How To Write An Article (That Gets Read!)

Most professionals realise that they can win work by producing content that engages potential clients and shows off their expertise. And an effective way to do this is by producing articles that provoke interest.

The problem is that most articles, case studies, capability statements, or track records, are neither good nor effective. They often lack relevance and rarely get clicked on, opened or read.

So, here are some tips to help:

- **Use a concrete headline**

  You might be sending out something extremely relevant to your reader but that doesn't mean they will open it. Your reader will be bombarded with a lot of information each day and if the heading of your article – or the subject line of your email – doesn't grab their interest and give them a reason to read on, you're dead in the water.

  So ask yourself "why should my reader care?"

  A concrete headline that explains what the article is about is also good for search engine optimisation and improving your internet ranking. Research shows that headings that allude to problem solving work well – such as "the top 5 reasons why rainmakers win clients", or "how to influence a prospect", or the top 10 mistakes to avoid in meetings".

- **Keep the introduction brief**

  Use your introduction to hook your readers and explain how the article applies to them. In other words, don't wait until the end to reveal the surprise. A professional article is not a novel.

  Get to the point. Never make your introduction longer than two or three paragraphs.

  And if you are a lawyer, keep case names out of this part of your article if you can. Too many legal articles start out by stating they are about *Walnut v Shoeshine*. Some lawyers even use the case name as the title of the article! Using case names just clogs your sentences and makes your readers' eyes roll.

- **Use sub-headings**

  Break your article with sub-headings that reflect your points and let readers see what's important straight away. The world's most famous copywriter, David Ogilvy, once noted that five times as many people read the headlines as

what's underneath them – and that was before we started reading on the internet. Now "skimming" has become the default way to read.

- **Address your audience**

  Where you can, write in the second person.

  "You should think about three things when buying a home", beats "Purchasers should think about three things when buying a home". It makes it less abstract and tells your readers you are talking to them.

- **Avoid jargon**

  People usually aren't interested in legal case names or professional accounting terminology. But they are interested in how what you're saying affects them.

  And remember, jargon isn't always technical language. For example, most non-lawyers don't use words like "aforementioned" or "all aspects of" or "notwithstanding".

- **Be succinct**

  Don't use 16 words to say something that can be said with 8.

  For example, don't say "We work with, have previously worked with, and will continue to work with your supplier networks" – when you could say "We have experience working with your supplier networks".

  David Ogilvy once said that nothing ever needed to be longer than two pages. Now that most of our writing ends up being read online, you need a very good reason to make your article longer than 500-800 words.

- **Use the active voice**

  By writing "subject/verb/object" you'll reduce the number of words you use and generally keep the language active.

  For example, say "The boy hit the ball" – rather than "In relation to the ball, it was hit by the boy".

- **Include a call to action**

  It's important to finish your article with a call to action that gives the reader a reason to pick up the phone and ask your advice.

The key take-away's for you from this lesson should be:

1. Make sure you put yourself in your reader's shoes.

2. Most professionals write to showcase their technical knowledge. The readers assume you are competent, they just want to know about the impacts – not whether you are qualified to comment.
3. Grab the reader's interest.