

# Communicating on the Job

Tips for effective writing, speaking, and  
listening from Cos Ferrara

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## **E-Newsletter: A powerful, professional marketing tool**

The newsletter has for years been a staple in the marketing plans of successful companies. The newsletter offers a means of keeping in touch with clients and of approaching prospects in a professional manner. It can also be an effective vehicle for communicating with staff.

Today, some companies have forsaken the printed newsletter for an electronic version. One major reason is cost. With the electronic version there are no paper, printing, and mailing costs involved. (These costs, of course, do not deter some companies, as you know merely from checking your daily mail. So the traditional form is still very powerful.)

The E-newsletter, however, offers companies, both large and small, the opportunity to stay visible in an economic, professional way.

### **How to Get Started**

First, decide the information you want to convey. Some companies use the E-newsletter to announce new products, services, locations, staffing. Others want to enhance their image as experts by delivering industry news. For example, a CPA I know regularly sends out explanations of new tax regulations. Newsletters win a more positive reception when they “give away” information the reader can use.

Of course, you can use your E-newsletter in a number of ways. I helped a mortgage start-up get off the ground with an E-newsletter that introduced the company to related businesses and also gave information on rates and options.

Next, draw up a list of topics you might touch on in the first few issues. Be sure you have enough to go beyond the first. As you draw up this topic list, keep in mind the people who will be receiving the E-newsletter and what they would be interested in knowing.

Third, write up the text for some of the articles. See what’s involved in doing so, and who (if not you) will do the writing.

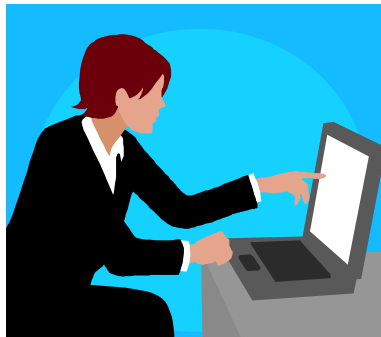
Fourth, develop a layout template. You need not get too fancy here. A number of relatively inexpensive software programs can walk you through the many options. For instance, *Communicating on the Job* is done on Microsoft Publisher and then converted to a pdf file through Adobe Acrobat. Once you’ve hit on a layout you like, input the text. You will have to do some tweaking, of course. With practice, you can become very adept.

### **When you need...**

...help writing newsletters, website copy, reports, proposals, manuals, and brochures, or your people need a refresher class in business writing or speaking, contact Cos Ferrara at 201-391-0178 or [cos@cosferrara.com](mailto:cos@cosferrara.com), or visit my Website: [www.colferrara.com](http://www.colferrara.com)

Fifth, determine the names on your mailing list who should receive the newsletter. Find out the bulk mail restrictions your Internet Service Provider has and follow those.

Once you get started, and begin receiving compliments—then new business—via the E-newsletter, you will be happy you did.



## **Presenting: How to reach and hold your audience**

When speaking before a group, don’t get so wrapped up in content that you forget about your audience. Besides developing riveting material, employ these techniques to grab the audience’s attention and keep it.

**Present from their perspective.** Show the audience how what you have to say will benefit them. For example: “In this session I’ll show you how to write shorter, clearer memos in less time.”

**State your theme up front.** Within the first 30 seconds, present your main idea. Use words to make clear that this is your main idea. “All that I’ll say today about writing focuses on one prime element—writing to the needs of your readers.”

**Offer your information in digestible bits.** Build small units of information, so listeners can grasp one concept at a time. Give a summary at each juncture. For example: “So in terms of organization, your first paragraph has to identify your purpose.”

**Use colorful, conversational language.** Determine beforehand the terms, jargon, and expressions this audience is likely to use and try to work some of that into your presentation. But try to avoid being too technical. Instead, be conversational. For example: “Think of the structure of a memo as a company’s organization chart.”

The most critical element in a good presentation is preparation. Included in that should be techniques to keep the audience listening.

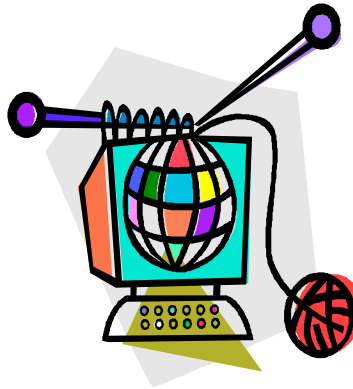
(For more help in this area, see *Powerful Presentations* by Cos Ferrara, at [www.MicroMash.com](http://www.MicroMash.com))

## Your Website: Is it time to refresh?

With technological advances and business changes coming rapidly, an organization's website can easily become haggard and obsolete. To keep your website fresh, consider these factors:

1. Is the site doing what you want it to? Is it still meeting your needs to communicate with clients? Are you still getting the positive responses? Are your expectations different now and can your original website meet those new expectations?

2. Is the site replete with old information? Has the organization changed significantly from what's on the site? Have you updated your list of services, client base, and staff?



3. Does the site scream out "old technology"? Will visitors take one look at your site and conclude the whole company is behind the times?

4. Does the site need streamlining? Have you made isolated changes over time to the point that the site looks like a patchwork quilt?

5. Does your content need editing? Are the images out-of-date or inappropriate? Is the copy wordy, clumsy, or inaccurate?

If you answered Yes to any of these questions, it's time for you to refresh. If you need help, call Cos Ferrara at 201-391-0178.

## Mechanics: Know when to use *who*, *which*, and *that*

To use these relative pronouns correctly, you have to check two criteria:

1. Is the pronoun referring to a person or a thing?
2. Is the word introducing a clause that is essential to the sentence's meaning or merely adding information?

**1. Person or thing.** Use *who* only when referring to a person. Use *which* only when referring to a thing or concept.

Donovan is the *woman who* turned the company around. (person)  
She gave *direction, which* the company had been lacking. (concept)

You may use *that* with persons, things, or concepts.

The *individual that* made the difference was Bird. (person)  
He provided the *vision that* the company needed. (concept)

**2. Essential or nonessential.** When your choice is between *which* and *that*, see if the clause introduced by the pronoun is essential to the meaning of the sentence. If the sentence's meaning would change or be unclear without the clause, the clause is essential. When the clause is essential, use *that*.

The change *that made the difference* began at her first staff meeting. (essential, *that*)

In the example above, the meaning of the sentence would

be very different without the clause. Therefore *that* is used.

Use *which* to introduce a nonessential clause, which adds information but whose omission would not change the meaning of the sentence.

The company objective, *which Bird designed*, became law. (nonessential, *which*)

Note that commas are used to set off the nonessential clause. The essential clause is not to be set off, so no commas surround it.

The change *that made the difference* began at her first staff meeting. (essential, no commas)

The company objective, *which Bird designed*, became law. (nonessential, commas)

**You Try It** Correct the misuse of pronouns and commas in these sentences.

1. The investor *which* bought the company had once been its mail clerk.
2. The Wall Street analysts, *that* had predicted the takeover, were ecstatic.
3. Total costs *which* can only be estimated approached \$1 billion.
4. An effect *which* no one foresaw was the wholesale firing of management.

(For more help with writing, see *Effective Writing for Accountants*, by Cos Ferrara, at by [www.MicroMash.com](http://www.MicroMash.com))