Write to Influence! – Table of Contents and Summary Thereof

Part 1 – Word Sculpting

Part 1 presents ten tools fundamental to writing focused, powerful sentences, explained in the context of a sculptor facing an 8-foot tall block of stone. The challenge -- Precisely convey the artist's vision onto the stone. Placing thoughts on paper or on a web page precisely parallels this analogy. Each word sculpting tool is demonstrated with ten examples in the format of Before, After, and Analysis. Ten exercises then follow, with solutions (found later in the book) provided in that same format. *Word Sculpting* techniques are prerequisite for teaching points in Part 2, *Strategies of Power Writing*.

Introduction

Chapter 1 Useless Words – Identify, Chisel, Discard

The book opens with the most fundamental of the ten *Word Sculpting* tools: Identifying and discarding useless words. Once this tool is applied, writers gain space to further elaborate on key points and increase the intensity of the message.

Chapter 2 Shorter is Better – Don't Hog Space

Most precise of the ten tools. Employ this when space is limited and precision required. Teaches three aspects: select shortest words, be precise in terminology (i.e., use one word in lieu of two or more), and use active voice.

Chapter 3 Redundancy – Once Will Suffice!

Find and eliminate, then learn to avoid subtle redundancies that waste space because they are … well, redundant. This chapter identifies three types: 1) Words already inferred in preceding text, 2) Unnecessary repetition, and 3) Information that is patently obvious, thus, does not need to be stated.

Chapter 4 Lead with the Basics – Horse before the Cart

Avoid lengthy, cumbersome, ancillary text that precedes the main thought. Professional products today are replete with this messy, ineffective style of writing that confuses the message, taxes the audience, and often fails to achieve the author's desired goal.

Chapter 5 Verbs are Your Friends – Rely on Them

Verbs add pizazz, sparkle, and excitement. Many authors are either unaware of this or are too conservative in their writing, often using several words in lieu of a single verb to convey action and preferring bland bureaucratic text to other terms. Products suffer for these practices.

Chapter 6   Avoid Gibberish

Gibberish encompasses several writing flaws: excessive detail, terms that bewilder the audience, and inappropriate/incorrect use of acronyms. Learn to provide the right amount of information in terms appropriate to the background of the intended audience.

Chapter 7   Tethers – In Sentences and Otherwise

A common construction in sentences involves tethering several items to a base term or concept. The author must ensure each item makes sense when directly associated with its particular base. Unfortunately, this construction is often erroneously executed because the author does not know how to think thru and validate application of the tethers to the base.

Chapter 8   Be Clear -- Who-Does-What-to-Whom?

To quote Eliza Doolittle, "Ready, aim, and fire!" This chapter does precisely that to the subject of convoluted, bureaucratic writing! The reader learns to dodge this pitfall by avoiding passive voice, misplaced phrases, useless words, nouns used as verbs, and other flaws of writing addressed thus far. The mantra to keep the story straight, "Who-Does-What-to-Whom?"

Chapter 9   Keep the Focus – Shut the Gates!

The author is a tour guide, leading the reader from the opening word to the text's conclusion, ideally doing so without losing the reader's attention along the way. However, the unschooled author inadvertently creates opportunities for the reader to stray, distracted by unintended or unanswered questions, poor writing techniques, or failure to proof read. This chapter identifies potential open gates and teaches the author to close them.

Chapter 10 Proof Carefully – Credibility's at Stake

This tool is placed last … intentionally. Why? For emphasis. No matter how brilliantly written (using all of the aforementioned techniques); how just the cause; how relevant, thought provoking, and intellectually valuable the document might be -- the author's effort and credibility, and the reader's attention will be lost if the product is rife with errors.

Part 2 -- Strategies for Persuasive Writing

Word Sculpting tools and strategies for persuasive writing are synergistic. Part 2 applies tools addressed in Part 1 in the context of specific strategies for organizing sculpted information to make that compelling case.

Chapter 11 Set the Hook

Seconds matter -- the hook is critical! This chapter examines the hook in scholastic articles, books, personnel appraisals, and resumes. It then addresses analytical products and evaluates the relationship between the title and the product's opening sentence, referred to as the First Impression Sentence.

Chapter 12 Make the Case

Gather specific facts to bolster your case; assume the role of an investigative reporter and uncover additional detail using questions provided to direct your search; employ statistics to hone the message; place the story in context (e.g., level of responsibility); recognize what information not to include. Remember, these specifics infuse writing with focus, dimension, and impact!

Chapter 13 Clinch the Deal

Write proportionally, balancing space available with importance of the message; identify questions the text should answer and use those as guides for your composition; use signs (i.e., first, second, third) to lead the reader through a complex message; in competitive writing, open with the strongest material and close with the second strongest; be objective in analysis; recognize the differences between an explanation and a persuasion paper.

Part 3 – Persuasive Writing Applied Daily

Test drive lessons learned thus far! Part 3 applies the techniques and strategies to three products central to the reader's life – personal and professional.

Chapter 14 Resumes – Stand Out from the Crowd!

You have the reader's attention and must now deliver the goods. Follow 12 steps to craft that showstopper resume or other competitive product to make the reader exclaim, "Wow!" Samples: Don't write a job description – address accomplishments, there is a difference; use action-packed verbs, descriptive and exciting; highlight accolades, bonuses, and other types of recognition; quantify accomplishments and place them in context the reader can understand. Each step is fully explained and accompanied by several examples.

Chapter 15 E-mail – Polished, Professional, Effective

Provides 16 tips to improve email.

How much time is allocated? Who is the audience? What is its background? Why are you presenting this -- what is your goal? Is the briefing informational or intended to prompt a decision? These are foundational questions that define the core message. Next, determine how to best organize the material: macro to micro, visa versa, another approach? What story lines convey to slides and what are spoken? This chapter then addresses composition of slides to ensure slides are powerful, strategically written, best leverage the audience's time, and achieve the desired goal.

Part 4 – Up for a Challenge? Test Your Skills

100 exercises allow the reader to test new-found skills. No fair peeking at the AFTER solutions. The concluding exercise is the toughest of all and is purposefully titled, "Graduation Exercise."

Appendices

Appendix A – Solutions to Exercises, Chapters 1-10

Appendix B – Commas, Semicolons, and Capitalization Made Easy

Though miniscule in size, commas, semicolons, and capital letters are powerful factors by which readers evaluate grammatical credibility, skill with the written word, and overall competency as an author. They also constitute the most frequent errors in contemporary, professional writing.

Appendix C – Editor's Challenge – Don't Tread on My Writing

From the school of hard knocks! How do you tell the author that the baby is ugly and violates every one of the *Word Sculpting* techniques? How do you proceed when the work needs major surgery, not a minor facelift? This will help those asked to edit others' work.

Appendix D – In a Nutshell -- *Word Sculpting: Persuasive Writing Made Easy*

The entire book distilled into ten prevailing principles to guide the development of and then measure the final product.

Appendix E – Common Errors in Professional Correspondence

The dark side of Appendix D, this presents the top 10 egregious errors in professional writing!

Appendix F – Epilogue

One concluding thought … Does your product meet "Best Quality" criteria