

The Red Letter



I Give You My Words

Volume 4, Issue 9
September 2007

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C4

Ka-blam!

That's what I strive for every time I put words to paper. I want them to explode – BAM! – grab readers, make them read on and, ultimately, convince them to buy what I'm selling for my client.

It's C-4 Communication. C-4, a military-grade plastic explosive, is 1.34 times as powerful as TNT. While I might not always make it to the detonation, I strike at it with every new project. Whether the words are for a brochure, a video script, a website or any of dozens of other forms of marketing communication, I want my words to figuratively blast off of the page.

C4 is not all that common these days but, believe it or not, the ingredients are simple and even you can brew up a batch. Every strong communication is:

- *Clear* – Use simple, easy-to-comprehend, everyday language.
- *Concise* – Short is sweet; no one has time these days.
- *Captivating* – This refers to both voice and style. Active, vigorous writing, good grammar, transitions between thoughts and so on draws readers in and keeps them reading.
- *Compelling* – The words have a powerful, irresistible effect and readers are convinced they need what you're describing. They see the benefits to their lives and are compelled to take the action you desire: visit a website, buy a product or hire you for a project.

A fifth "C," creativity, always helps, but defining what that is can be slippery. Creative to one is ho-hum to another, and sometimes the most creative course is the common, straightforward one.

Each ingredient of C4 is innocuous alone, but mix them together and... Ka-blam!

Good Meeting Tips

Long, tiresome, useless, unproductive meetings – we've all been there. While it takes two to tango, and more than that to tap out a good meeting, much of the blame usually belongs to the leader. Here's how to lead a good meeting:

- Before calling one, make sure it is necessary.
- Excuse team members whose presence is only needed for part of the meeting from the remainder.
- Create and stick to an agenda. If the meeting gets off track, pull it back.
- Define goals at the outset.
- Set a clear end time.
- Allow group members' ideas to come first; don't compete.
- Listen well, don't judge, show interest.
- Control strong personalities without alienating them and enable participation by those with weaker personalities.
- Give others a chance to lead.
- Thank everyone.

You can never get enough of what you don't need to make you happy. – Eric Hoffer

The Good Word

Are You Overqualified?

If you are a writer who likes to use qualifiers, you should try to do a little better.

In "The Elements of Style," William Strunk and E.B. White put it most eloquently:

"Rather, very, little, pretty – these

are the leeches that infest the pond of prose, sucking the blood of words." That's harsh, even without the vampire imagery. Harsh, but right on.

C4 says to use fewer words whenever possible (see "*Concise*" bullet above).

Besides, qualifiers suck punch from a sentence instead of

adding it:

- It's rather important to be honest.
- It's important to be honest.
- I'm very excited about this project.
- I'm excited about this project.

Try to be a life giver, not a leech; throw the qualifiers back into the mucky pond.