



Welcome to

Getting Results With Business Writing

Developed by

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Oakland, CA

Developed for

SVPMA

June 21, 2014



Objectives

- 1** Drive action in email
- 2** Improve clarity and conciseness
- 3** Make writing reflect well on you, your team, and your company

Principle #1

Write first;
edit later.





From a ten-year old:

Two months ago, I sent \$5 for a Snoopy sweatshirt. When will I get it?



From a business writer:

I call your attention to my correspondence dated September 10, a copy of which I enclosed herewith, wherein I ordered a Snoopy sweatshirt from your company in response to your ad on a Wheaties cereal box. I would like to know when I might expect to receive it.

Principle #2

**Don't write
anything that
you wouldn't
say.**



Principle #3

Write with a plan



A detailed map of California with a red line tracing a route from the San Francisco Bay Area, through the Central Valley, and down to Los Angeles and the South Coast. The route starts in San Francisco, goes south through the San Francisco Peninsula, then inland through the Central Valley (Sacramento, Modesto, Fresno, Visalia, Hanford, Delano, Bakersfield, Coalinga, San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Oxnard, Glendale, Pasadena, Los Angeles, Torrance, Long Beach, Santa Monica, Malibu, and finally down to Escondido and San Diego). The map includes major cities, highways, and geographical features like the Pacific Ocean, Lake Tahoe, and various national parks and monuments. A compass rose is visible in the bottom left corner.





Part 1 - Driving Action in Email

Why Are You Writing?

Attached Expense ~~Report~~: Receipts

Attached Expense Report: Copies of receipts needed

Titan II ~~Project~~ Status

Titan II Project Status: Requesting additional resources



Cover your bases:

- **Why**

- **Who**

- **What**

- **When**

- **Where**

- **How**

- **How much**

- **So what**



Avoid the Ping-Pong Effect

The PAPER format—Direct

Purpose – why?

Actions – You or I

Particulars – what

Evidence – Attachment, appendix,
or link

Request for response – Next step

Number the sentences 1—8 corresponding to the PAPER format

2 The client is complaining that our deliverables are not of the quality that we promised.

7 Furthermore, the reports being produced are unformatted and difficult to read. This is obviously unacceptable.

6 The database is not allowing the customer data to be imported properly. In fact, after testing, 30 percent of the data that was transferred was completely missing.

5 Let me name a couple specific problems with the system that I'm aware of.

8 Please let me know your schedule for Wednesday, September 13. I would like to meet with you for 45 minutes to discuss our plan to improve this situation.

4 Offshore personnel may also need additional communication with our designers for the next two weeks.

3 We need to meet with the design team to see how the architecture can be improved.

1 We have a situation that needs to be resolved immediately.



P

We have a situation that needs to be resolved immediately. The client is complaining that our deliverables are not of the quality that we promised.

A

We need to meet with the design team to see how the architecture can be improved. Offshore personnel may also need additional communication with our designers for the next two weeks.

