamline your faxes, forms, and vital documents.

I used "10% - 35%" from a genuine testimonial on the same website where I found the "Before" example. Your clients are the best resource for writing marketing material.

Notice the action verbs "automate" and "streamline" in the second sentence to support the benefit in the previous sentence.

Marketing writing can seem like a shot in the dark, but if you take the time to get familiar with your clients, how they think, and even how they write (testimonials, forum postings, etc.), you'll find it's much easier to surprise them with fresh, original writing.

I hope your summer is going well. Please take a moment to select the "indicate your preferences" link in the sidebar. This will give me an idea of how many of you prefer an HTML newsletter versus a text version.

Warm regards,

Mary

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"Clear and concise writing for the software and manufacturing industries."

If you have a writing project coming up, I'd love to talk to you about it. Please contact me for a complimentary 30-minute consultation.

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