



Five Mistakes Salespeople Make When They Write

by BRODY trainer, Bonnie Budzowski, MA

In sales, it's all about capitalizing on opportunities. The reality is, you could be destroying those opportunities by failing to effectively communicate with clients through your writing.

Here are five common mistakes that diminish sales results – and what you can do to fix them:

Mistake #1: Making the Message Visually Dense

The first test any message must pass is a split-second read/no-read decision, based on appearance. Screens and pages that visually overwhelm the reader get deleted or put aside for later. Later, of course, never comes.

Solution: To improve visual appeal, follow a guideline from author Bruce Ross-Larson: think light, layered, and linked. Provide a first page that is visually light, quick to read, and compelling. In the following pages, add more depth. Provide links or appendices for readers who want the nitty-gritty details.

Mistake #2: Boring with Background

People are not motivated by your company history; they are motivated to meet their challenges and solve their problems. History may provide credibility – but only after you've captured interest.

Solution: Rather than start a document with the history of your company, begin with a quick description of your customer's challenges or problems. This immediately establishes relevance, and pulls the reader into the piece.

Mistake #3: Picking the Wrong “You/I” Ratio

As a salesperson, your job is to communicate strengths, experience, and benefits. In short, you need to impress. Oddly, trying to impress a customer is often counterproductive. Strive to serve, instead, and you'll get a better result.

Solution: For a simple example, imagine you want to buy a book to help you search for a job. Which of the following descriptions entices you?



Option A: I have experience as a recruiter in a large institution, as a specialist in a job-readiness program, and in other positions in human resources. I wrote this book for job seekers to share my experiences to make their job searches go more smoothly ...

Option B: The purpose of this book is to make your job search easier, less frustrating, and more successful. This book is a quick, easy-to-read guide you can use in any job search. It contains real-world examples ...

Check your "You/I" ratio on every piece. Revise until there is more "You" than "I" – about 3 to 1.

Mistake #4: Failing to Plan for the Scan

When reading, our eyes scan back and forth, involuntarily and continuously, at about 200 miles per hour. This is how we make sense of words in the context of a page.

Solution: Anything that is surrounded by white space sticks out as a person scans – it is automatically emphasized. Major headings, placed on a separate line so they are surrounded by white space, grab attention and provide structure for the piece.

Take full advantage of "the scan" by choosing rich and descriptive headings. Rather than a topical heading like "Population," make the heading carry a conclusion: "Population in Dangerous Decline." Take it one step further, and your document becomes compelling: "Declining Population Presents Business Opportunity."

Mistake #5: Failing to Include Third-Party Testimony

Your potential customers know you are biased about your product or services. They expect salespeople – even ones with integrity – to exaggerate the benefits and downplay the drawbacks of the things they sell.

Solution: When you fail to include third-party endorsements in your proposals and reports, you miss a huge opportunity to increase your credibility and sales. Ask for these testimonies and weave them into your documents. Nothing you can say will be as credible as third-party testimony.

Bonnie Budzowski, MA, guides individuals to increase the success of their messages from three points of view: marketing, influence, and visual design. Through Bonnie's practical, humorous and high-energy approach, workshop participants leave her training programs feeling energized, inspired, and equipped to send messages that build relationships and get results. The techniques and strategies that Bonnie shares in her training programs are also detailed in her books, Secrets to Get Busy People to Respond to Your Messages and Clickety Clack: 86 Ways to Keep Your Speech on Track.



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