P

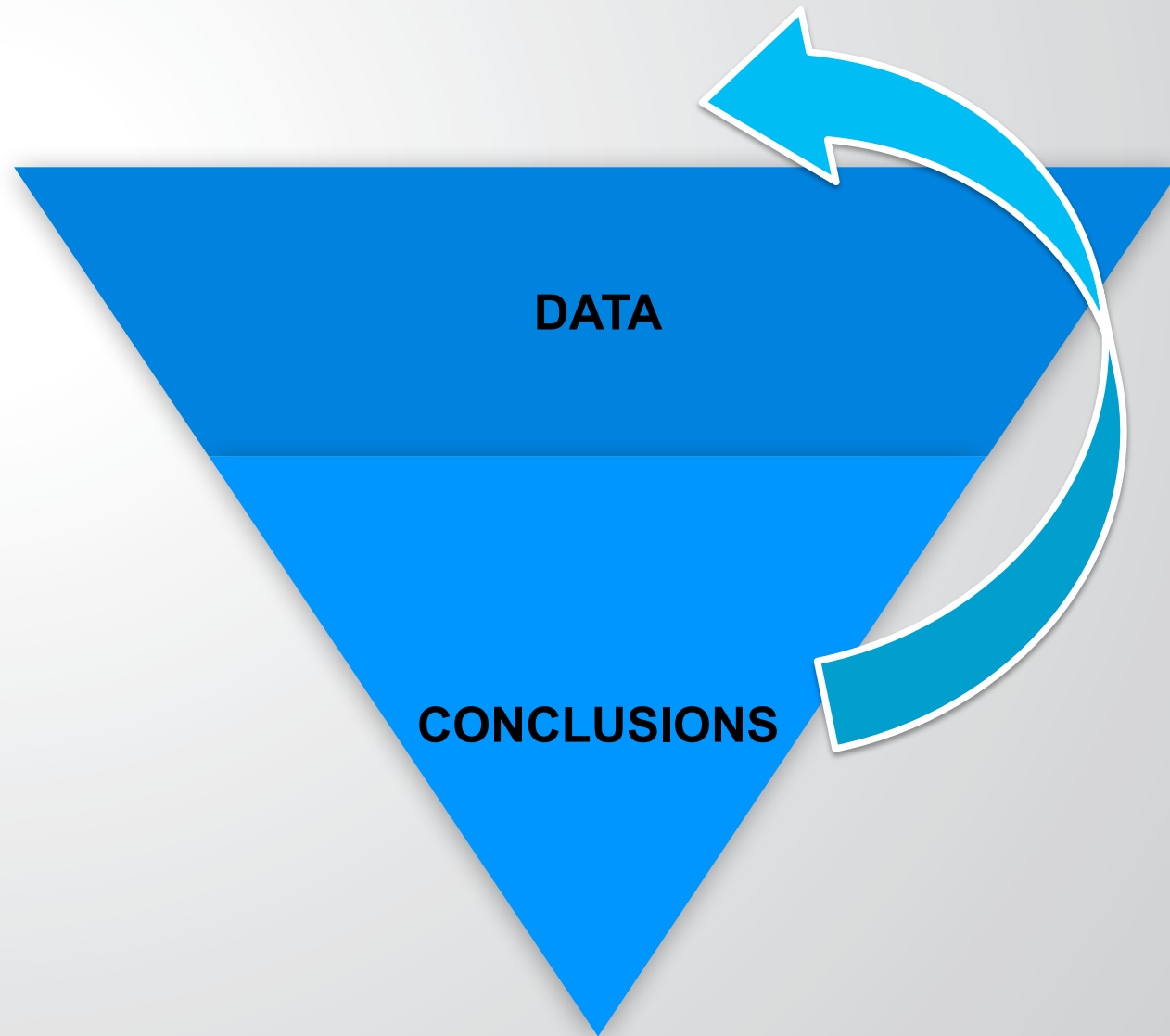
Let me name a couple of the problems I'm aware of. The database is not allowing the customer data to be imported properly. In fact, after testing, 30 percent of the data that was transferred was completely missing. Furthermore, the reports being produced are unformatted and difficult to read. This is obviously unacceptable.

E

R

Please let me know your schedule for Wednesday, September 13. I would like to meet with you for 45 minutes to discuss our plan to improve this situation.





The PRESS format—Indirect

Purpose or problem – why?

Reason for citing problem

Examples or evidence – W&H

Solution – Actions or Conclusions

Supporting material – Attachment,
appendix,
or link

PAPER

Old issue

Know answer

No convincing
necessary

Audience trusts
conclusion

Cut to the
chase

Direct

PRESS

New issue

Don't know
answer

Need to persuade

Need buy-in
from audience

Build a case

Indirect

**It's not enough
to make a better
mousetrap.**

**You must know
your mouse.**





"OLD BOTTOM LINE"





Sample Email—Before

Subject: Enrollment

Use the attached enrollment form to enroll in courses. This year we'll be using an OPEN ENROLLMENT system. You may enroll in any course up until one week before the course date. Enrollments after that time will not be accepted. Reminders about upcoming courses will be posted on bulletin boards. E-mail messages will be sent about a month before the course starts. The employee's supervisor must sign all enrollment forms.

