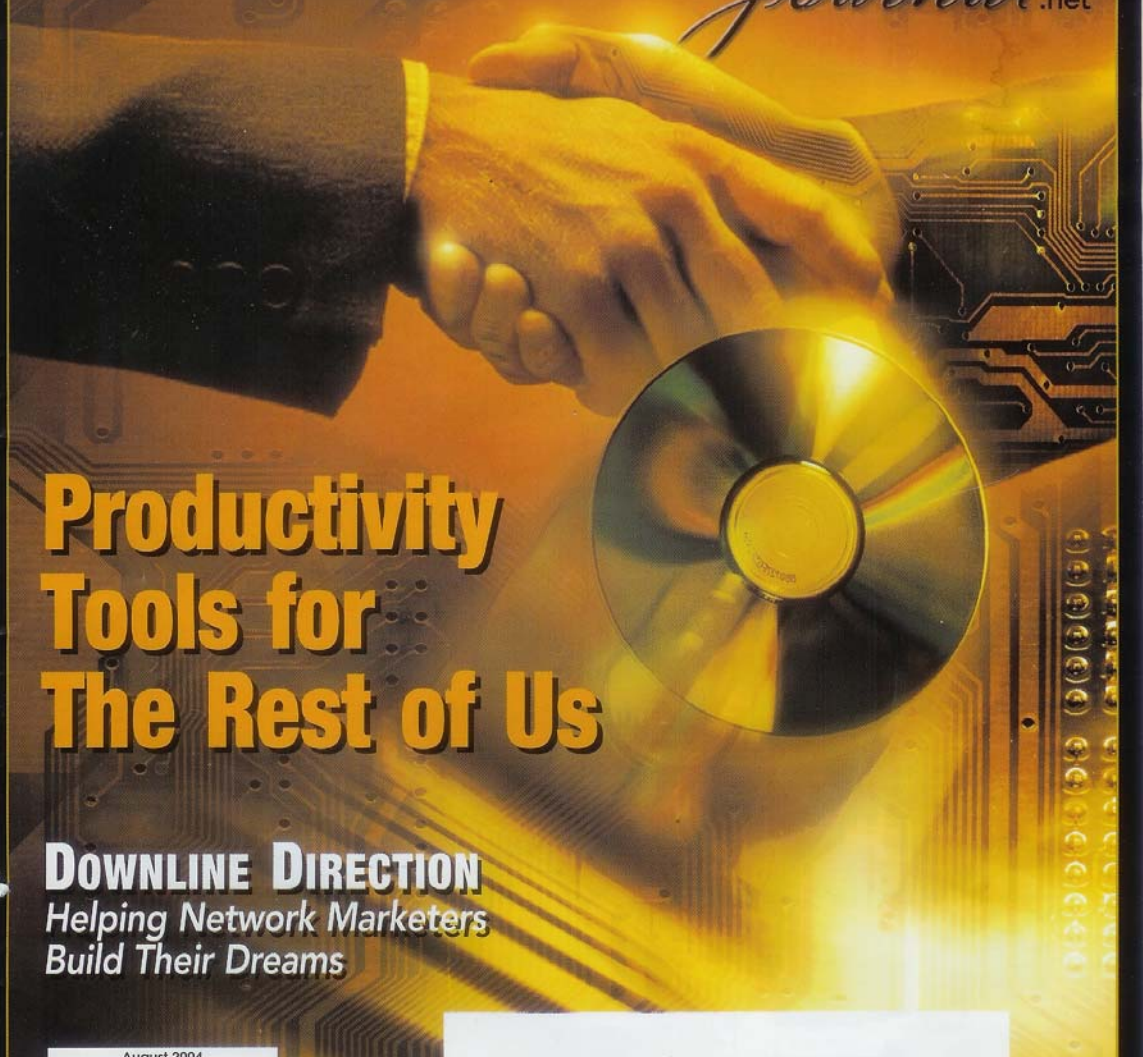


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# Write In Style: Tech Tips Add Clout To Your Content

by Bobbie Christmas

*Take your computer beyond checking for spelling and grammar. This technique and your current word-processing program team up to put power in your promotional materials.*

No matter what business you own, sooner or later, you have to write something. Sales letters, collection letters, proposals, press releases, Web copy, advertisements, reports, e-mail notes, speeches and other materials all demand that you present yourself and your company in the best light. Your written materials will change from plodding to persuasive, from conniving to convincing when you apply the Find and Refine Method® outlined in the recently released book, *Write In Style* (Union Square Publishing).

### *Write First, Revise Later*

Before you can refine a report, proposal or other prose, you must first write, so first write your materials as best you can. Let your ideas flow naturally from your brain to the paper or your computer. Don't worry about grammar, punctuation, syntax (word order) or revision until you have completed your draft.

After you have written a draft, use the tech tips and key words in this article. As a result, you, too, will write in style.

### *The Find and Refine Method®*

*Write In Style* explains that good writing style relates more to what writers leave out, than on what they put into their works. The Find and Refine Method® allows everyone to use their current word-processing program to locate words to delete, and as a result, the writing style improves.

