



A to Z Business Communication Tips

By Cathy Miller

©2023

SimplyStatedBusiness.com



SIMPLY Stated Business
for better business communication

Introduction

At the start of 2015, Simply Stated Business (SSB) took an alphabetic journey through business communication. From A to Z, each post offered tips and ideas to help you with your business communication.

The posts have been updated; however, this ebook pulls a few tips from the newer versions. Sprinkled throughout this ebook are links to the full blog posts. So, sit back and enjoy quick A to Z tips for better business communication.



*Helping you keep business communication
simple, clear, and uniquely yours.*

Legal Stuff

All information contained in this ebook is copyright © 2023 by Cathy Miller. All rights are reserved.

I appreciate you sharing this ebook but keep all links, credits, and format in place. Do not edit any content when sharing.

Do not sell this ebook or publish it (or any portion) of this ebook, including breaking it down to publish articles, posts, or excerpts.

Kick Your Business Communication into Action

Welcome to the first letter of our alphabetic journey to better business communication. 'A' knows it has a heavy responsibility. After all, it leads 25 other letters in our Tip Parade. So, let's cue up the band.

Sometimes words get lazy and hit the snooze button. Our first tip shows you how to wake those words up and kick them into action.

Pump up the action.

Have you ever read a murder mystery where you could almost taste the metallic fear of the first victim? Your heart pounds in anticipation of what is about to happen. That's the power of pumped-up words.

Action verbs create an image in the reader's mind. Strong action verbs snare your audience in a sturdy net of caring about what comes next.

TIP: Describe what is happening instead of just telling your reader.

Instead of: *Our product has made our customers happy.*

Get active: *Our customers rave over how simple it is to track sales.*

What: Your customers are *raving* (in a good way). **Why:** Because your product makes it *simple to track sales*.

Ready to wake up your words? Take action today.

P.S. Want more action?

- Read the post, [Business Communication Shouts Action](#), for more tips.
- Download the free word list – [Power Words for Business Writing](#).

B is a Boring Mess

When you think about business communication, what is the first word that pops into your head? For many, the word is a yawn-popping boring.

To help you avoid the dreaded B word, our next tip offers you an animated idea for banishing the boring.

*TIP: Animate your business communication –
literally and figuratively.*

Instead of: Product descriptions

Animate by: Show how products work instead of just writing about it.

Instead of: Written dialogue or interviews

Animate with: Live presentations, videos, or podcasts

Instead of: BORING words

Animate with: Figurative and descriptive language

Ready to banish the boring from your business communication?

P.S. Want more bore-busting ideas?

- Grab additional tips in the post, [The Dreaded B Word in Business Communication](#).
- Download the free word list, [Descriptive Words for Business Writing](#), to replace BORING words.
- Want some figurative language ideas? Read [Is Your Business Writing Figuratively Speaking?](#)

C is Catchy

The letter 'C' has a lot to say. But for brevity's sake, I selected just one of the 7 Cs from the post, *Surf the 7 Cs of Business Communication*.

TIP: Be Concise

If you are like me, writing like you talk may be a problem. I ramble. Talk about a way to lose readers – fast.

One question to ask yourself in your editing is – What can I eliminate? Below are a few examples.

- Eliminate redundancies – ~~necessary~~ requirement
- Delete dangling debris – *The product was ~~very~~ expensive and poorly made.*
- Flip passive voice to active – Instead of: *The course was taken by Ben.* Try: *Ben took the course.*

Is your business communication crisp and concise?

P.S. Curious about the other 6 Cs? Want to know about the Rule of Three?

- Read the post, [Surf the 7 Cs of Business Communication](#).
- Check out Master Class's post, [How to Use the Rule of Three in Writing](#).

D is for Details, Details, Details

Do you know the width of the balance beam used in women's gymnastics? 4 inches (10 cm). That's about the width of a business envelope. Try balancing on that.

When it comes to business communication, the devil is in the details. How much is too much? And when does too little muddle your message? The following is a simple tip on balancing those devilish details.

TIP: Picture balance

Would your business communication put an image in my head? Could I picture exactly what you are saying? Successful communication does.

Instead of: Our cloud storage keeps your files safe.

Create a mental image with more details: Even after computer glitches, crashes, or drowning, your files will still be there in the cloud.

Do you have enough details to create an image? Or do the details end up in a fuzzy picture?

Find your detail balance.

P.S. Want more ideas for balancing on the beam of better business communication?

- Read the post, [Devilishly-Detailed Business Communication](#)
- Watch the short video – [Business Communication: The Devil is in the Details](#)

E has Email

This latest tip deals with the non-marketing aspect of email. It zeroes in on the use of the email tool for communicating with staff and clients.