By the way, cancel too late, and you pay.

Warmly,

Mary Bond



Sample Email—After

Subject: Training Course Enrollment—Review new system

This year we'll be using a new Open Enrollment system for training courses. Please review the following Information:

Action required

Review, complete, and submit the form at least one week prior to the course you wish to attend.

Details

The following are important details to be aware of regarding course enrollment:

- We will not accept enrollments less than seven business days of the course date.
- We will post reminders about upcoming courses on the bulletin board.
- We will send e-mail messages informing you about courses at least a month before the course is scheduled to begin.
- Employee supervisors must sign all enrollment forms.
- Your department will incur the charges if you cancel within one week of the course.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding the Open Enrollment System.

Best regards,

Mary Bond



Sample Email—Before

Subject: info

Hey Scott,

I was doing some work on the quarterly report and I've got some incomplete information from your last variance report. Can you send me numbers and what you know about the reason we were over budget on paper costs, IT support, misc. supplies, maintenance, and travel expenses? I need this stuff asap as I'm under the gun on getting this report to Sue. These budget overages are getting out of control and Sue is starting to get upset. What do you think about increasing the frequency of reporting on the budget items so we can get a better handle on this? Maybe we could do a weekly report for the next three months.

Anyway, hope the Omega project is not running behind sched.

Talk to you later,

Jim



Sample Email—After

Subject: Quarterly Variance Info: Need by tomorrow by 5 pm

Hi Scott,

I'm doing some work on the quarterly report and need some additional information. I would also like to discuss how we can get better control of our budget overages.

Information needed

I need the actuals, budgeted numbers, percentage over budget, and reason for variance for the items below. Can you get these to me by tomorrow by 5?

- Paper costs
- IT Support
- Misc. Supplies
- Maintenance
- Travel Expenses

Next Steps/Questions

I will forward your information to Sue, who is upset that these budget overages are getting out of control. What do you think about increasing the frequency of reporting on the budget items so we can get a better handle on this issue? Let's talk about doing a weekly report for the next three months.

Thanks for your help in pulling together the data.

Jim





R.E.S.P.E.C.T.

Sample Email

Subject: Strategy Meeting

Hi Rob,

Can you please come to the strategy meeting for the Titan II product line next Tuesday at 3PM in Conference room 10? We need to discuss product improvements, marketing strategies, and initial projections...so we'd like to hear your thoughts on the financials.

Thanks a lot and see you then,

Linda



Sample Email - After

Subject: Titan II strategy meeting—Prepare financial overview

Hi Rob,

We're discussing strategies for the Titan II product line with the VP at a meeting next Tuesday, May 7, at 3 pm in conference room 10. Please plan to be there.

Action Required

- Bring five copies of last year's financial reports
- Give the group a ten-minute overview of last year's Titan II sales
- Provide explanation of monthly financial results and variances

Details

We'll be discussing product improvements, marketing strategies, and initial projections for next year. Therefore, we'll need your financial expertise to help with the next year's Titan II plan.

Please follow up with questions, and I look forward to your summary.

