Take Your Writing to the Next Level

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Take Your Writing to the Next Level

Presented by
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Principal, Tricia Parker Communications

July 30, 2014
12:00 – 1:00 pm EDT
GETTING TO KNOW YOU...
What Book Editors Do . . .
TWO KINDS OF EDITORS

- Acquiring Editor: Decides which books to publish
- Copyeditor: Actually edits the manuscript
- Note: Copyeditors can be in-house or freelance
PRINCIPLE #1
Grab readers with the first line
THE FIRST LINE SHOULD:

- Give as many "W's" as possible: the "who," "what," "where," and "why"
- Introduce tension, even in a minor way
- Compel the reader to ask a "W" question
- Be concise
SOME EXAMPLES . . .

- "I'd been back in Manhasset about two weeks when it happened." (Memoir)
- "At first Victor thought little of the pain in his back." (Sci-Fi)
- "Let me begin with a confession: I used to fear ebooks." (Blog)
- "They line up a dozen deep behind the Capitol in Washington . . ." (NYT)
PRINCIPLE #2

Organize your thoughts: the "one-to-one" rule
The "one-to-one" rule:
- One thought per sentence
- One topic per paragraph
- One overall theme per book/article
FACT: Literary agents are looking for provocative books they can easily sum up in a sentence or two.
"Eating a shellfish-based diet can have surprising rewards, even though both clams and mussels have been found to have trace elements of plutonium, which is found off the coast of Japan due to high numbers of nuclear reactors."
"Over half of all employees say they're dissatisfied with their current jobs. Many employees also fear they won't be able to fund their retirement as planned. Right now, more than half of retirees are employed part time."

[What would you change?]
TRY TO AVOID:

- Frequent shifts of focus
- Numerous digressions
- "Rambling" writing
- Too much "theory," with no practical applications
- Vagueness vs. specificity
PRINCIPLE #3

Trust your ear more than your eye
WRITING THE WAY WE SPEAK...

- He played golf with Tom, the man with whom he'd first transacted the deal.
- Revised version:
  - He played golf with Tom, the man he'd first done the deal with.
  - (It IS okay to end a sentence with a preposition!)
ANOTHER EXAMPLE...

- "The journal in which I wrote the entry is missing."
- Revised version:

"The journal I wrote the entry in is missing."
"The Rule of Threes"

Example:
"Tim's presentation struck me on three levels: its depth, its clarity, and the quality of its content."
Rule of Threes/Parallel Structure

"It wasn't so much how he moved the pieces, or studied his opponent, but how he thought about the game that made him a master."
"Writing in the Active Voice"

Example:

"The report given to me by Anne seemed to sum up the situation well."

Revised:

"The report Anne gave me summed up the situation well."
ANOTHER EXAMPLE...

- "A shift in his thinking was required by the situation."
- Revised:
- "The situation required a shift in his thinking."
- OR:
- "The situation required him to shift his thinking."
"Avoiding Pronoun Ambiguity"

Example:

"After I read the e-mail and reviewed the recipient list, I wasn't sure about its purpose."

Revised:

"After I read the e-mail and reviewed the recipient list, I wasn't sure about either's purpose."
THE BEST CHOICE FOR YOUR BOOK

Traditional vs. Self-Publishing
Author Royalty Percentages

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<th>Self-Publishing</th>
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GETTING YOUR BOOK PUBLISHED

- Nonfiction: Must have a book proposal and 1-2 sample chapters
- Fiction: Need query letter and completed manuscript
- Best way to get published is to go through literary agent
- Agent is the "go-between" between you and acquisitions editors
- If agent rejects your manuscript, ask for feedback and don't give up!
CONNECT WITH ME!

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- Twitter: @TriciaParkerCom
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Books recommended by Tricia:

1. "On the Art of Writing Copy" by Herschell Gordon Lewis
2. "The Elements of Style" by William Strunk and E.B. White
3. "Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers, Editors, and Literary Agents" by Jeff Herman