What is your #1 annoying misuse of email?

- Spam would win hands-down – if we were talking about email marketing.
- But what drives you nuts about some users' email habits?

[In a 2020 survey](#), over 2/3 of workers identified USING ALL CAPS FOR WORDS OR SENTENCES!!! as a HUGE annoying email habit (52% hate the use of too many exclamation points).

Other annoying habits included:

- Copying (cc:) people who do not need to be included (63%)
- OMG – using slang (53%)
- Not proofreading emails before sending (50%)

We each have our own pet peeves. Chances are, no matter what you do, someone will be annoyed. So, what can you do?

TIP: Think Pause before Send

- Breathe and check what you wrote.
- We often repeat the same annoying habits we hate.
- Weed out the annoying habits.

P.S. Want more tips on removing annoying email habits? Read the post, [Eradication Tips for 10 Email Annoyances](#)

F Fulfills Forms

You bump into forms often – from a long-form application to sharing your information for downloading a report.

Now, picture filling out forms on a smartphone. Is there anything as annoying as attempting to fill out page after page on your teeny-tiny smartphone?

TIP: Feel the frustration

Put that frustration and image in your head every time you develop a form for your website.

1. Keep forms short – try not to exceed three or four fields to fill out.
2. Eliminate unnecessary fields – just because you want it for your marketing does not mean you should include it (e.g., date of birth, gender)
3. Keep function simple – a ton of drop-down menus gets super annoying. Try radio buttons instead.

P.S. Check out additional tips on managing your business forms. Read the post, [Are Your Business Forms in Good Shape?](#)

G Grabs Grammar

Does it feel like your main source of online interaction is from the Grammar Patrol? Make one little stumble and they come out in force.

No matter how well-versed you are in grammar, mistakes happen. Even if it's only in the mind of the grammar critic. So, what can you do? First, relax. Then use whatever tools work best for you.

TIP: List repeat offenders

A simple tip to get you started – make a list of your most common missteps.

- Your fingers insist on typing *Your* when you really mean *You're*.
- Or is it *capitol* or *capital*?
- Keep your list handy to root out those sneaky grammar gremlins.

P.S. How would you like a grab-bag of grammar tips and tools? Check out these free resources.

- Read the post, [Tools for Avoiding Grammar Pitfalls](#) (with even more resources).
- Like this abundance of free downloads on SSB's [Tools page](#).

H is Hiring

All working people hit the hiring process at some stage in their life. Even if you are sole proprietor, clients hire you or you may hire independent contractors (like a web designer).

Probably every one of us has a hiring hell story. So, what can you do differently?

TIP: Think sales

One tip to avoid the frustrating flames of hiring is to think sales.

A *good* salesperson wouldn't tick off a customer. Instead, that salesperson tries to keep the customer happy. So, if you are the one hiring, keep job candidates informed and empathize with their journey.

And if you are the one being hired, follow application guidelines, and thank recruiters.

P.S. Want more hiring tips? Read the post, [3 Simple Communication Tips to Improve Your Hiring Process](#)

I Improvement

How many times have you read to stop using “I” in business communication? I believe 😊 there is a Good and Evil I.

The Evil I is the impatient intruder focused on all things I. But how does Good I work?

TIP: Focus on I alternatives

Instead of peppering business communication with the I's version of you, focus on an alternative. Like the I alternative word – Invest.

Invest in your customer's needs and deliver something special.

P.S. Want more I alternatives for the Good I?

- Read the post, [When I Works in Business Communication](#)
- View the short [video version](#)

J Just Because

Do you remember your dream that going online would stop junk mail? Not only do you *still* get bombarded with postal junk mail, now you have junk email, texts, and pop-up ads.

Think how your customers feel. But what if you could send communication they welcomed?

TIP: Embrace “just because” communication

What is “just because” communication? It’s the no-strings-attached gift that brightens your customer’s day.

- Like a gift card thanking them for their loyalty.
- Or the sharing of an industry report they would have had to purchase.
- Give the unexpected and get back so much more.

P.S. Want more ideas just because? Read the post, [Business Communication Just Because](#)

K is a Kindred Spirit

Is your best buddy someone you instantly connected with? You feel like kindred spirits, sharing similar interests and concerns. Imagine if you instilled that connection through your business communication.

TIP: Think about what drives you nuts – then fix it.

You seldom see business communication advice encouraging you to think about yourself first. What happened to focusing on the customer? You still are – promise.

A core trait of kindred spirits is a shared experience. So, think about what drives you nuts about business or customer service.

