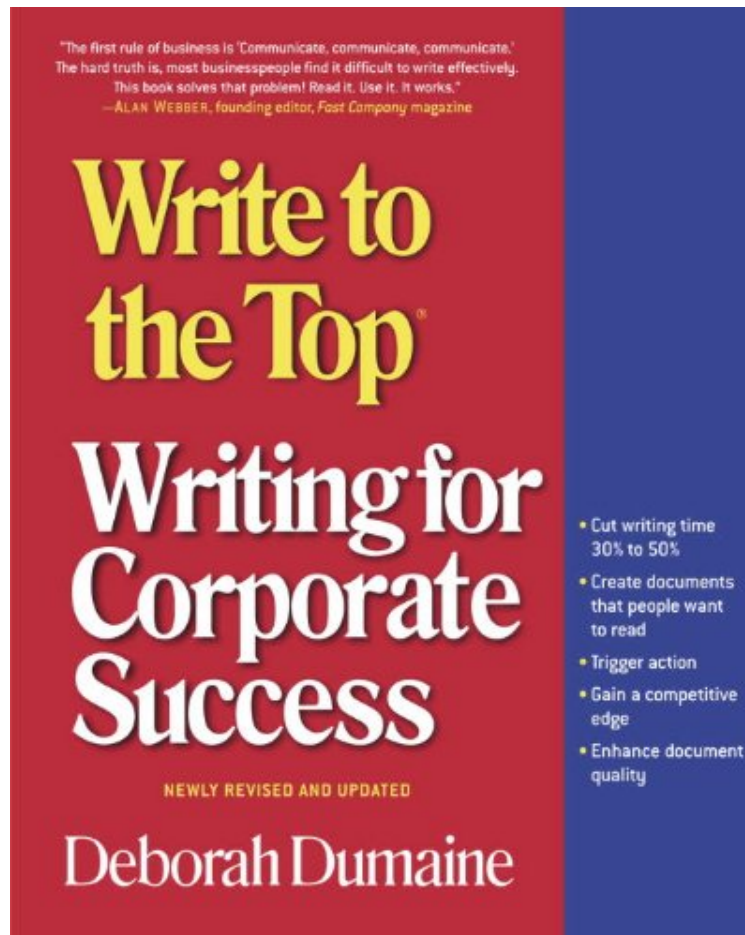


Write to the Top: Writing for Corporate Success

Deborah Dumaine

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Deborah Dumaine : Write to the Top: Writing for Corporate Success before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Write to the Top: Writing for Corporate Success:

8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. proven over the long runBy CustomerI first encountered this book in the late '80s. Since then, I've use the techniques from the book to write technical papers and documentation, employee reviews, published articles and winning proposals for million-dollar government contracts. I even used it to write testimony for a Congressional hearing.The process outlined in this book is NOT a fad, and not "buzzword compliant", it's a proven, well-defined process that allows almost anyone to write like the best writers. These techniques will have you writing naturally, with clarity and focus.These same techniques will also provide a big help in organizing your thoughts, and creating careful and insightful analysis.For those who have trouble or anxiety about writing, having a well-defined process solves most of the problems with procrastination or "not knowing what to write, or how". This book provides that process. It simplifies the mechanics of "how" to write, so that you can focus on "what" to write, and getting your message across to the audience.I'm glad this book is out in a new edition. I'll be buying copies for most of my technical staff, and suggesting it to my graduate students.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. If you

buy one book to upgrade your writing skills, this is the one! By Lori Dearman GET BETTER RESULTS WITH "WRITE TO THE TOP" "Write to the Top" is a no-nonsense book on writing strategies that will help you write faster and get better results. I bought a copy last year, and it is dog eared and highlighted throughout. The author writes in a personable tone and uses an easy-to-follow format. It is just what would you expect from the author of a writing book. MONEY WELL SPENT Even after reading it cover to cover, I find myself referring back to it constantly. I give this book two thumbs way up! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book to help improve all of your formal writing By Angel Eyes I read about this in one of the Harvard Mentor Series courses, ordered it immediately, and refer to it regularly in both my work and personal life. It addresses good writing habits in a wide variety of formal writing.