Thanks,

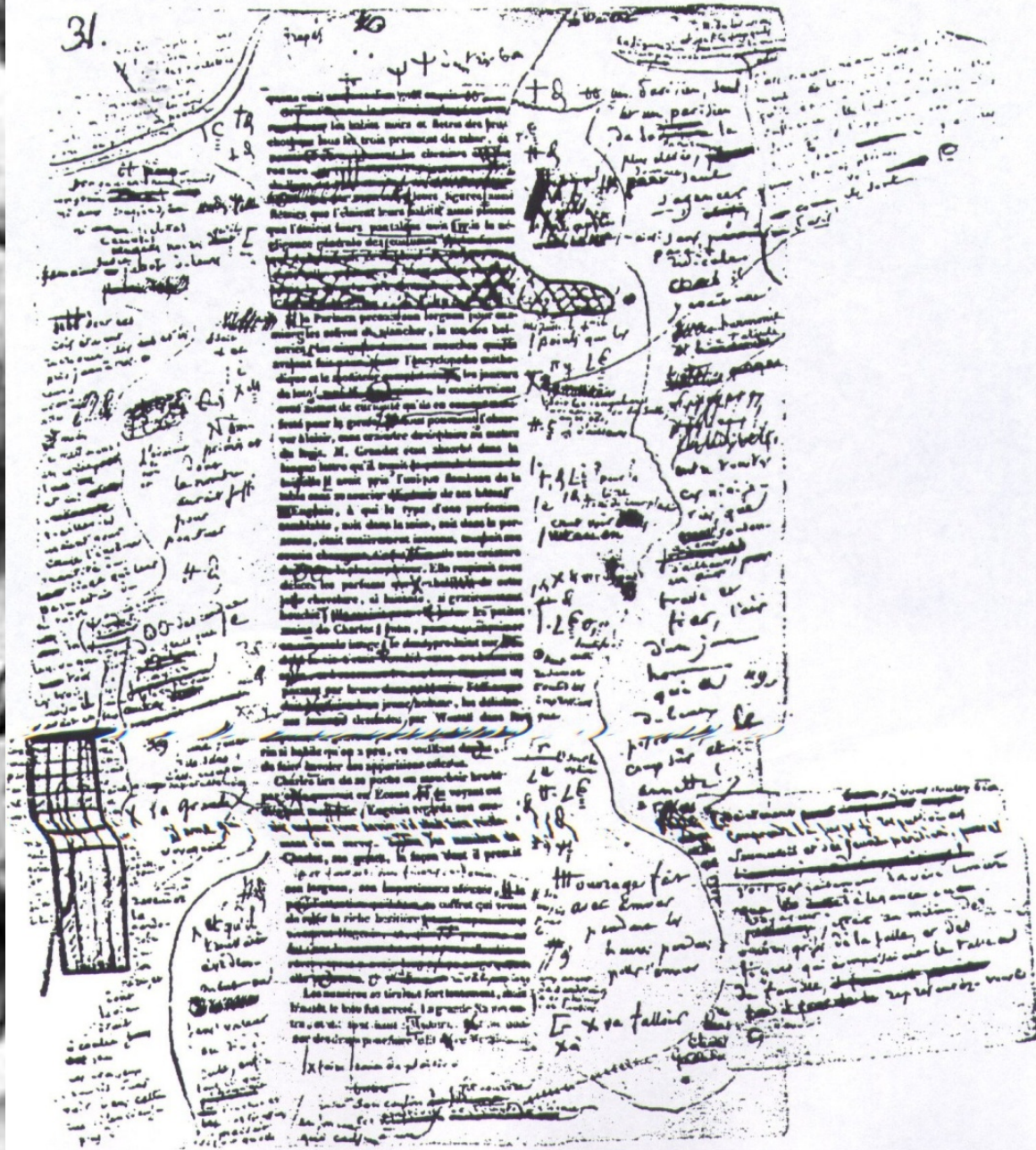
Linda





Part 2 - Achieving Clarity and Conciseness

REVISING UP TO THE VERY END



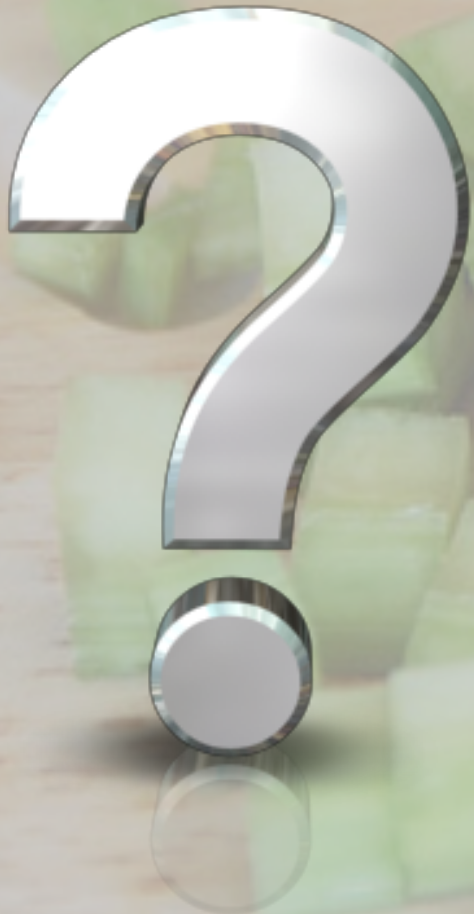
How important is it that we take care in crafting each sentence?



