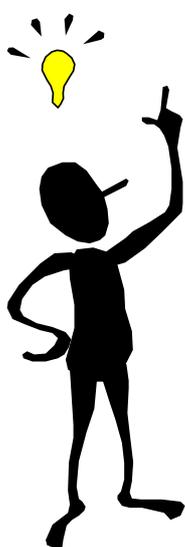


From Confused and Cluttered to Clear and Concise: Three Mini Case Studies

by Janet Tilden (www.exec-rewrites.com)



Have you ever written a letter, email, or blog post and had a nagging feeling that something about it *wasn't quite right*? Or maybe your writing seemed fine to you until a boss or colleague started pointing out errors. In either case, you have a decision to make.

If you're dissatisfied with your written work, you have three options: (1) edit it yourself, (2) ask an employee, friend, or family member to offer suggestions, or (3) hire an editor like Janet Tilden. Option 1 is often ineffective because it can be tough to spot errors or deficiencies in your own writing. You're likely to see what it's "supposed to" say instead of what it really does. Option 2 can work well if you ask the right person to help you, but not everyone is lucky enough to have a trained wordsmith available at a moment's notice. Option 3 is an excellent choice if you're short on time and able to pay for expert assistance.

How can an editor help you communicate more effectively with the people you want to reach? On pages 2 through 16 you'll find "before" and "after" examples highlighting editorial changes I made in three documents: a blog entry written by a marketing manager at a construction company, a business proposal letter written by a sales representative for a manufacturer of a shelf-management system, and a flyer announcing a self-study program created by a holistic psychologist.

To make it easier for you to compare the "before" and "after" examples, take a moment to print out pages 2 through 16. Studying the examples* will help you understand what I do during the editing process so you can decide whether you might want to work with me.

**Identifying information has been changed or omitted in the first two examples to protect the privacy of the writers. The writer of the third example granted permission to reprint it here.*

Blog Entry “Before” (unedited, without highlighting)

GENERALIST OR SPECIALIST?

“What built environment does your firm specialize in?” No matter what service or product you provide in the A/E/C industry, the likelihood of you being asked this question is very high. As my firm’s Marketing Director, I’m often asked this question and somehow I seem to provide a different answer depending upon who is asking the question and when it was asked. Sheffield is an architectural, engineering and planning firm offering over two-dozen distinctive services in five core market sectors. Many firms that fit this profile refer to themselves as generalists. Not Sheffield. We view ourselves as specialist in multiple markets. If you asked me what we specialize in three years ago I would have answered – engineering services for federal government agencies or architectural design of senior living facilities. The majority of our billable hours were dedicated to these two markets. Our architects, engineers, project managers and field technicians are all well practiced in the services directed at these two markets. They are experts in these markets. However, three years later and asked this same question, I would say we specialize in infrastructure engineering and industrial facility architectural engineering services. A altogether different group of professionals providing services in these markets not only allow us to draw from a new client base but it also provides our existing clients that need these services a consultant already proven and acclimated to their way of doing work. My point is, when demand for a built environment changes, so do we. We are an adaptive group of professionals that provide our clients in-the-moment services.

Blog Entry “Before”

(unedited, with selected trouble spots marked)

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Blog Entry Notes

- 1 Break up text into shorter paragraphs to improve readability.
- 2 Change “you” to “those of us” to avoid confusion.
- 3 Explain industry-specific abbreviations or acronyms.
- 4 Change “somehow I seem to...” to a more purposeful “I’ve found that...”
- 5 “Two dozen” should not be hyphenated.
- 6 “Secretors” is the wrong word in this context. It was probably inserted by “autocorrect” software when the writer typed “sectors” instead of “sectors.”
- 7 “We” is plural, so “specialists” should be plural also.
- 8 Avoid mixing past and present tense in the same sentence.
- 9 Use quotation marks rather than a dash to set off quoted material.
- 10 Improve clarity by omitting unnecessary words and fixing grammatical errors (for example, changing “a” to “an” and making sure subjects and verbs agree).

Blog Entry “After”

(edited, with selected changes highlighted)

GENERALIST OR SPECIALIST?

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⑧ If you had asked me three years ago what we specialized in, ⑨ my answer would have been “engineering services for federal government agencies” or “architectural design of senior living facilities.” At that time, the majority of our billable hours were dedicated to serving these two core markets. Our architects, engineers, project managers, and field technicians are experts in meeting the needs of these markets.

Today, though, if you asked me this same question, my answer would be “infrastructure engineering and industrial facility architectural engineering services.” ⑩ This focus enables Sheffield to address the needs of an expanded client base while continuing to provide our existing clients with consultants who are already acclimated to their ways of doing work.

When demand for a built environment changes, Sheffield responds. We are a group of professionals who can adapt our approach to meet the needs of our clients. As the marketplace evolves, so do we.