Now reorganized into an easy-to-follow, six step approach to effective writing for every business communication format.

From the Inside Flap Now reorganized into an easy-to-follow, six step approach to effective writing for every business communication format. About the Author Deborah Dumaine is a bestselling author and expert writer who has pioneered improvement in the quality of business writing. She is the founder of Better Communications and has been setting the standard for corporate writing, sharing her strategies in the book Business Communication. Dumaine received both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from Smith College. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Writing Can Make or Break Your Career Most of us dread writing in some way Tom LeBlanc glances at his watch and then back at the empty screen in front of him. The ticking of the wall clock grows louder, and a siren outside the window makes him lose his train of thought for the second time. The right words are just beyond his reach. His mind wanders to the next day's appointments and to the movie he is going to see with Elaine that evening. A ringing telephone brings his attention back to the memo he wants to write. "I'm just not getting anywhere," he thinks. "I know pretty much what I want to say, but I can't get those first words out." Tom stands, straightens up his desk, and wonders if a cup of coffee will wake him up. "Maybe I'll just let it go until tomorrow," he mutters. An enormous percentage of the people we work with tell us that they regularly feel the way this manager does. Whether writing a long report or a short memo, they find themselves staring at the blank page or screen more often than they'd care to admit. At those times the process can seem so overwhelming that many will do anything to avoid getting started. Writers get into this trouble because most of them were not taught an effective, step-by-step approach to writing. They were often told, with bright red pen, what they were doing wrong, but few teachers ever said, "Write this way!" Convenient distractions In the office there are many distractions: the phone rings, an associate drops by, or there's e-mail to check. Here is a list of obstacles to writing mentioned by participants in a Better Communications (r) business-writing workshop: -I need to clean my desk before I can start writing. -I can't find the time to do my job and write this proposal, too. -My manager called a special meeting. -No matter what I write, it will be ripped to shreds. -I don't understand why they want me to put this in writing. -I need to check my messages first. For those who dread beginning or who are embarrassed about their skills, almost any other activity will win out over writing. Our mass-media society sabotages good writing skills These days it's easy to communicate with a minimum of writing. The Internet gives us business information, news, and entertainment. Family, friends, and business associates are a phone call away. E-mail barely counts as writing anymore-much to the detriment of clear communication. People read dramatically fewer books than they did 50 years ago, and it shows. As we read less fiction or nonfiction, we are becoming far less comfortable with the written word. No wonder many people say that writing is the part of their job they like the least. In fact, most of them would probably be happy to see other methods of communication replace writing completely. Today's biggest writing challenges Our clients tell us that they are faced with several challenges that they are aware of. After listing these, we'll add a couple they may not be aware of. No time The first and most daunting task most businesspeople climbing the corporate ladder experience is the need to write twice as quickly as perhaps five years ago. In a company that has experienced downsizing, these people must be able to do a job that two or three did in the past. If they are slowed down by their writing responsibilities, their daily success and possibly their careers will suffer. The good news: This book has a solution that works for improving writing efficiency. At Better Communications we measure the writing productivity of over 4,000 graduates each year-and all report writing 30 to 50 percent faster after taking one of our workshops! Writer's block The inability to get started can have many causes: not knowing who your readers are or how to approach them, lacking a clear vision of where you want to go with your message, negative past experiences that shook your confidence. The good news: There are many more causes of writer's block, but our strategies will help you overcome them all. According to our graduates, even years after one of our workshops, their start-up speed keeps improving. Constant interruptions It's frequently impossible even to reply to an e-mail without three phone calls and two drop-ins slowing you down. This, on top of the two challenges we have already discussed, can grind you to a halt. The good news: This book offers several step-by-step processes that can guide you through writing any type of document, from the simplest e-mail to the most complex of presentations. If you are interrupted in Step 3, it's all right. You can go back anytime, finish that step, and move on to Step 4. You always