A. Very important

B. Not very important

How important is it that we choose precise words to convey our thoughts?



- A. Very important
- B. Not very important

How important is it that our sentences and ideas flow well in our writing?



- A. Very important
- B. Not very important

When you buy a new camera, how many of you read the manual?



A. Read it

B. Don't bother

When you search online to resolve an issue with your computer, how many read each answer word for word?



- A. Read each answer
- B. Glance as quickly as possible for answer

When you started your job and were handed the policies and procedures, did you read them?



A. Yes

B. No

Aesthetic and Accessibility

- Tables, charts, and graphics
- Headings and sub-headings
- Short paragraphs and sentences
- Bulleted and numbered lists
- White space
- Bold, italics, and underlining
- Section breaks

Wall of Words

Design Specification: Centauri Systems Website Development

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Short paragraphs

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White Space

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Headings

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Two columns

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Section breaks

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-

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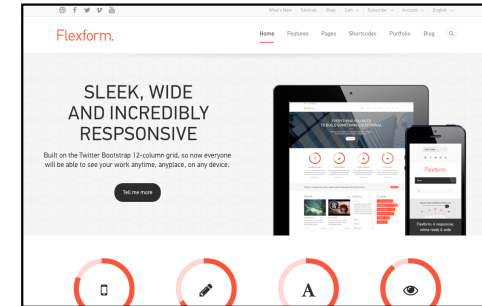
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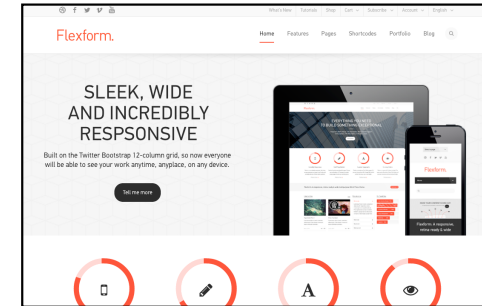
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Good Example of Parallel Structure

Preparation for the move includes the following:

- Laying a masonite surface on all traffic areas.
- Protecting walls, corners, and doors.
- Notifying both building managers of the move.



Poor Example of Parallel Structure

At the meeting, we will:

- Review the proposed ordinance.
- Discuss its legal implications.
- Listen to citizen comments.
- Take a vote.
- The meeting will then be adjourned.



Apply document and paragraph techniques

BEFORE

Status Report: eLearning Development Project

I'd like to report on the status of the eLearning development project over the past four weeks. The current state of the project is yellow, meaning that we are starting to run quite behind. This is because of the scope change of two additional courses being added and needing to be developed for the project. We are now at a total of six courses, instead of the original four. Are you aware of the fact that Jane wants to add a seventh course?!? We are pleased with the content of the new courses and think they'll be well received by the client. Since we had to spend time creating the templates and initial outlines for the two additional courses, we are looking at a budget overage to the tune of 25 percent. Therefore, we need to request authorization from you to change the PO to \$57,500 from \$45,000.

There are currently no issues with the project—it's just that we have had to make a schedule stretch-out adjustment and will need to look into the potentiality of pulling Dave off the eCommerce side of things and have him start creating the database for the Learning Management System. Fun stuff. By the way, we have reached completion of the content for the initial four courses. The graphics were added by Maria and we were able to examine the look and feel. The courses were then taken by Katherine and she said they ran exactly 55 minutes each, which is what we planned. We plan on utilizing Katherine's feedback on the courses and making modifications over the next month. We plan to also beta-test the courses and acquire feedback from one or two clients by next month. Last, we'll be able to load the courses on the LMS if Dave finishes the database.