- Chances are the same issue drives your customers nuts, too.
- Identify what that issue is.
- Then fix it.

Here are a few examples how fixing what drives you nuts about business communication helps your customer.

- [Hate being ignored when you contact a business?](#) Develop an acknowledgement system and standards for responding. And stick to it religiously.
- [Frustrated when you can't find contact information?](#) Ensure your website and business communication all have easy-to-find contact information.
- [Wish you had a how-to guide on a specific product?](#) Give customers a simple guide to product use.

Simple, isn't it?

P.S. Want to learn other tips on becoming a kindred spirit to your customers' needs?

→ Read the post, [Becoming Kindred Spirits in Business Communication](#)

L Leaves a Lasting Impression

Mary was looking forward to an industry conference she saved up for. With excited anticipation, she walked into the room and was immediately met by Arnold.

Without asking Mary for her name (or anything about herself), Arnold started in on his sales pitch. What kind of lasting impression do you think Arnold made?

TIP: Get personal.

Imagine if Arnold had asked Mary about herself first.

- Who she was
- What company Mary worked for
- Why she decided to come to the conference

Getting personal by asking questions produces multiple benefits.

1. Questions boost understanding about the person's job, lifestyle, and interests.
2. Connecting helps identify what challenges individuals (or their companies) have.
3. A professional encounter opens the door to other opportunities (referrals, sales, feedback).

P.S. Curious about what other ways you can make a good lasting impression?

- Read the post, [What Lasting Impression Does Your Business Communication Leave?](#)
- Download the free ebook – [20 Communication Tips for Creating a Lasting Impression](#)

M Manages Mistakes

You finish a great post and are eager to share it with your audience. Then the comments come in. Your readers have a vastly different take on your message. How did that happen?

Mistakes misrepresent your message. Some may be unintentional, but they are just as deadly (like the following).

TIP: Beware of the word, “But” (and other negative undertones).

Are you scratching your head at how a word like “but” could misrepresent your message? Look at the following responses using “but” or other negative words from a customer service representative. What is your reaction?

- We could do that, **BUT** then we would need to charge more.
- I'm **NOT SURE** that will work.
- I **CAN'T** approve that.

What if the representative responded this way instead?

- **Yes, we can offer that option.** You can choose between the standard for \$9.99 or upgrade to the premium for only \$2.00 more at \$11.99.
- **Sure, let's try that approach.**
- **I'll be happy to ask my supervisor.** Would you like to hold while I do that? (Bonus Tip: An even better response is for the company to give front-line employees the authority to make those decisions).

P.S. Want to know other mistakes that misrepresent your message and how to avoid them?

- Read the post, [7 Mistakes That Misrepresent Your Message](#)
- Download the infographic – [7 Tips for Avoiding Mistakes That Misrepresent Your Message](#)

N is a Negative Son of a Gun

In the last tip, you discovered how negative words or tone can misrepresent your message to your customers. Negative language takes different shapes. The following is a weaker form.

TIP: Convert weak words into powerful alternatives.

Do you know someone who is constantly apologizing? For everything?

Repeated excuses or apologies damage the credibility of the guilty party. Would you want to buy something from a person who lacks confidence? Substitute confident-sounding words for weak language.

- **Instead of:** *I'm sorry. I don't know the answer to that.*
- **Strengthen it:** *I will be happy to find that answer for you.*

P.S. Want to know other forms of negative language sabotaging your message?

- Read the post, [Negating Negative Business Communication](#)
- Download the free word lists – [Alternatives for Negative Business Words/Phrases](#) and [Positive Persuasive Words for Business Writing](#)

O is for the Outsiders

Picture the last time you were someplace where you did not know a soul. Someplace where everyone else knew each other.

Feeling like an outsider can be uncomfortable. While no business intentionally alienates its customers, certain business communication blunders do just that.

TIP: Avoid language that excludes differences.

I am a caregiver for my mom who turned 100 (!) this year. So, I have a different perspective on communication sent to her from various businesses.

- Like those that offer an online response only.
- Some tell her to scan a QR code.
- Or scan a document and email it.

See the problem? She has no cell phone or printer. And while Mom is better than most at her age, when it comes to computers, newer technology is beyond her scope.

We are each unique with cultural, lifestyle, accessibility, and other differences. Avoid using language that is slanted toward one segment.

Failing to recognize differences leaves customers feeling like outsiders.

P.S. Want to know other business communication blunders that alienate customers?