know where you are in the writing process and what to do next. It's Hard to persuade and influence There are specific techniques for convincing readers that your ideas are the right ones. Some are simple-good for quick e-mails, for example. Others guide you through the process of constructing persuasive arguments built on inductive logic. These arguments can be inserted into more than one type of document. The good news: You can find strategies for influence and persuasion in this book. Building your professional image-and your career There are two challenges of which corporate writers are often blissfully unaware. The first is professional image, how you are perceived by your managers and peers. We are constantly surprised at how many corporate writers, especially emerging ones, don't understand that their casual "instant messaging" approach to business e-mail is doing them a grave disservice. They just don't believe that taking the time to write a professional-sounding e-mail makes a difference. Managers, however, are constantly telling us that they judge others negatively for this failure. Indeed, managers doubt other aspects of their coworkers' skills when they receive careless, error-filled e-mail. Second, if you work in a large company and are known only on e-mail, you face the challenge of how to differentiate yourself and advance your career. With the ever-greater use of phone and Internet conferencing, many meeting participants have never met one another. Do you judge others a bit harshly if they send you a messy e-mail riddled with errors? Are you sure that yours don't look the same? Do you take the time to use spell check and grammar check? The good news: "Energize Your E-mail" in Part 4 will help you avoid these all-too-common errors. Part 5 focuses on the rigors of editing and lets you quiz yourself to see how much you already know. Writing skills will always be vital to business success Most businesspeople we meet are not happy with their writing skills. On top of this, they spend hours reading and replying to ever more e-mails a day. They must make decisions about graphics and page layout-tasks that are alien to most. No matter how technological the workplace may become, real power will still have its source in the written word. Good writing skills are in demand by employers. Skill in writing correlates highly with the ability to think well-to analyze information, weigh alternatives, and make decisions. Writing ability is also one of the core competencies necessary to climb the corporate ladder. Our experience consulting with executives verifies that, these days, no one gets to the top without being able to write well. Why business documents fail No matter what the topic, most of the writing we coaches and editors see suffers from one major flaw: it is written more from the writer's point of view than from an angle that will appeal to the reader. One of the greatest challenges to writers is to get outside of their personal interests to present their ideas in a way that will answer every reader's four biggest questions: 1. What's this about? 2. Why should I read this? 3. What's in this for me? 4. What am I being asked to do? We will be explaining more about reader-centered writing and how to achieve it as we go through "Six Steps to Reader-Centered Writing(r)," "Writing Presentation Documentsrdquo;," "Challenges of Persuasion," and "Action Through Words." You'll see how the reader-centered approach will make your writing more persuasive and help you achieve the results you want. Why use a process? How do efficient writers write? Some seem to have a natural flair, while others develop the skill through practice. Most of the participants in our writing workshops confirm that their writing improves when they begin to look at it as a manageable process, rather than as an irritating chore. How can you make this shift in attitude? By breaking the writing task into its components. The different steps we offer for various types of documents make efficient writing easy to learn. Using a systematic approach, you can always pick up where you left off in the process, even after an unexpected interruption. This is an especially important skill if you're working on more than one document at a time. A writing process benefits the writer in surprising ways One manager wrote a long document developing an idea for a new business direction. As he worked his way through the writing process, he changed his mind about the value of pursuing the new approach and actually recommended aborting the project. "The writing process helped me see the facts more objectively," he told us. Because he had been so emotionally tied to his great idea, he wasn't able to think it through clearly until he systematically approached the task of writing it down. Writing is thought on paper, a tool for creating and organizing ideas. When writers transfer random ideas from the brain to paper, they begin to understand their own thoughts better. As they continue the process and develop a ...