Status Report: eLearning Development Project

I'd like to report on the status of the eLearning development project over the past four weeks.

Status Overview

The current state of the project is yellow, meaning that we are starting to run quite behind. This is because of the scope change of two additional courses being added and needing to be developed for the project. We are now at a total of six courses, instead of the original four.

We are pleased with the content of the new courses and think they'll be well received by the client.

Since we had to spend time creating the templates and initial outlines for the two additional courses, we are looking at a budget overage to the tune of 25 percent. Therefore, we need to request authorization to change the PO to \$57,500 from \$45,000.

Open Questions

1. Are you aware of the fact that Jane wants to add a seventh course?!? What are your thoughts on that?
2. Can you provide authorization to change the PO by Monday?

Issues

There are currently no issues with the project—it's just that we have had to make a schedule stretch-out adjustment and will need to look into the potentiality of pulling Dave off the eCommerce side of things and have him start creating the database for the Learning Management System. Fun stuff.

Accomplishments

By the way, we have reached completion of the content for the initial four courses. The graphics were added by Maria and we were able to examine the look and feel. The courses were then taken by Katherine and she said they ran exactly 55 minutes each, which is what we had planned.

Plan for Next Month

We plan on completing the following next month:

- Utilize Katherine's feedback on the courses and make modifications.
- Beta-test the courses and acquire feedback from one or two clients.
- Load the courses on the LMS if Dave finishes the database.

Maximize Active Voice

A background diagram showing a neuron with purple branching processes and a blue nucleus. Below the neuron are two HEK cells, represented as blue spheres with purple outlines. The neuron's processes end in 'Nerve terminals' containing small brown dots. The HEK cells have green and blue structures on their surfaces, some with red stars. Labels include 'Alpha 2 subunit' and 'Alpha 6 subunit' near the top right, and 'HEK cell' near the bottom left and right.

ACTIVE:

A synapse enables a neuron to pass an electrical current to a cell.

PASSIVE:

Passing an electrical current from a neuron to a cell is enabled by a synapse.

Change to Active Voice:

A diagram showing a neuron with purple branching processes and a blue nucleus. Two nerve terminals, depicted as purple sacs containing brown dots, are shown interacting with two HEK cells. The HEK cells are light blue with internal organelles. The neuron is labeled 'Nerve cell' and the HEK cells are labeled 'HEK cell'. The nerve terminals are labeled 'Nerve terminals'. The HEK cells are labeled 'HEK cell'. The diagram also includes labels for 'Alpha 2 subunit' (marked with a blue asterisk) and 'Alpha 6 subunit' (marked with a red asterisk) on the neuron's surface.

1. A meeting was held in the conference room by the committee members.

2. The phone was answered.

***SCRAP* Your Excess**

- S** pineless qualifiers
- C** ontemptible jargon
- R** idiculously long words/phrases
- A** nnoying nouns
- P** ointless verbiage

Cut the spineless qualifiers

I ~~truly~~ enjoyed our time at lunch last week. The style and commitment level you demonstrate in your business make you ~~very~~ unique.

Contemptible Jargon

- profit margin reduction
- schedule stretchout adjustment
- interior intrusion detection systems
- employment-affected outplacement

