

## Death of a Sentence

Our 8<sup>th</sup> grade English teachers were right; sentence structure is important. A recent newspaper example proves it.

The following photo cutline, with names changed to protect the innocent and grieving, appeared in a Tuesday edition:

*Anytown City Councilman Joe Johnson, right, reacts as fellow Councilman Sam Smith extends his condolences to Johnson's family for the death of his sister on Monday during the City Council meeting.*

The sentence made me stop. Did Councilman Johnson's sister really die during the city council meeting? I read it again. No. Did she pass away on Monday? No. His sister died. That much was clear, but the rest was up for grabs.

What the cutline writer was trying to convey was that Councilman Johnson's sister died, and during Monday evening's council meeting he received condolences from Councilman Smith.

The sentence should have been structured this way:

*Anytown Councilman Joe Johnson, right, reacts during the city council meeting Monday as fellow Councilman Sam Smith extends his condolences regarding the recent death of Johnson's sister.*

The cutline is shorter by four words and its clarity is enhanced significantly.

The greater lesson is clear, too. Pay attention to sentence structure or your marketing will be dead on arrival.

## New Work

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Arthur, Buffalo, Casselton,  
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:30 – Common Threads"  
:30 – "Lean & Plenty"  
:60 – "First Thing's First"

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Credits:

Bernie Sinner: Project  
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Dayna Del Val: Script Editor,  
Co-Producer, Voice

FredComm: Project Manager,  
Scriptwriter, Lead Producer

Mike McClain: Production and  
Editing

David Wintersteen: Voice

Cameron Wintersteen: Voice

*Those who dream by day are cognizant of many things  
which escape those who dream only by night. – Edgar Allan Poe*

*The Good Word*

## Exceed Expectations

Consumers have high expectations. As product and service providers, we strive to exceed them or, at minimum, meet them. In marketing materials, we often see this:

"We apply our years of

experience to meeting and exceeding your expectations."

Three problems: 1) If we're striving to exceed expectations, then the mention of merely meeting them is unnecessary and potentially undermining. 2) While meeting expectations is not nearly as desirable as exceeding them to prospects or customers, we

always mention the worst option first. 3) Expectations are a moving target.

I suggest leaving expectations out of it. Cheeky example: "We'll work to serve you as if you were our own mother."

By the way, work with FredComm, and that's what I'll do.