→ Read the post, [Do You Treat Customers Like Outsiders?](#)

P is Very Persuasive

In my corporate days, I enrolled in a negotiating course. The instructor offered this tip: *If you want an example of negotiating at its finest, listen to your child's pleas at bedtime.*

Wouldn't you love if all your business communication persuaded customers to act? Different techniques improve your chances.

TIP: Answer your customer's Why

Your customers ask why a lot.

- Why should I?
- Why would I care?
- Why am I getting this?

Anticipate your customers' *Whys* and give them a *Because*.

WHY SHOULD I READ THIS? Because...*ABC Widgets produced faster response time and saved customers an average of 15% doing it.* (Additional Tip: make sure it's a problem the reader shares).

P.S. Want to know additional techniques to create persuasive language?

→ Read the post, [A Plethora of Persuasive Business Communication Tips](#)

Q Asks Questions

John's sales training promoted the technique of asking questions to learn more about potential customers. So, when John met Megan from Fabulous Company R-Us, the first question he asked was:

- *Are you happy with your current phone system?*
- Megan replied, "Yes".
- John thought, *Now what?*

TIP: Ask open questions.

Asking questions is an excellent way to learn more about a customer or a prospect. But don't slam the door on knowledge by asking questions that are easily answered with one-word responses.

Using the above example, the following are alternative questions John could ask.

- *Why did you choose your current platform for your phone system?*
- *What are your favorite features about the system?*
- *Are there functions you wish you had?*

Imagine the wealth of information you'll learn through open questions.

P.S. Want more techniques for asking good questions?

→ Read the post, [Can Questions Guide you to Better Business Communication?](#)

R is into Relations

Have you followed someone on social media because you love her work? You comment regularly on her posts and send her questions through her blog. But the only sound you hear back is crickets chirping.

Would you keep following that person?

Individuals can be brilliant writers or clever entrepreneurs. But that means nothing if they don't pay attention to their business relationships.

TIP: Take business relationships personally.

Each contact offers an opportunity.

- Valuable networking connections
- A resource for feedback
- A potential sale

Make relationships personal.

- Send a birthday greeting (if you know it – and not the canned LinkedIn greeting).
- Act on their feedback, then give them credit.
- Acknowledge their efforts.

When you ignore someone who reaches out, you obliterate opportunities.

P.S. Do you know the other business relationship killers? Check out 3 tips to keep your business relationships thriving.

→ Read the post, [How to Stop Business Relationship Killer](#)

S Builds Silos

When I was a child, my family took road trips that crossed farmlands. Dotting the landscape were tall, towering silos where farmers stored grains.

Instead of storing grain, business silos store knowledge. Typically, companies separate various specialties and expertise into department silos. For example, sales, customer service, and production.

But imagine if the farmer stored the grain but never used it. What's the point, right? Business silos that do not share knowledge become pointless, too. One sign of a business silo gone wrong is missing information.

TIP: Use tools for tracking information workflow.

Have you ever told a customer one thing only to find out it no longer applies? Someone in your company forgot to loop you in about the change.

How did that make you feel? Pretty frustrated, right? Think how your customer feels.

A simple tool helps small and large businesses share information effectively. Try building a framework for tracking, such as the following RACI process.

- Responsible – who does what
- Accountable – the one in charge (business owner)
- Consulted – your subject matter experts
- Informed – individuals who need to be updated on status

P.S. Want more signs of business silos gone wrong? And a template for developing your RACI tool?

- Read the post, [3 Scary Signs of Business Communication Silos](#)
- Download the RACI template – [Marketing Roles & Responsibilities](#)

T Taunts Terrifying Typos

How many times have you hit Send and had a glaring typo leap out at you as you scream, “Stop”? None of us are immune to typos – even those whose life mission is to tell you about yours.

The best tip is to relax and laugh at yourself. But the following tip may help before those pesky letters pull their typo taunt.

TIP: Create a personal typo list.

We tend to make the same mistakes. In addition to typos, we may use the wrong word that sounds like the one we want (think they’re/there/their).

Create a list of your most common terrifying typos.

- Keep the list handy so you can find it quickly.
- Update your list, as needed.
- Check it before hitting the sneaky Send button.

P.S. Need some prompting on what should go on your list?

- Read the post, [Ten Terrifying Typos in Business Communication](#)
- Watch the video version of [Ten Terrifying Typos](#)

U is Undermining You

I used to usher at the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival in Ohio. One of my favorite perks was getting to watch the plays for free.

One of the actresses was a real scene-stealer. When another actor was speaking, she remained in character, making hysterical facial expressions. I wonder how amusing the other actors viewed her scene-stealing. They may have thought she was undermining their performance.

Sometimes, distractions undermine your business communication's message.

TIP: Ask yourself – what can I remove?