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Business Proposal Letter “Before” (unedited, without highlighting)

Dear Larry:

RE: SelfStocker Merchandising Product

I am writing to introduce you to SelfStocker, an innovative shelf management system ideally suited for the beverage industry. It is the optimum merchandising equipment that supports all Shopper Marketing programs -- it enhances product presentation, improves the shopping experience and ultimately converts shoppers into buyers.

I was interested to read of the new Shopper Experience Innovation Center in Aurora **and I am offering the opportunity to install SelfStocker for evaluation.** This installation could initiate valuable shopper research regarding the “benefits of permanent product fronting” that drives revenue. The specific details of this execution can be finalized once the initiative is approved.

Recent in-store tests of SelfStocker have delivered very interesting results that I would like to share:

- Sales Lift -- Validated test proves a 6% sales gain (convenience store beverage).
- Labor Savings -- Less time to spend fixing/fronting shelves (ambient and cold shelves).
- Enhanced Presentation -- Consistently front-facing products showing a fully stocked shelf always.
- Space Management – the most flexible shelf management system available
- Planogram Compliance – flexibility allows easy changes.

From over 10 million lanes installed globally, we know that SelfStocker adds value to the retailer, the shopper and the brand company keeping products fronted at the shelf edge. FEMSA Mexico, in OXXO, have installed 4000+ stores and are continuing the rollout to achieve chain wide execution.

Please visit the new SelfStocker website at www.SelfStocker.com where you can view recent in-store videos demonstrating the functionality of the equipment.

Major retailers in the USA and Europe are currently implementing SelfStocker in various categories, with both ambient and cold vault beverage as the lead categories.

SelfStocker is a product that the global Beverage Company system can really get behind – the product will perform in the marketplace for a minimum of 10 years.

I can meet with you at short notice to discuss further and look forward to discussing next steps.

Kind regards,

Bill Jordan

Business Proposal Letter “Before” (unedited, with selected trouble spots marked)

Dear Larry:

① RE: SelfStocker Merchandising Product

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Business Proposal Letter Notes

- ① Put the subject line above the salutation, not below it.
- ② Revise the first line of the letter to avoid leading with the phrase “I am writing to...”
- ③ Mention the name of the recipient’s company before describing your own service or product.
- ④ Focus on how the recipient of your letter will benefit from implementing your proposal.
- ⑤ Remove unnecessary quotation marks.
- ⑥ Revise paragraph to describe something that is happening right now.
- ⑦ Include specific examples to capture the reader’s attention.
- ⑧ Convert the statement about the system’s durability into an attention-getting postscript.
- ⑨ Include your contact information.

Business Proposal Letter “After” (edited, with selected changes highlighted)

1 RE: Shelf Management System Proposal

Dear Larry:

2 Retailers who sell 3 BevCo products are always looking for ways to increase revenue and improve the shopping experience while saving time and money. With this in mind, I believe BevCo could benefit from trying out **SelfStocker**, an innovative shelf management system that’s ideally suited to the beverage industry. It enhances product presentation, improves the shopping experience, and converts shoppers to buyers. By continuously moving products to the front of the shelf, SelfStocker also reduces labor costs by saving time and effort for retail employees.

4 To give BevCo an opportunity to experience the benefits of SelfStocker, I would like to install the system at your Shopper Experience Innovation Center in Aurora. This installation could initiate valuable shopper research regarding the 5 benefits of permanent product fronting to drive revenue. The specific details of the proposal can be ironed out once the initiative is approved for either a cold vault or ambient beverage set.

Recent in-store tests of SelfStocker in a C-Store chain (cold vault) have delivered some promising results that I would like to share:

- **Sales Lift** -- Validated testing proves a 6% sales gain.
- **Labor Savings** -- Less time spent fixing/fronting shelves.
- **Enhanced Presentation** -- Consistently front-facing products provide maximum visibility at all times.
- **Space Management** – The most flexible shelf management system available.
- **Planogram Compliance** – Flexible design provides ease of modifications.

6 Major retailers in the US and Europe are currently implementing SelfStocker in various categories, with an emphasis on ambient and cold vault beverage sales. With more than 10 million lanes installed globally, we know that SelfStocker adds value for the retailer, the shopper, and the brand company by keeping products fronted at the shelf edge.

7 Below are just a few of the many retailers who are already enjoying the benefits of SelfStocker technology:

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Walgreens Cold Vault | • 7-Eleven | • Coca-Cola Hellenic |
| • Valero Convenience | • FEMSA Mexico/OXXO | • REWE Germany |
| • Sunoco Convenience | • Shell Petrol Germany | • ESSO Petrol United Kingdom |

9 If you are interested in receiving more information or a product sample, I would welcome an opportunity to meet with you. My direct phone line is (123) 456-7890. Information is also available on the new SelfStocker website at www.SelfStocker.com, where you can view recent in-store videos demonstrating how the equipment works. I look forward to hearing from you regarding next steps.

Kind regards,

Bill Jordan

8 P.S. SelfStocker can deliver outstanding long-term value to the global BevCo system, as it will perform in the marketplace for a minimum of 10 years.

