

## The Importance of Voice in Your Copy

It's Not Just What You Say...

I imagine you've completed the sentence in your head already. You've heard it before: "...it's how you say it." Okay, so let's look at it from a marketing prospective.

In school, they teach you to write formally for your assignments. It's all third person. If your teachers were any good and they prepared you for university, you learned never to include yourself in a formal essay, unless you were instructed to.

In university there was more of the same. I well recall writing such things as "the scholar will conclude..." "one might suppose..." and similar academic-speak. It sound formidable and might even seem impressive.

Then you're let loose in the business world. All of a sudden you're writing marketing materials for your own business or the company. The natural course of action would be to put into practice the kind of writing you got so good at, right? Especially if you're a small company or a sole entrepreneur – using "we" makes you seem larger and busy.

The logic is sound. The problem is, it doesn't work in the real world. People want to do business with people they feel they know and trust. Yes, even if it's an "artificial" online-type of knowing. They don't want to do business with "we at Company X." "We" may be multiple departments where you have to jump through hoops – twice!- if there's a problem with your order. And with so many online scams these days, people become wary if they can't find a "real" person behind the business.

Many large companies have tested this: as soon as they put a "face behind the name" their sales went up. So it's important to develop not only a voice but a personality in your copy. Be approachable. Ask yourself, would you want to do business with someone who sounds like the person who wrote this?

A lot of corporations get caught up in what's known as corporate-speak, possibly because they're supposing their clients and customers are highly intelligent and sophisticated people who use 3-and-4 syllable words.

I won't argue; they may well fit this description. But the fact remains they're still people. And people want to do business with ... other people, a real down-to-earth human not with someone who sounds like they just came back from having tea with a monarch.

Especially if you're in a business where you interact with your clients, don't refer to yourself as "we" or even in 3rd person. If you're a chiropractor, acupuncturist or therapist...people are going to decide to do business with you, so let them get a sense of your personality.

It's really not hard. You just talk to them like you'd talk to a friend. Like I'm doing with you now. Of course, you do have to keep some basic rules of grammar and punctuation in mind, and break those rules only for effect. And of course, there are some "tricks of the trade" in copywriting that centre on leading a prospect through the selling process.

Nevertheless, keeping the tone of your website, your direct mail packages – and all of your marketing material – informal, or colloquial, is a good start.