

Write to Influence! – Its Genesis

As a lieutenant colonel, I commanded a squadron of 480 people ... dedicated, patriotic, and talented. My responsibility, in addition to accomplishing the missions at hand, was to mentor the next generation of Air Force officers and enlisted personnel entrusted to me as commander. I loved the Air Force (still do) and took that responsibility very seriously.

I soon saw the critical correlation between the influence of the written word and career progression—or lack thereof. How? Many of these amazing people were regularly beaten in competitive quarterly and annual awards. In fact, I learned that my unit was perhaps the most losing unit on Hawaii.

Why? Because many supervisors could not write compelling nominations and personnel reviews, these individuals missed opportunities for awards, early promotion, and other significant recognition.

This, in turn, hindered their career progression; extrapolated, it also hurt their families. No promotion, no pay raise; no pay raise, fewer disposable funds to save for college tuition. That was in equal measure tragic and unacceptable.

I am blessed with the ability to write (I guess to compensate for my ineptitude in math!) and had already earned a reputation for submitting winning packages. So, I took three days personal vacation, sequestered myself in a beach bungalow, analyzed my writing, and identified core techniques that enabled me to spin effective and powerful messages.

Penning Performance Reports was the initial step towards the eventual 14-page handbook, ***Word Sculpting***. I then created a one-hour workshop, taught my entire unit, and transformed it to the unit to beat, regularly sweeping the “All Air Force Hawaii” awards.

Other units asked me to teach them, which, of course I did – although this did sacrifice our competitive edge. I became a regular instructor at the NCO (Non Commissioned Officer) Academy in Oahu. Units regularly copied and distributed my handbook by the hundreds. In today’s vernacular—it went viral, reaching hundreds of Air Force units worldwide.

I subsequently taught my writing techniques and strategies to thousands of Air Force members for the next 15 years, not as an assigned duty, but as a voluntary labor of love. Student response? Rave reviews and personal testimonials on how powerful writing actually changed their lives.

Write to Influence! is all about helping people to help themselves. It is based upon the desire to take care of my Air Force troops but has been retooled and expanded by magnitudes and now applies to students in junior high school, high school, and college; to individual preparing to enter the workforce; those who want to advance therein; and to a wide variety of organizations.

My battle cry is twofold:

- Powerful writing changes lives!
- Everyone deserves a boss who can write but isn’t always so fortunate; learn to write well, yourself!