

# **Business Writing**

**Five Practical Steps to Achieve Focused, Organized,  
Clear & Supported Business Writing**

**Vital Skills for Government & Corporate Managers  
& Report Analysts**



**Government Training Inc.™**

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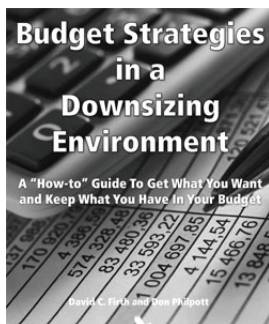
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## Business Management

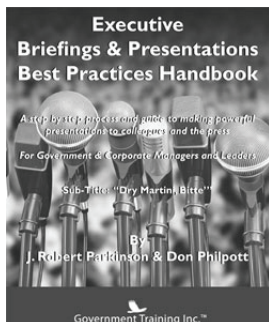
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A very timely and insightful new book *Budget Strategies in a Downsizing Environment*, answers that question. It explains in a concise and engaging way, the emerging budget scene and what budget planners and managers need to know and do to respond effectively to budget reductions in a downsizing environment. It details effective techniques to formulate, defend and execute an operating budget in the new austere funding environment.



This book explains that getting people to do things your way doesn't just refer to what others will do – it is about what you will do. It stresses that getting people to do things your way requires that you know what you want - and that you are willing to work to get it. The book then teaches/describes all the various tools and techniques available to you and when and how best to use them.



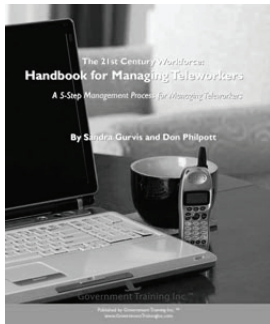
This handbook will teach you how to develop presentation skills so that you grab the audience's attention from the very first moment. It also discusses in great detail how to make maximum impact using posture, hand gestures, eye contact and all the other factors that come into play when successfully communicating with others.



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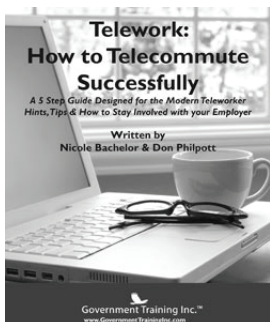
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This book is an A-Z guide aimed at managers tasked with introducing teleworking or overseeing teleworkers and ensuring that everything runs smoothly. The rules for managing teleworking are the same whether you are a federal or state employee or work for a private company or organization. The book is also very useful to people who are thinking of teleworking or trying to persuade their employers to introduce it.



This Handbook is an easy to follow and implement Five-Step Toolkit for all managers and decision makers involved with teleworking. It explains how to set up a telework program, how to train managers and in turn, how managers should train and supervise their teleworkers. The Handbook discusses all the arguments that have been put forward against teleworking and debunks them using all the latest surveys and case studies.



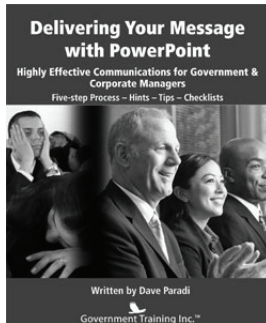
This book spells out all the positives – and the negatives – and with the use of checklists and questionnaires will help you reach the right decision. While the book is aimed at people considering telecommuting it is also relevant to employers who have to decide if workers should go this route and if so, how best to manage them.



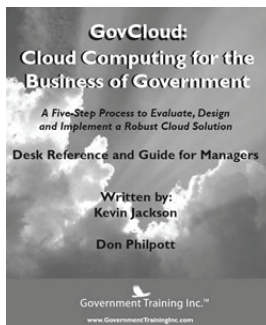
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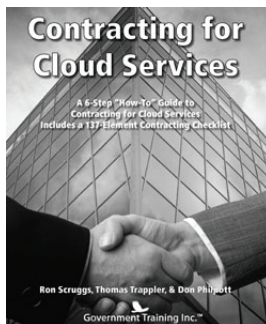
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PowerPoint presentations, however, can be an enormously effecting communications tool provided you follow some basic rules. These rules are spelled out in “Delivering Your Message with PowerPoint” written by Dave Paradi, a proven expert and sought after speaker at all levels of government and corporations. Using a simple to follow, five-step process, the book talks you through creating the right sequence and structure for your presentation.



The book describes the key characteristics of cloud computing and various deployment and delivery models. It contains case studies and best practices, how to set and meet goals, how to implement and use cloud computing and how to make sure it is working. It is packed with practical tips, checklists and unique templates that can be used to design and implement cloud computing to meet agency specific needs.



This comprehensive, expert book uses an easy-to-understand, easy-to-follow six-step process that guides you through the complete contract lifecycle. It steers you through all the cloud service and deployment models available, highlighting the benefits and downsides of each. Discussed in detail are critical issues, such as security, vendor lock-in, and legal and regulatory obligations.





