

Helping Staff to Write Effective Reports

Stan Stenersen, Presenter

Purpose of Presentation

- ◆ Examine key problems and issues that can hinder effective writing
- ◆ Offer perspective on these problems and issues
- ◆ Suggest matters for your consideration as you evaluate your organization's strategy for empowering writers

Report Review Exercise

◆ Strengths?

◆ Weaknesses?

5 Ideal

4 Above average

3 Good enough to go

2 Needs some work

1 Needs a lot of work

Common Obstacles?

Common Obstacles

- ◆ Mismatch between training and need
- ◆ Infrequent writing
- ◆ Turnover
- ◆ “Black hole” of report review
- ◆ Promotions and reassignments
- ◆ Lack of a writing vocabulary

“Busy Reader” Concerns?

“Busy Reader” Concerns

- ◆ Brevity
- ◆ Hierarchy: whole to parts
- ◆ “Human factor”:
interest in anecdote
and example
- ◆ Nonexpert
approach to
learning

“Other” Concerns?

“Other” Concerns

- ◆ Completeness and accuracy
- ◆ Concern for process: parts first, then whole
- ◆ “Number factor”:
interest in data
- ◆ Expert approach to learning

Contrasts in the Concerns

Busy reader

- ◆ Brevity
- ◆ Whole to parts
- ◆ “Human factor”
- ◆ Nonexpert approach to learning

Other

- ◆ Completeness
- ◆ Parts to whole
- ◆ “Number factor”
- ◆ Expert approach to learning

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Add explanation

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Add explanation

Cut detail

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Cut detail

Add explanation

Add detail

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Cut detail

Make it clearer

Add explanation

Add detail

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Cut detail

Make it clearer

Add explanation

Add detail

Make it reference

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Cut detail

Make it clearer

Make it persuasive

Add explanation

Add detail

Make it reference

Contrasts in the Directions

Make it shorter

Cut detail

Make it clearer

Make it persuasive

Add explanation

Add detail

Make it reference

Stick to the facts

Potential Steps?

Potential Steps

- ◆ Training
- ◆ Models and examples
- ◆ Opportunity to act as reviewer
- ◆ Mentoring

Training Considerations

- ◆ Familiarity with writing style and approach
- ◆ Tools for message development as well as message presentation
- ◆ Understanding of review
- ◆ Framework for discussing products
- ◆ Examples

Structured Review

- ◆ Small group (4-6) reviewing each others' work
- ◆ Writing samples should preferably be in process rather than completed
- ◆ Review is segmented so that each reviewer has a separate role

Mentoring

- ◆ Rewriter
- ◆ Editor
- ◆ Coach

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