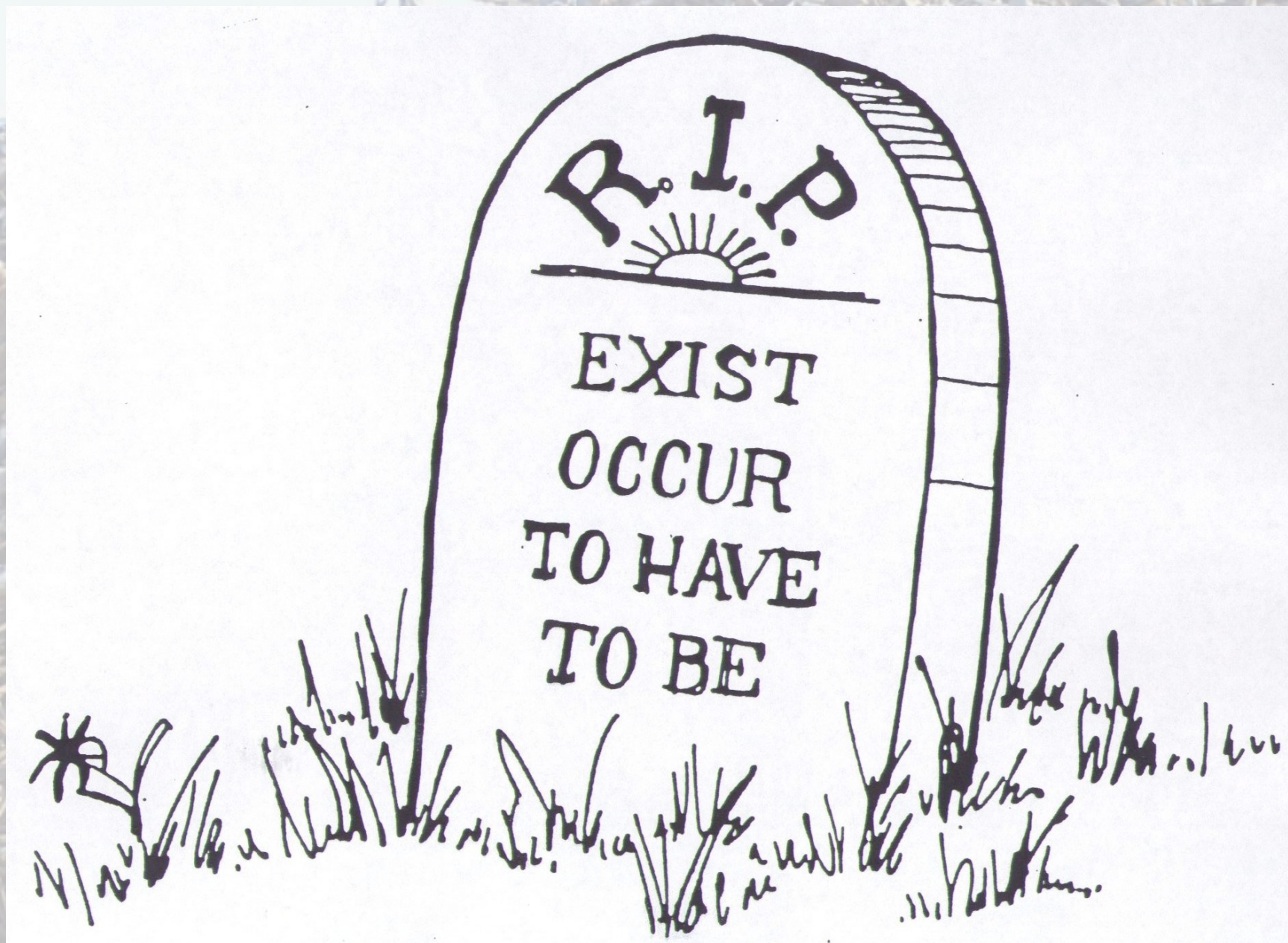
Buzz-Phrase Projector

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
integrated	management	options
total	organizational	flexibility
systematized	monitored	capability
parallel	reciprocal	mobility
functional	digital	program
responsive	logistical	concept
optional	transitional	projection
compatible	third generation	hardware

Shun the “TION” Words

Due to the ramifications of the dissemination of the objections to the qualifications of the definitions...

Susan Quinn, *Write Right*



Find Those Hidden Verbs

1. This caused complications in bookkeeping.
2. That rule is applicable in this case.
3. The job presents a challenge to our engineers.



Part 3 - Proofreading for Perfection

Five Steps to Proofreading:

1. **Let the document rest.**
2. **Print it.**
3. **Skim it—get a sense of layout and content.**
4. **Read out loud.**
5. **Have an associate proof it.**

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Thank You

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