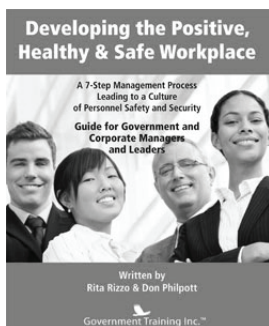
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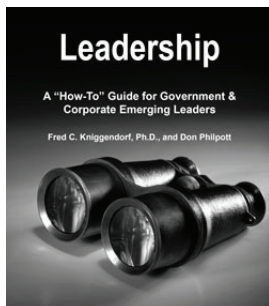
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The book uses case studies, checklists and best practices to guide you through the RIF process with a wealth of information on planning and implementation, employee counseling and outplacement assistance and how to handle appeals and grievances. This Handbook covers the management and human resources role in planning for restructuring actions.



The book is packed with useful tips, best practices, case studies and checklists that walk you through the process from understanding the violence cycle to implementing an effective WVP program and ensuring that all management and employees are aware of it. There are practical tips on managing conflict – from bullying to domestic violence, dealing with mental health concerns and avoiding negligent hiring.



This handbook details the steps you need to take to become a good leader with top notch leadership skills, leadership qualities and leadership styles. It is designed to give you the skills and resources you need to understand the principles of good leadership and management, and how to constantly strive to better yourself and encourage others to follow your example.

## Symbols

Throughout this book you will see a number of icons displayed. The icons are there to help you as you work through the Six Step process. Each icon acts as an advisory – for instance alerting you to things that you must always do or should never do. The icons used are:



This is something you must always do



This is something you should never do



Really useful tips



Points to bear in mind



Have you checked off or answered everything on this list?

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## Acknowledgements

This book has drawn heavily from a number of sources, including *Crisis Communications*, *How To Get Others To Do What You Want Them To*, and *Executive Briefings and Presentations Best Practices Handbook*, all written or co-written by the author and published by Government Training Inc. It has also relied on the authoritative materials published by a wide range of sources including many federal agencies and organizations. These materials are in the public domain. In particular, the author acknowledges the United States Air Force for the use of its excellent publications and guides on leadership and communications, particularly the *Tongue and Quill*.

The author and publisher have taken great care in the preparation of this handbook, but make no expressed or implied warranty of any kind and assume no responsibility for errors or omissions. No liability is assumed for incidental or consequential damages in connection with or arising out of the use of the information or recommendations contained herein.

## About the author

**Don Philpott** is Managing Editor for Government Training Inc. Publishing, and he also serves as editor of *International Homeland Security*, a quarterly journal for homeland security professionals. He has been writing, reporting, and broadcasting on international events, trouble spots, and major news stories for more than 40 years. For 20 years, he was a senior correspondent with Press Association – Reuters, the wire service, and traveled the world on assignments, including Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, South Africa, and Asia. He then became President of Mediawise Communications, an international corporate communications consultancy, for 20 years.

He writes for magazines and newspapers in the United States and Europe, is a regular contributor to radio and television programs on security and other issues and lectures on communications and the media. Author of more than 120 books on a wide range of subjects, he has had more than 5,000 articles printed in publications around the world. Don's most recent books include *Act Like a Leader*, *Crisis Communications*, *Securing our Schools*, and *Workplace Violence Prevention*. All of these books have been published by Government Training Inc. He is a member of the National Press Club.



## INTRODUCTION

Effective business writing skills are an essential requirement for every manager or supervisor. Like other managerial requirements, effective business writing needs clear, strategic thinking.



### Must Do

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You must be able to accurately identify the issues to be addressed, communicate your thoughts clearly to the intended audience and motivate that audience to take the actions you propose in order to resolve those issues. It is all about effective communications.

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The essence of good business writing is: keep it simple, keep to the point and keep it short. Remember the Three Cs – Clear, Complete and Concise.

Good business writing is a lot like packing well for a vacation. Most people only wear about one third of the clothes they take, and the rest is literally unnecessary baggage. The secret of good packing – and good business writing – is to include only what you need.

Communication is defined as the process of sharing ideas, information and messages with others. Most communication involves speaking and writing, but this definition includes nonverbal communication such as body language, graphics and so on.

Any communication can be broken into three parts: the sender, the message and the audience. For communication to be successful, the audience must not only get the message, but must interpret the message in the way the sender intended.

Communication skills are vital in any environment where teamwork is important. Communication skills are particularly important for managers. The ability to communicate a vision and direction, to motivate and inspire others, and to persuade your superiors are all essential in bringing people together to achieve a common goal.

If the purpose isn't clear to the audience, you have failed. Worse still, if there is confusion people may take actions which are actually counter to what you intended. This could have dire consequences.



