



Detecting the Breakdown

**5 Common Writing and
Communication Failures and
How to Fix Them**

We all make mistakes

I'll never forget my first big communication mistake. I was working at our local community newspaper and it was election time. The sheriff's race was more heated than normal. I was putting together an ad which talked about one candidates many years of "public" service. Well what ran in the paper came out as "pubic" service. I'll never forget that call from my editor. However, the candidate told me later, I probably helped him win the election from all the attention he received from the ad.

In business it can lead to much worse. Sales, hiring and marketing all rely on ones ability to exchange information and ideas. For messages to succeed you have to win the hearts and minds of people.



Who am I?



Chellie Phillips - I write and talk for a living. I've learned a lot in my 25 plus years in corporate PR/ Marketing and Journalism. It's my mission to help you create bold, impactful messages that reflect your personal vision or that of your company.

1. Headlines Have to Grab ‘Em

Make sure your messages get read. Good headlines get your attention and lead the reader into the story. Bad headlines serve more as a label.

“A poor headline will render your article invisible.”



Less is more in a headline.

They shouldn't have more than eight words. Use decks if you need more. Decks provide a way to get more information out without making the headline too long. Use the headline to get the attention and the deck to sell the story.

Here's six tips to make your headlines reel in the readers:

1. Use active voice
2. Use present tense (immediacy - storm pounds town/ not pounded)
3. Use short words
4. Be specific (vague is dull)
5. Watch punctuation - steer away from it if you can
6. Play with your words. Pull words from your story. Twist clichés, but don't use these all the time. It has its place just like alliteration or repetition.

**Headlines make your story irresistible
-- just like those cat pics on Instagram!**



Consistency
is The Key



Does your business have a message? Do you want people to identify you with specific ideas, products or services?

Implementing the Three C's drives those messages home with your customers. You need to be consistent in your message. Completely communicate your message. Be creative in your communications.

2. How you tell your story matters.

Consistency. You have to make a plan and stick to it. Your story or message needs to be told the same every time by every employee at every opportunity.

Completely. You are the manager of the message. It is your responsibility to make sure the whole team – not just you and your department – is on the same page.

Be creative. Think of new ways to deliver your message. Could you put it on your vehicle? Can you create a look and feel that energizes a tired message? Have you put it in today's words? Are there phrases or terms that are no longer current? Develop a social media campaign. Think of any way you can draw attention to your message.

There's a bonus "C" as well – **Be Correct!** If you are quoting someone, get it right. If you are using facts, make sure they are accurate. If you can't get it right, don't send it out.

**IF YOU WANT TO
BE TAKEN
SERIOUSLY,
BE CONSISTENT.**

We all do it.

We get comfortable.

We become predictable.

We forget that the art of writing requires more of us.

When we write, each of us falls back into patterns we are familiar with. We use the same words. We structure our sentences the same. We make the same grammatically errors over and over.

By identifying this and spending just a little time each week branching out you'll be a better storyteller and more compelling to your readers.

1. Freshen up your vocabulary. That doesn't mean add a bunch of big words to your writing. It means see what words you use over and over. Find synonyms for them. If there are phrases you use repeatedly, find alternate ways to say them.

2. Be vivid. Action and description are two of the best ways to generate interest with readers. Was he "really mad" or "fuming"? Just changing up a few words can draw a better mind picture and connect the reader to your story.

3. Change up your sentence structure. It doesn't always have to be subject then verb. Maybe you just use a sentence fragment on a social media post. However, you can generate interest and draw your reader in is a win. Changing the length of your sentences is another way to accomplish this too.

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a silver pen, writing on a white document. The background is blurred, showing another person's hand and a dark surface. A red banner with white text is overlaid on the top right.

3. Don't get complacent



4. Is it measurable?

Before you begin any communications, make sure you have measurable objectives. Your reputation has a tangible value? What your customers perceive is important? Communicating today isn't

just about getting the words on paper. It's about giving your customers information they will use and remember in the future. It's about adding trust and credibility to your brand.

So how do you become a knowledge broker for your company and your customers?

- Be the first to identify and discuss emerging issues.
- Be clear in your goals.
- Be relevant to your audience. Remember it's not all about product. Reputation is king.
- Be an advocate for them and their beliefs.
- Be easily understood.
- Be informative. Make sure you give both sides of the story and give real data to back it up.
- Be credible. Use only solid research to back up your claims.

Most importantly, track your results. Using analytics available through all of the social channels and through your web provider, you can see the impact your message is having on your audience. You can track mentions in traditional media. You can track customer actions to see if you are achieving the desired results and that the media you are using is where they are getting their information from.



COMMUNICATION



A horizontal wooden clothesline is stretched across the frame. Four wooden clothespins are clipped to the line, each holding a rectangular card. The cards are colored yellow, green, blue, and red from left to right. On each card, a large black letter is printed, spelling out the word 'PLAN'.

P L A N

5. It only works if you plan your work and work your plan

Communicators are notorious procrastinators. We all say we work well under pressure. Deadlines mean we work on what has to go out that day. You can get ahead of the curve through planning.

Take a look at all of the ways you are communicating now. Dig in and really evaluate if the piece or method could be improved. Determine if it is relevant still. Is it contributing to the overall image or message of your business?

You need a communication plan to address each activity.

The plan should include:

1. Strategy - the background or situation analysis along with your objectives
2. Audience Analysis - who needs the message and how best to target them
3. Creative Plan - key messages, external design work, implementation
4. Timetable - what's the schedule for the campaign or deadline for production
5. Budget - total cost (internal and external resources)
6. Evaluation - how will you determine the success

the Planet **Battle**...
of **Words Cannot Express**
The Military Fight R...
Follow the leader? Giving China a blood...
At last, progress
Public Finance management
Experiment
Welcome to M...
Hope for the f... Transparency
Opportunities in Economic and



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