



You Don't Have Much Time

If this article takes longer than seven minutes to make its point, the odds are you won't understand its meaning. The same goes for your business memos. The attention span of middle managers averages between five and seven minutes. A poorly written memo won't hold their attention even that long. Worse still, poor writing often makes points contrary to the intent of the author. In business that spells disaster.

Having read this far, you must be looking for a way out of sloppy writing habits. Start with the way you think. "The biggest enemy of clear writing is fuzzy thinking," advises author Patricia King. In her newly released *Mind to Disk to Paper: Business Writing on a Word Processor* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1984), King explains that, "If you haven't thought through what you want to say, you won't be able to say it clearly. "For-

ing yourself to write clearly can mean that you will make that extra effort to think clearly."

Vague language, jargon, redundancies, run-on sentences, passive verbs and stating the obvious sabotage your message. King tackles each of these problems—and more—in the kind of clear, concise prose she champions: "If you go around stating the obvious, people will think that's all you know.

"Sometime between the ages of five and seven, kids learn the months of the year, and you don't have to be a chemist to know what 40° F is. Yet business writers persist in telling us."

Guess which words don't belong in the phrases, "During the month of September," and, "At a temperature of 40°F." Besides slowing your reader down, the use of unnecessary words can make your audience feel patronized. Not only will they be confused—they will be angry and confused.

"When you receive a memo or letter that doesn't make any sense," writes King, "ten-to-one as you throw it down on your desk in disgust, you

mumble something like, 'What jerk wrote this?'" If you have authored such counter-productive memos, you can do worse than heed King's advice.

Quality of Work Life Focus of Federal Report

A report examining key issues in the expansion, development, and use of quality-of-work-life programs and similar employee involvement or cooperative labor/management arrangements has been published by the Department of Labor.

The 32-page booklet summarizes the views expressed by experts in the field during a conference that focused on five current issues affecting employee participation and labor/management cooperation in the U.S. Some 25 labor and management representatives, consultants and educators participated in the three-day conference sponsored by the Labor Department.

The participants discussed the relationship between cooperative arrangements and collective bargaining, the implications of shared decision making, the impact of technological change on cooperative programs, the need to share with employees the financial benefits of cooperation, and the behavioral changes required by the cooperative approach.

For copies of "A Conference on Quality of Work Life: Issues Affecting the State-of-the-Art" or other information on cooperative labor/management programs, contact the Bureau of Labor and Management Relations and Cooperative Programs, Room N 5677, U.S. Department of Labor, Washington, DC 20216. Telephone 202/523-6098.

Enclose a self-addressed mailing label with your request.

Another Anniversary Slips By

Writers and editors, of all people, should have been the first to note the 18th anniversary last summer of the introduction of one of their most important tools—the fiber-point pen. That's right, the year that brought you the last "real" Mustang—1966—also marked the immediate commercial

success of Paper Mate's Flair™ pen, on the shelves just in time for the beginning of another school year.

The man responsible, Henry Peper, came up with his modification of the cruder felt-tip pen at the Paper Mate factory in Santa Monica, Calif. (The original felt-tip, the famous Magic Marker™, was the work of Sidney Rosenthal, whose 17-year patent had expired in 1964.) Two years before Peper's breakthrough, the Japanese had begun to export a bonded, porous fiber tip that—while not perfect—produced sharper, bolder lines. Gillette's Paper Mate Division quickly saw that their ball-point empire was in jeopardy. The rest, as they say, is history. If there is a stationery hall of fame, surely Peper and Paper Mate have taken their place in the pen category.



When Sales Reps Plateau

Submitted by Porter Henry & Co., Inc., New York.

The plateaued sales representative is a problem common to most companies, yet little is known about why

a sales rep plateaus and how the rep can be remotivated.

To find out more, we conducted a survey on a random basis nationwide in cooperation with the Sales Executive Club of New York posing several questions to all levels of sales executives in a variety of industries.

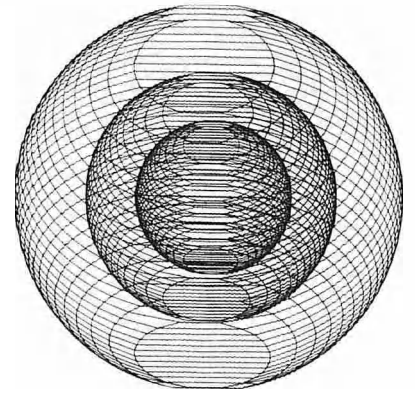
A surprising 26 percent of the sales executives responding to the survey said 15 to 20 percent of their reps had plateaued. An additional 18 percent said 20 to 25 percent of their reps had plateaued. Two percent felt that 75 percent of their reps had plateaued. The majority of the respondents to the survey thought the main reason for a sales rep to plateau was money. Fifty-one percent said their sales reps plateaued because their economic needs were already being met. An additional 45 percent felt their reps were plateauing because they had no career path.

