Techniques for More Effective Communication

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ISPE Automation Forum
December 8, 2009

What the Presentation Covers

- The Truth about How People Read at Work
- Audience
- Purpose
- Techniques to Enhance Comprehension

How People Read at Work

They don't.

They skim, scan, and skip.

Workplace document = tool to get work done

Audience: Document's End User

Determining Audience's Needs

- What hat does your audience wear?
  - Expert
  - Technician
  - Manager

- Where does your audience work?

Take a Tip from Warren Buffet

"…**Write with a specific person** in mind. When writing Berkshire Hathaway's annual report, I pretend that I'm talking to my sisters. "

A Plain English Handbook How to create clear SEC disclosure documents
By the Office of Investor Education and Assistance
U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission
August 1998

Write to Specific People

- What are their responsibilities?
- What do they have to know?
- What can you leave out?
- Will they understand your jargon?
- What questions will they have?
- What is their reading environment?

Adapted from :
Anderson, Paul V. *Technical Communication: A Reader-Centered Approach.* 6th ed. Boston: Thomson-Wadsworth, 2007.

Brizee, H. Allen and Kety A. Schmaling. "Audience Analysis: The Development Stage." The Writing Lab & The OWL at Purdue University, 1995-2009.
Accessed from <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/629/02>.

Purpose: How the Document Is Used

- Inform
- Instruct
- Persuade

Techniques to Enhance Comprehension

- **Formatting** – Focus attention
- **Writing** – Reduce ambiguity & increase clarity

Techniques to Enhance Comprehension

Formatting: Focus Readers' Attention

- Use bullets or numbers
- Include white space
- Group similar information (chunking)
- Use graphic enhancements – ALL CAPS, **bold**
- Consider appropriate typeface

Two General Categories of Type

Serif = print

Times New Roman, Garamond, Georgia

Sans Serif = electronic

Arial, Verdana, Corbel

Techniques to Enhance Comprehension

Writing: Reduce Ambiguity & Noise

- Begin with big picture
- Use terms consistently
- Be specific
- Avoid "not"
- Use terms readers understand

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood." *Stephen Covey*

- Consider audience's needs
- Understand your purpose
- Use techniques to aid comprehension