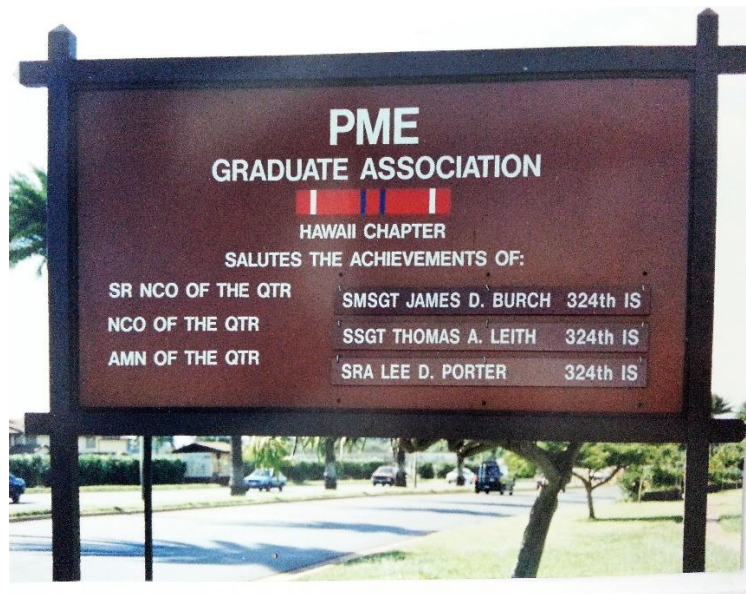


# WOMEN OWNED *wobe* BUSINESS CLUB MAGAZINE

## Fundamental Leadership Skill – The Ability to Write!?!?

Before I continue, let me pose and answer the question, “Does this article apply to you?” The moniker, *leader*, applies not only to an organization’s CEO. If you supervise a single individual ... *you* are a leader. If people seek your advice ... *you* are a leader. Does this apply to you? Yes!

Writing as a fundamental leadership skill -- Didn’t see *that* coming, did you? I taught many leadership classes to military members during my 30 years in the Air Force. When challenged to identify leadership skills, my students never included *the ability to write well* on that august list of esteemed characteristics: integrity, courage, honesty, empathy, high work standards, loyalty, etc.



I, myself, did not recognize the criticality of writing as it affects people’s lives until I assumed command of the 324<sup>th</sup> Intelligence Squadron (324 IS), a unit in Hawaii comprised of 480 talented troops. It was there I saw the direct correlation between powerful writing, developing the workforce, career progression, and leadership responsibilities.

The accompanying picture reflects one of the proudest moments in my Air Force career -- the first of several times that 324 IS swept the state-wide, professional award competition. Not only did such victory catapult individual careers, the unit stood tall and took pride in itself. Morale soared.

Previously, the unit regularly lost these quarterly and annual competitions. Why? Many supervisors couldn’t write hard-hitting award nominations. We lost to units that did ... until I taught 324 IS to write.

Think about it. The ability to write powerfully ... to present a case with focused intensity ... is intrinsic to being a successful leader, who must be persuasive in products such as budget proposals, marketing, and public outreach. Powerful, influential writing undergirds them all.

Recall the fairy tale character Rumpelstiltskin, who spun straw into gold? Your subordinates produce the straw (i.e., noteworthy accomplishments). The leader is responsible for spinning those accomplishments into gold, leveraging messages to benefit the individual and the company.

To demonstrate, I identify three leadership responsibilities and associate how powerful writing is central to each.

**1. Retain and promote talent.** “Always take care of your people,” my father (a retired Air Force colonel) advised his daughter, then a newly commissioned second lieutenant. Central to this mandate -- Recognize and promote deserving people. A leader must compose compelling and succinct job performance reviews (some organizations allow as few as 1,500 spaces) and nominate deserving individuals for professional awards.

**2. Compete in large-scale award programs.** This equalates the item above, except on a larger scale. Everyone likes to be associated with a winner. If your organization amassed accomplishments to compete in professional award programs ... nominate it! Win accolades and recognition for your company and, therefore, your people.

**3. Leverage that good news – broadcast it!** Organizational recognition, record-breaking accomplishments, successful launch of pilot programs, winning significant bids, an employee scoring a significant achievement ... exemplify items that leaders should trumpet via articles, blogs, press releases, quarterly/annual newsletters, etc.

I conclude with advice I offered my youngest troops in the 324 IS ... *“Everybody deserves a boss who can write. That’s not always the case ... So, learn to write well, yourself!”* When asked to provide input to your own performance review ... voilà... it’s hard-hitting and well crafted!

By **Carla D. Bass, Colonel, USAF (Ret)** | [Author of the Award-winning book, “Write to Influence!”](#)