

The ROCK #15 - Communication

Written Communication

How to Overcome Procrastination and Improve Your Skills

Often, we will need to put our thoughts down in written form. The blank of piece of paper is intimidating. So is the blank computer screen. People often panic because they feel they are not competent and do not feel confident. People don't feel confident about using the written word because they do not read the written word very much. They watch TV or only read what they have to. They do not read for pleasure or for the increase of knowledge.

People may avoid writing because they speak poorly, or they cannot use proper grammar, or they are used to texting in incomplete sentences. However, with modern technology such as spell check or Grammarly, you can address these problems.

In addition, if you don't practice written communication, you will always be intimidated by doing it. It is a lot like public speaking. The more you do it, the less uptight and nervous you are. The more you do it, the more successful you are. The same is true of communicating in writing.

One of the easiest ways to improve your writing skills is to use your imagination. Visualize the person you are writing to. Imagine it is a conversation. You are talking to this person. But instead of talking to this person, you are writing to them. Speak with written words. Use the same words and same style in writing that you use in talking.

Another important point is that the mental image of the person you are writing is friendly. If you have unfriendly feelings, it will come out in your writing. If you imagine a friendly person you are writing to, you will have a friendly tone to what you have written. Also, if you are intimidated by who you are writing to, imagine them differently. Imagine they don't intimidate you and that they like you and you like them. The tone will be different and much more successful.

Last is practicing written communication skills. Yes, this means correct spelling, grammar and punctuation. It helps you look competent and confident in your written communication efforts. People tend to perceive you as a master communicator regardless of your content. If you don't use correct grammar, their view of your content and ideas will suffer.

Good Writing Skills Are a Pathway to Success

- Good writing skills help you succeed.
- Good writing skills are getting more difficult to find. Therefore, they stand out.
- Written messages that are well thought out, edited, and proofed, build your professional image.
- Introducing yourself and your personal value in writing that makes you special and unique will open many doors for you.
- Write down what you want to achieve in a certain time frame. Write down where you are now, and the steps that can get you where you want to go.
- Write thank you notes. A genuine written thank you will help you stand out in a positive way. The power and benefits of a hand-written note are priceless.
- You need to know how to explain your value in writing. Explain how you can contribute. Be able to justify yourself.

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Written Communication - Steps to Get Started

- Commit yourself to the written word.
- Write down the objective of the communication.
- Write down the key thoughts of what you want to say.
- Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct.

Once you decide what you want to write, and you know what you want to say, then you can write it with confidence and success.

Written Communication - Resumes

- A one-page summary of your job experience, education and career goals.
- A list of your qualifications and skill set for the job.
- A response to the company that you would like to work for.

Components of a Resume

- Contact information
- Objective or purpose, including the job you are applying for; activities or responsibilities that you want to engage in; goals you want to achieve
- Summary of job experience and qualifications. Highlight the special skills that you possess
- Education
- Work experience
- Awards, honors and activities

Resume Cover Letter

- A short and concise letter
- Your sales pitch
- Provides a good impression of you
- Explains how you can be an asset to the company
- Address it personally to a person rather than a title
- Be brief
- Use strong action words
- Don't repeat anything already in your resume

Components of a Great Cover Letter

- Explain why you are writing
- Use energetic language
- Be unique
- Explain why you are the best candidate for the job
- Mention outstanding awards or qualifications
- Show knowledge of the company and their business
- Summarize your position
- Promise to make a follow up phone call

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Resume and Cover Letter - Things NOT to Do!

- Don't include reasons for leaving your current or previous jobs
- Don't be negative about previous employers or their employees
- Don't discuss potentially negative information
- Don't use humor or sarcasm
- Don't label "resume" on your resume
- Don't list your hobbies or social organizations
- Don't be inauthentic and lie
- Don't exaggerate
- Don't apologize for lack of experience

Do make sure your grammar, spelling, and punctuation are correct.

Written Communication - Texting

- Normal written communication rules apply
- Be personal and friendly-not negative
- Remember this a written record for everybody to see
- Misspelled words are unprofessional and will give negative perceptions
- Don't send angry texts
- Don't send anything confidential
- Answer all texts, it is just the polite thing to do. It is like not returning phone calls if you don't answer
- Don't send bad news by text
- And, of course, DON'T TEXT and DRIVE!

E-Mail Communication Golden Rules

- Don't put anything in an e-mail that you would NOT want on the front page of the newspaper
- Don't send jokes in e-mail. They will always be in the archives of the internet universe and can come back to haunt you
- Don't send confidential matters by e-mail
- Don't send angry e-mails
- Don't hide behind e-mails because you are afraid to talk to somebody. They will know it and react negatively.
- Answer all e-mails. When you don't it is like not returning phone calls. People won't think very highly of you.

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E-mail-Best Practices

- Send fewer and better messages
- Before you send a message, always ask yourself if you should communicate in person instead
- Send first draft to yourself, not anyone else
- Only copy people who need to be copied
- Use red flags or other indicators sparingly
- Change subject lines if subject changes
- Make subject line important so they will read the e-mail
- Let people know when you need a response

Communication - Voice Mail

Important Component #1 - Your Personal Greeting

- Identify yourself
- Say where you are or where you are not
- When you will return their call
- If appropriate, who they can call if need be
- Replace robotic voices with friendly personal message
- Make sure your message is positive
- Speak slowly

Important Component #2 - The Message You Leave

Do not leave negative messages.

Always put on your happy face when you leave a message

Do not leave bad news on a voicemail. Just say it is an important matter

Do not leave confidential matters

Plan what you are going to say before you leave a message. Confused or disorganized messages sound unprofessional

Talk in the message as though you are not reading it. Say your message as if the person you are leaving the message for is right there looking at you

Speak slowly, repeat your name and state your phone number twice

Effective Communication - Manners Matter

- Do you say please when you ask someone for a favor?
- When you are introduced to someone for the first time, do you thank the person for the introduction?
- Do you thank the person who drops everything to help you resolve a problem?
- Do you include the word “please” when asking for help?
- Do you thank people that give you a reference?
- Do you thank people who listen to you even though they can't help?
- Do you thank your boss for their feedback and guidance?

Did you know that good manners make YOUR BRAND stand out from the crowd?