### Remember

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The only way to become a better writer and speaker is to work at it – there are no short cuts. Your communication skills will become stronger with practice, regardless of your initial ability.

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With today's 24-hour news coverage, the Internet and social media, we are awash in a sea of information. Now, more than ever, it's important to communicate with clarity and focus.

## 5

It's important to understand what makes communication succeed and what makes it fail. Most mistakes are caused by forgetting one of the five principles of good communication.

### **Focused**

Address the issue, the whole issue and nothing but the issue.

### **Organized**

Systematically present your information and ideas.

### **Clear**

Communicate with clarity and make each word count.

### **Understanding**

Understand your audience and its expectations.

### **Supported**

Use logic and support to make your point.

## **FOCUSED: ADDRESS THE ISSUE, THE WHOLE ISSUE, AND NOTHING BUT THE ISSUE**

The first hallmark of good communication is that it is focused. The sender has a clear idea of purpose and objective, locks on target and stays on track.

In a staff or academic environment, writing and speaking often attempts to answer a question provided by either a boss or an instructor. In such situations, the principle may also be stated as the following:

Answer the question, the whole question and nothing but the question.

Failure to focus comes in three forms:

1. Answering the wrong question. This happens when we don't understand the assignment or what the audience really wants. Have you ever written what you thought was an excellent paper, only to be told you answered the wrong question or you missed the point? Have you ever asked someone a question and received a long answer that had nothing to do with what you asked?

2. Answering only part of the question. If a problem or question has multiple parts, sometimes we work out the easiest or most interesting part of the solution and forget the unpleasant remainder.



3. Adding irrelevant information. Here the communicator answers the question, but mixes in information that is interesting but unnecessary. Though the answer is complete, it's hard to understand. It's like finding that needle in the haystack.

Failure to focus can really hurt staff communication. Time and time again our efforts crash and burn because we never carefully read the words or really listen to the speaker for the real message – for the specific question! Most executives will tell you that failing to answer the question is one of the primary reasons staff packages are dumped back into the laps of hapless assistants.

### **ORGANIZED: SYSTEMATICALLY PRESENT YOUR INFORMATION AND IDEAS**

Good organization means your material is presented in a logical, systematic manner. This helps your audience understand you without reading your words over and over, trying to sort out what you're really trying to say.

#### **Remember** \_\_\_\_\_

When writing or speaking is not well organized, audiences become easily confused or impatient, and may stop reading or listening. Even if you're providing useful, relevant information, your audience may underestimate its value and your own credibility.

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Problems with organization are relatively easy to fix, and the payoffs are enormous. In these high-tempo environments, a little effort on your part will save your audience a lot of time and pain.

### **CLEAR: COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY AND MAKE EACH WORD COUNT**

This principle covers two interrelated ideas. First, to communicate clearly, we need to understand the rules of language – how to spell and pronounce words, and how to assemble and punctuate sentences. Second, we should get to

the point, not hide our ideas in a jungle of words.

People are quick to judge, and mangled, incorrect language can cripple your credibility and limit acceptance of your ideas. Acceptable English is part of the job, so commit to improving any problems you may have. Developing strong language skills is a lot like developing strong muscles – steady commitment produces steady improvement. Always remember that progress, not perfection, is the goal.

Grammar scares most of us, but the good news is that many common mistakes can be corrected by understanding a few rules. If you want to dig deeper, then check out some of the books and Internet sites that address grammar and writing – contact your local librarian or see the References section at the end of the book for some suggestions.



**No No** \_\_\_\_\_

Many writers and speakers cripple themselves with bureaucratic jargon, big words and lots of passive voice. These bad habits make it hard to understand the message.

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Using language correctly is only half of the battle, though.

### **UNDERSTANDING: UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE AND ITS EXPECTATIONS**

If you want to share an idea with others, it helps to understand their current knowledge, views and level of interest in the topic. If you've been asked to write a report, it helps to understand the expected format and length of the response, the due date, the level of

formality and any staffing requirements. It's easy to see how mistakes in understanding your audience can lead to communication problems, and I'm sure you've watched others make this mistake.

### **SUPPORTED: USE LOGIC AND SUPPORT TO MAKE YOUR POINT**

Most writers and speakers try to inform or persuade their audience. Part of the communicator's challenge is to assemble and organize information to help build his or her case. Support and logic are the tools used to build credibility and trust with the audience.

Nothing ruins a clearly written, properly punctuated paper quicker than a fractured fact or a distorted argument. Avoiding this pitfall is difficult, even for good writers and speakers. Logic is tough to teach and learn because it challenges the highest levels of human intellect – the ability to think in the abstract. We slip into bad habits at an early age, and it takes effort to break them. This handbook is written to help you become better communicators, especially better business writers, and as a result, become better managers.