



# Leadership Tips

## April-May

### 2018:

# Brevity in Communication

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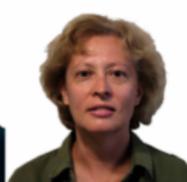
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## Brevity in Communication:

### *Because today's world seemingly suffers from ADD*

Long-winded, verbose, redundant, wordy, dense, lengthy, hard-to-read, cumbersome, endless, overly detailed, cluttered, unwieldy, prolonged, unnecessarily verbose, overly complex, never-ending, protracted, run-on document, pointless, prolixity, elongated, interminable.

**Brevity**

Have you noticed lately how people's attention spans have shrunk? Readers neither have the time nor the patience for the whole story. They want a short version, the executive briefing, the synopsis, abstract or capsule summary. And if we don't provide it they simply

tune out or check out.

Do your clients, customers, constituents, and co-workers a favor: be respectful of their time. Make your communication concise and focus on the important aspects of your message. Everyone will benefit.

### **Your Communication Palette**

Savvy communicators choose their mode of communication based on key constraints, including the needs of their readers, listeners and audiences. You too should know your audience.

There are 540,000 words in the US dictionary but no requirement to use them all, or just the most obscure words. Choose your words accordingly.

It's been noted before that the Gettysburg Address was just 272 words; the Declaration of Independence: 1,300 words; the US Tax Code as of 2014: over 9 million words. Edit, edit, edit, to make your writing tight, powerful and focused.

And choose your mode of communication appropriately. Never before have we had more communication options: IM, texts, email, blogs, listservs, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube (for verbal and visual communication) and other communities, real and virtual.

Despite the many modes available, a responsibility accompanies this freedom to choose. Just as you wouldn't use a public address system to announce the termination of an employee, you likely wouldn't use a listserv to share the results of your latest medical tests with colleagues.

Let's review some options:

#### **Texts:**

A great way to communicate short bursts of information or affirmations. Strive to be understood, yet not misunderstood when using this shorthand form of communication. When it becomes too lengthy, consider using email instead.

#### **Email:**

Great for putting finite amounts of information in writing. Use bullets

and numbered lists if possible. Punctuation and spelling count! For long emails consider a document instead.

### Phone Messages:

Messages you leave on voice mail should be clear, concise and confident in nature. Identify yourself and your contact number, enunciating well. State the purpose of your call at the outset, to orient your listener. Don't gab on incessantly. Repeat your phone number a second time. Pause between bursts of numbers (area code, pause, three numbers, pause, four numbers).

Have you noticed how some callers treat a recording device like a license to engage in a stream of consciousness exercise. THINK FIRST, *before* you call. [Email The Consulting Team](#) for a phone message template to help you organize and focus your thoughts into a concise and cogent message.

**Bonus Tip:** Review your recorded outgoing message heard by incoming callers to voice-mail. Is it credible? Focused? Professional? If not, re-record it from a script. Keep it brief.

### Twitter and tweets:

280 characters max! It's not War&Peace. Key points. Vitals only. #Headlines but no fine print, Tip: spaces count too. Use tiny URLs.

Users of Twitter compact their communication to 280 characters ...originally just 140 characters or fewer per tweet (transmission). Learn to distill your ideas and accomplishments into this short form of communication. It focuses you on what's key and vital, and no more.

### Written Memos:

When possible, confine to one page. You want it read, not ignored. The more focused your writing, the quicker others can understand it. Your headlines, sub-heads and organization of content increase its readability. Write it with purpose.

### Reports:

Use an executive summary or abstract to orient your reader to what's to come. Your strategic use of a page hierarchy and tables, charts, graphs and lists can improve readability and garner the results you seek. Build your case and share your findings and / or

recommendations.

### Slide Decks:

Presentation software such as PowerPoint is designed for visual communication. Tell your story visually. Less is more! Use powerful images, simple graphics, clear tables, charts and graphs that are quick to process. Design, select fonts and its text size for the *back* row of your audience.

### In Brief:

Need inspiration? Consider these forms of *short* communication.

#### Haiku:

17 syllables. Three lines of poetry. No more; No less. Bonus points for its relationship to the environment.

#### Epitaphs:

With space at a premium, -each word counts. How can you sum up a life on a block of granite, elegantly and poignantly?

#### Greeting Cards:

A sentence. A phrase. A word. Or just an image. Power and poignancy in its brevity.

#### Traffic Signage:

All done with an image! Or at most, three words.

#### The World's Shortest Speech:

Salvador Dali, famously delivered the world's shortest speech, just four seconds long. He announced at the podium:

"I will be so brief I have already finished."

And then sat down.

#### Speech-making:

short and sweet seals the deal.

"A speaker should cultivate brevity

with a suitable leaven of levity.

In short, be terse,  
for nothing is worse  
than interminable verbal longevity"

William Shakespeare said it best, "Brevity is the soul of wit."



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**The Consulting Team** offers half- and full-day writing classes to help professionals compose, write, edit, proofread, publish and deliver reports, memos, letters, emails and other documents to generate results.

We also offer writing coaching as well as [presentation coaching](#).

We include brevity tips in our [Customer Service](#) Training, [Facilitation](#) and Presentation Workshop, [Building Credibility](#) Course and [Presentation Skills](#) and [Thinking On Your Feet](#) classes.

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*We look forward to partnering with you to foster workplace success.*

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Contact The Consulting Team to learn more about training, coaching, consulting assistance and also one-to-one training for leaders and employees.

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