What can a company do to help the plateaued sales rep? The vast majority of respondents felt the most important thing to do is admit the problem exists and freely talk about ways to correct it. Over and over again, first line sales managers, as well as vice presidents of sales, emphasized that their companies refuse to admit that a problem of this magnitude exists.

Once a company realizes and admits that the problem of the plateaued sales rep exists, it can employ a variety of methods to solve it. The respondents' recommendations included recognizing the sales reps in a variety of ways, creating an *esprit de corps* among the sales force, tying compensation to sales performance and conducting formal career planning.

Other questions answered by the respondents include: How old is the typical plateaued rep? Who is more susceptible to the plateau phenomenon—men or women? What can the sales rep's immediate manager do to remotivate a rep who has peaked out? What can the sales training department (if one exists) do to help? What can plateaued reps do to help remotivate themselves? What did the survey population list as the warning signs of a plateaued sales rep?

The survey is available free to anyone who requests it. For information write or call Bill Clayton, vice president and general manager, Porter Henry & Co., 370 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017; 212/679-8835.



Nothing Ventured . . .

If you believe that everyone wants to grow, and know that personal growth is the hardest thing to accomplish in a world full of insecure people who see the growth of others as a threat, then you might wonder how anyone manages to rise above the general run of small minds and weak hearts. So has Kaleel Jamison, a Cincinnati "organizational developmental" consultant. The book, *The Nibble Theory and the Kernal of Power*, (Ramsey, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1984), is her answer.

Put simply (and everything in this slender volume is simple and direct), Jamison believes that the world is made up of big circles and little circles. Everyone, she writes, can be a big circle, "But some choose to be small. Some would like to be bigger but don't know how. Some think of themselves as able to be bigger."

The nibbling comes in when a small circle, confronted with a big circle, takes bites out of the big circle instead of using the occasion as an opportunity to learn something and grow. And we all nibble from time to time, no matter how big or small we are.

But nibbling gets us nowhere. Growth, though harder, does.

Jamison uses an engaging analogy early in the book to get her point across. The generous, productive way of living works like a candle. When you give away some of the light from the candle, by lighting another person's candle, there isn't less light because you've given some away—there's more. That works with love, too. And that works with this growth theory.

"When *everybody* grows, there isn't less of *anybody*; there's more of—and for—*everybody*."

Now this sort of theorizing may sound naive and simplistic, but Jamison observes that just because something is simple doesn't mean it's easy. In fact, she notes that the complexity of nibbling is easy to master. Personal growth—self-empowerment—is far more difficult. Finding the "kernel of power" that makes each of us as different from one another as snowflakes are from each other is not easy. The constant presence of nibblers and our own lack of persistence can make the task insurmountable.

This illustrated volume explains how to fulfill your potential and avoid hindering others in their quest to do the same. Even a sophisticated reader can learn something here.

A Short Course in Time Management Training

Submitted by Klaus P. Hilgers, president, Epoch Consultants, Inc. (USA), St. Petersburg Beach, Fla.; Nicholas Economo, president, Epoch Consultants, Inc. (Canada), Montreal; and William Mingin, a free-lance writer in St. Petersburg.

Audiences flock to time management courses because effective time management eludes so many people. Another explanation for the popularity of such courses is that they often can administer the cure rapidly and simply.

What distinguishes good programs from the rest is that the former hold the following elements in common: enrollment, context, principles and actions, and systems and tools.

Enrollment

In spite of the popularity of time management training, audiences can not be taken for granted. Enrollment means more than class size: It means attitude, as well. Trainees can't just be sold on the course. They have to feel responsible for their participation. This means trainers must interest the trainees in the material, show trainees why they need it and help trainees visualize the results.

The results of poor time management—discomfort, frustration and failure—when exposed provide the best reasons to improve. In the press of circumstances, people often give up responsibility for their actions and react to whatever happens next or whatever shouts loudest for their attention. Self-management and creativity suffer when life is reduced to a series of fires to put out.

Another sign of poor management is the sacrifice of one aspect of life for another. Business people usually sacrifice human relationships, recreation and health in pursuit of career and money.

The pain can be drawn out by asking the following questions:

- Do you have to write reminders and lists of things you have to do?
- Are you always behind and trying to catch up?
- Do you leave home or the office and then remember something important you forgot?



- Have you started a lot of projects that you can't seem to complete?
- Do you have trouble trying to concentrate on what you're doing right now because you're thinking of all the other things you have to do?
- Do interruptions on the job irritate you excessively?
- Do you go home at night feeling as if you didn't get anything done, but thoroughly tired out?

- Do you feel that you can't take time for physical fitness, recreation or just plain fun?

People answering yes to more than two of these are showing signs of poor self-management. When they see the cost they are likely to be interested in finding a solution.

Context

Effective personal time management takes place in a context when purpose and commitment to completion exist. Time management training must engage people in confronting and discovering their purpose in life. Ask trainees: "What are you doing it all for?" "What is your reason for being?" "What do you want to accomplish?" For those who have not confronted these questions before, the process is illuminating, if discomfiting.