Most word-processing programs display a list of functions across the top or down the side of the screen. The first item in the list is usually File, followed by Edit, View, Insert and so on. When you pull down the Edit menu and choose Find, you're on your way to refining your style. In the Find function, type in the key words described in this article, to find and replace "missed opportunities for improvement." When you delete the words listed in this article, your writing grows in strength, right before your eyes.

Although *Write In Style* applies the Find and Refine Method® to many types of writing, here are a few words specific to business, and when you find and refine these words, you add muscle to your money-making materials.

### *Help!*

Most people don't want help; they want you to do the work. They also want a complete job,

whereas the word "help" implies you perform the work only partially. In your advertising copy, you might have a choice of these two mottoes:

1. We help increase your computer security.
2. We increase your computer security.

Which is better? Number two is stronger, shorter and tighter, and it implies that the company does all the work, the complete job.

To use the Find and Refine Method®, go to the Find function and type in the word "help." Each time the finder stops on "help," rethink the sentence and rewrite it in a way that deletes "help." Here are some possible examples and revisions:

**Original:** *David Ritchie photography will help make your wedding memories permanent.*

### **Stronger revision:**

*David Ritchie photography makes your wedding memories permanent.*

**Original:** *Sanford Window Blinds help brighten up your house.*

**Stronger revision:** *Sanford Window Blinds brighten up your house.*

### *Don't Try, Do!*

Try, another word that appears harmless on the surface, rarely has a place in advertising

copy, sales letters or proposals. If you were the buyer, would you prefer to hear, "We try to satisfy you" or "We satisfy you"? You want to hear the second version, because the first one implies that although you try, you may not achieve your goals.

Use the Find and Refine Method® by going to your Edit menu, scroll down to Find, type in "try," and revamp every sentence that uses it.

Your changes might look like these:

**Original:** *Nancy's Outsource Services tries to find the best sources at lowest prices.*

**Stronger revision:** *Nancy's Outsource Services finds the best sources at the lowest prices.*

**Original:** *Flier Web Page Designs tries to enhance your exposure.*

**Stronger revision:** *Flier Web Page Designs enhances your exposure.*

### Can You? Will You?

When you delete auxiliary verbs such as can, will, would, should, have, and had, you strengthen your advertising copy, memos, letters and proposals. You may not be able to delete every use of auxiliary verbs, but each deletion increases your persuasiveness. Type each of those auxiliary verbs, one at a time, into your Find function. When they appear in your copy, decide how you might change them to more stylish writing. Here are a few examples:

**Original:** *Mildred's Mildew Remover can make your deck look brand new.*

**Stronger revision:** *Mildred's Mildew Remover makes your deck look brand new.*

#### Original:

*Barron Bug-a-boo will inspect your house for insects, and if we find any, we will exterminate them.*

#### Stronger revision:

*Barron Bug-a-boo inspects your home, and if we find insects, we exterminate them. (Notice that the personalization of house to home adds an emotional element to the copy, as well.)*

#### Original:

*We would like to be of service to you.*

#### Stronger revision:

*We want to be of service to you.*

**Original:** *You should give us a call today.*

**Stronger revision:** *Call us today.*

## Believe in Yourself

You believe in what your company does for customers, but when you use the word "believe," prospects may think you don't quite believe it yourself. For that reason, look for ways to avoid the words think, feel and believe. Another opportunity hides behind the word if.

Below are some sentences and suggested revisions:

#### Original:

*We believe we are the best in the business.*

#### Stronger revision:

*We are the best in the business.*

#### Original:

*If you feel you need a new newsletter company, one that can take care of all your problems, MVN Newsletter Company can help.*

#### Stronger revision:

*When you are ready for a new newsletter company, one that solves all your problems, MVN Newsletter Company stands ready to serve you.*

**Original:** *If you think it's time to use a better accounting service, our representative will meet with you and give you an estimate.*

#### Stronger revision:

*When you are ready to use a better accounting service, our representative meets with you and gives you an estimate.*

make it more powerful. You can even do it with quotations. Look at this example:

**Original:** *Bruce Roy says he did not always live in a penthouse apartment. He says, "I remember when I was growing up on a two-acre dirt farm."*

**Stronger revision:** *Bruce Roy did not always live in a penthouse apartment. He says, "I grew up on a two-acre dirt farm."*

**Wait a minute!** Did the revision change Bruce Roy's quote? In most circles the revision is perfectly acceptable, because it does not change the content or intent of the statement, it merely tightens it. Notice that the revision also deleted the repetition of the word says.

Here are a few other examples:

#### Original:

*Don thinks the most important lesson he learned in school was to arrive on time.*

#### Stronger revision:

*The most important lesson Don learned in school was to arrive on time.*

#### Original:

*Lita recalls an incident that changed her life.*

#### Stronger revision:

*One incident changed Lita's life.*


**Here is a partial list of words to find and delete to make your business materials stronger:**

believe	recall
can	remember
could	should
feel	think
have	try
if	will
know	would

## Yes, I Remember It Well

Magazine articles go a long way to promote your business. When you write them, reduce the wordiness, and you increase the strength of the article. Delete the use of remember, recall or think in your personal statements or in quoting others, and you tighten the information and

Now you know that deletions actually add zing your 'zines and power to your proposals. For many more words and phrases to find and refine in business, creative nonfiction and fiction writing, see *Write In Style*, available at most bookstores or through *Amazon.com*.

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