Technology is fabulous. It has made our jobs easier. But sometimes technology is more a distraction than a benefit. It undermines your message.

- Annoying pop-up ads that make reading impossible
- Automatic video play that assaults the senses as soon as you sign on
- Too many drop-down menus

Take a critical eye to business communication and the vehicles you use. Ask yourself – what can I remove? Whether it's words or technology, keeping it simple, clear, and unique helps your message shine.

P.S. Want more tips to avoid confusion that undermines your message?

→ Read the post, [Stop Those Message-Undermining Dastardly Demons](#)

V is Invitingly Vivid

Do you remember that moment when Dorothy's house in the Wizard of Oz landed? Dorothy opened the door in her black and white world and walked into technicolor splendor.

Vivid business communication flips the switch from boring to inspired. Help readers experience the technicolor splendor of vivid business communication.

TIP: Be sensible about vivid communication.

Think about the last time you read a novel where you could feel the tension. Or smell the stench of death in a murder mystery. Vivid writing puts your senses on high alert.

A great trick for producing vivid communication is using one or more of our senses to describe ideas.

- **Hearing** – *Relax to KL7's silent cycle, shushing the clanking, churning noise of old dishwashers.*
- **Sight** – *User manuals read like a bullet-riddled paper victim at a shooting range.*
- **Smell** – *The recipe smelled like childhood, rich with the aroma of Nana's freshly-baked cookies.*
- **Touch** – *Glide your hand over the smooth surface of wood transformed by the Kelsey Sander X5.*
- **Taste** – *Our chardonnay wraps a buttery ribbon of flavor, tying up tastebuds in a smooth finish.*

P.S. Would you like other tricks for creating vivid communication?

→ Read the post, [3 Tricks for Vivid Business Communication](#)

W is Welcoming

Social media is a fabulous way to connect with potential customers. When done right.

But picture this.

- You sign on to your favorite social media platform.
- The first post that pops up is a rage-filled rant filled with expletives.
- A brief time later, you receive a request to connect with the author of that lovely post.

What would you do?

TIP: Never post something you wouldn't send to your ideal client.

We often forget that what we post is there for all the world to see – including our ideal client. ALL communication represents our business.

Keep business communication welcoming. You never know who is watching.

P.S. Want to know what other missteps cause a less than welcoming feeling in business communication?

→ Read the post, [How Welcoming is Your Business Communication?](#)

X Copies Xerox

A common saying is, “Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.” That’s true, except if you’re talking about copyright or trademark infringement.

- But some businesses had even a worst problem.
- Their product name became the term used to describe all products of the same type.
- For example, Xerox became synonymous with photocopying.

You may think that’s a great problem to have but Xerox was in danger of losing its trademark. The company also had a tough time getting known for their other products.

While you may never have Xerox’s challenge, you can encounter your own brand problems. Missteps can cause confusion and even harm your business.

TIP: Create a brand message that tells your story.

Maybe you are a sole proprietor and think you don’t need to worry about a brand message. But if you are not clear on your brand message, you risk confusing – or worse – boring your target market.

So, how do you create your brand message? Start by answering three questions.

1. **WHAT** do you do?
2. **HOW** are you different?
3. **WHY** should customers care?

P.S. Need more ideas for promoting your brand identity?

→ Read the post, [Do You Have a Xerox Brand Identity Problem?](#)

Y is for You

Are you thinking, “Oh no, another tip about using *you* instead of *I*”? Well, I am going to flip the script on you. 😊

TIP: Be the authentic YOU.

Look at your business communication. Now think about you.

- Does it sound like you?
- Do you believe it?
- Is the tone hitting the right note?

To focus on the you in customer service, be the authentic you.

P.S. Want more tips for incorporating the right you in business communication?

→ Read the post, [Finding the Right You in Business Communication](#)

Z Dazzles with Zing

Pat yourself on the back. You made it to the last letter in our alphabetic journey of business communication tips. Woo-hoo!

Let's go out with a bang. Our last tip offers one way to add Zing to boring business communication, so you bedazzle your words into sparkling gems.

TIP: Add intrigue to entice readers.

Have you ever been rapidly scrolling through social media posts when something stops your flipping finger in its tracks?

- Maybe it's a stunning photo
- A hysterical meme
- Or an attention-grabbing headline.

To dazzle your audience and add zing to your business communication, add intrigue that makes them want to know more.

Review your content and picture a seductive individual with a crooked finger, inviting you inside. Does your content have that zing?

P.S. Interested in more tips for adding zing?

→ Read the post, [27 Ways to Add Zing to Your Business Communication](#)