Purpose must provide for all of a person's goals in life. If often is expressed as something almost visionary: "Being the best I can and supporting others to do the same," "Leaving the world a better place than it was when I was born" or "Serving others." People sometimes hesitate to answer because they see their purpose as naive, simplistic or silly. But having a purpose in life gives one power and certainty.

Commitment to completion is vital to any kind of personal management. Completion is more than finishing or ending things. Something is complete, according to Webster's New World Dictionary, when it is "full, whole, entire," "lacking none of the parts," and "thorough, perfect." It includes everything needed for full integrity. When you do something completely, you are 100 percent satisfied that the result has been produced; it's off your mind. You are ready to start the next thing; you have the ability to create.

Of course, many people merely finish things off. They say things like "I don't care if there is a mistake, I'm not doing it over," or "Let's just get it over with," or "Send it out like that—it doesn't matter."

The importance of completion must be made clear for people. So must the cost of incompleteness. Incompletion saps time, energy, attention and health. Jobs are incomplete when:

- They often appear back on your desk the next morning for additions or corrections, so that the job has to be done twice.

- In production, the number of rejects goes up and effective quality control is impossible.
- Even if no one catches on, *you* are unsatisfied.
- Every time you have to redo something or you put it off it gets more difficult.
- You clutter your memory (or pockets) with reminders of things to do that should have been done.
- You can't concentrate on what you're doing now because you're worrying about when you're going to do what you didn't do yesterday.
- You have trouble focusing.
- You feel like you're wasting time.
- You're tired and irritable. You feel pressure.
- Your stress level goes up (with all the physical and psychological symptoms associated with stress).

On the other hand, some of the results of completion include increased productivity, increased satisfaction, the subjective experience of having "more" time, greater control in producing results, momentum, more energy and attention and the ability to create, to start anew.

Principles and actions

People should be uncluttered, free to think, create and concentrate on the task at hand. To accomplish this, people need to:

- Set goals and prioritize them.
- Make a daily "to do" list.
- Do tasks in order of priority.
- Ask "What is the best use of my time right now?"—and do it.
- Throw unnecessary things away.
- Do one thing at a time.
- Do it completely.
- Do it now.

An effective exercise is to have everyone write down whatever they have been carrying around on file in their heads, including anything that is incomplete for them. Next comes setting down their purpose. Then, within the context of that purpose, they should set down their goals and prioritize them. They should start with their longest-range goals and then set them for periods of time that become smaller and smaller and closer and closer to the present: five years, one year, six months, one month, one week, that very day. They should examine them for conflicts, see which ones are "on purpose" for them, and which they have a commitment to.

These goals should be broken down into series of action steps plus dates for when each step will be completed. (This need not all be done in the workshop setting). Then, when they are writing "to do" lists, they can use these goals and plans to set their actions and priorities on a day-to-day basis. Thus they will always be moving toward long-term goals and the realization of their purpose. They only need to complete whatever is next on their list and then move on to the following item.

When trainees are setting goals, remind them to write down goals in areas other than career and finances, such as health, relationships, nutrition and recreation or relaxation.

Systems and tools

System and tools can help people manage their time. Examples include personal time management books, forms to keep in an ordinary notebook (such as "to do" lists, calendars and financial record sheets), and forms for notes and addresses and telephone numbers. Introduce the system during the training setting and help people get started on it. Follow up within a month to reinforce the principles learned and answer new questions.

managers, and 32 percent include training for company officers.

Marketing and sales training is conducted by 68 percent of the companies. Most train both sales managers and sales people; 14 percent train only sales managers. Only one firm confines it to sales personnel.

Training programs at half the companies are held at work locations, 6 percent are held at centralized training centers. The rest do their training at both a center and in the field.

A total of 87 percent of the firms utilize both in-house and outside courses of study; 10 percent conduct in-house training only; one firm uses only outside programs. However, 39 percent plan to increase the use of outside consulting training services. A half dozen expect to use outside help for the first time, while the same number will maintain their current balance between the two methods. And 87 percent plan to send employees to outside training programs.

It would seem that companies once again are investing in their employees' futures.

Please send items of interest for In Practice to Robert Bozē, Training & Development Journal, Suite 305, 600 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, DC 20024.

... But Recoveries and Training Do

Last month's *Practicum* reported the results of a survey that demonstrated what many trainers know first hand: Economic downturns can be bad for the health of your HRD programs (see "Training and Recessions Don't Mix"). Fortunately, the results of a recent survey of senior human resource executives at 100 top Fortune 500 companies show the reverse to be true.

According to the poll, conducted by The Goodrich & Sherwood Company, a human resource management consulting firm in New York, 94 percent of the companies surveyed now have a formal, ongoing employee training program in place.

Of these firms, 90 percent train both first-line supervisors and middle managers, 75 percent also train senior