Business Proposal Letter “After” (edited, without highlighting)

RE: Shelf Management System Proposal

Dear Larry:

Retailers who sell BevCo products are always looking for ways to increase revenue and improve the shopping experience while saving time and money. With this in mind, I believe BevCo could benefit from trying out **SelfStocker**, an innovative shelf management system that's ideally suited to the beverage industry. It enhances product presentation, improves the shopping experience, and converts shoppers to buyers. By continuously moving products to the front of the shelf, SelfStocker also reduces labor costs by saving time and effort for retail employees.

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P.S. SelfStocker can deliver outstanding long-term value to the global BevCo system, as it will perform in the marketplace for a minimum of 10 years.

Flyer “Before”

(unedited, without highlighting)

“Overcome Anxiety Naturally”

By Dr. Doris Jeanette, a licensed psychologist with a new, holistic psychology approach

One out of four people have an official mental health diagnosis. The rest of us also need a serious spring clearing of the mind in order to remove the garbage, clutter and rotten thoughts that have accumulated over the winter and in some cases, the years. Most people ignore their mental health until a heart attack or a serious sexual problem. Dr. Jeanette, a licensed psychologist, offers a new, holistic psychology approach to mental health that focuses on body awareness.

<http://www.drjeanette.com/anxietyonlinecourse.html>

This online course has 10 written lessons in pdf format that you download and 5 hours of audio in mp3 format that you download. It sells for only 149.97

Students of “Overcome Anxiety Naturally” online course report, “Wow. Your information blows me away. No one else is saying what you’re saying. It makes perfect sense.” “I realized that my thoughts are separate from my real self. This was huge.” “The first written lesson in your online course was worth the price of the whole package.” “After the third lesson I can make love to my wife.”

“The only way to solve any psychological problem is to get physical,” says Dr. Jeanette, who has developed safe, effective solutions to psychological problems for 35 years. “Most people obsess about the same thing over and over again, without noticing. The results of obsessive thinking are: anxiety, insomnia, bad relationships, lousy sex life. Some people even repeat the same dreams at night! This is garbage. The only way you can learn to override this fast, racing mental energy is to get in your matter.”

In addition to her private practice, mentoring and training programs in the new, holistic psychology, Dr. Jeanette hosts the radio show “Live at the Edge,” publishes a popular newsletter, The Vibrant Moment, and has been featured in the news numerous times, such as in the Philadelphia Inquirer, Chicago Tribune, Woman’s Day, Men’s Health, My Business, Garzia Daily, on ABC radio, Fox TV and more.

For full details on the New Psychology approach to mental health visit:

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Call: 215-732-6197

drjeanette@drjeanette.com

Free holistic psychology library at:

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Flyer Notes

- ❶ Change “have” to “has” (the word “one” goes with “has”) and add the word “every” to emphasize that mental health problems are widespread.
- ❷ “Spring clearing” should be “spring cleaning.”
- ❸ Replace “over the winter” with the phrase “for months or years” so you can use the flyer year-round instead of only during the spring.
- ❹ Provide a transition sentence explaining that mental clutter can cause physical problems.
- ❺ Insert a new sentence that mentions the reader’s problem and offers a solution, paving the way for your description of the self-study course.
- ❻ Draw attention to the testimonials by listing them separately rather than combining them in a single paragraph.
- ❼ Avoid confusion by replacing the phrase “get in your matter” with “work on the problem at a physical level.”

Flyer “After”

(edited, with selected changes highlighted)

Overcome Anxiety Naturally

1 One out of every four people has an official mental health diagnosis. The rest of us could benefit from a 2 regular “spring cleaning” to get rid of all the mental garbage, clutter, and rotten thoughts that have accumulated 3 for months or years. 4 This mental clutter often leads to physical disorders like heart disease or sexual problems. 5 If you’ve been feeling anxious or troubled lately, the good news is that you’re not stuck with it—you can learn how to feel better without drugs. Dr. Doris Jeanette, a licensed psychologist, has developed a new, holistic psychology approach to mental health that focuses on body awareness.

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6 Students of Dr. Jeanette’s “Overcome Anxiety Naturally” course report dramatic improvements in their well-being:

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“After the third lesson I can make love to my wife.”

“The only way to solve any psychological problem is to get physical,” says Dr. Jeanette, who has taught safe, effective solutions to psychological problems for 35 years. “Most people obsess about the same things over and over, leading to anxiety, insomnia, bad relationships, and a lousy sex life. Some people even repeat the same dreams at night! This is garbage. The only way to override this fast, racing mental energy is to 7 work on the problem at a physical level.”

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About the Author

My name is Janet Tilden, and I'm a self-employed editor and writer. Realizing that business people everywhere could benefit from fast, reliable help with their written work, I founded Executive Rewrites in 1998 to offer editorial services via the Internet. In addition to writing and rewriting letters, brochures, email messages, memos, blog posts, and web pages for business clients, I've edited dozens of college-level print and digital texts for educational publishers such as HarperCollins, Cengage, Wadsworth, Allyn & Bacon, Heinemann, Houghton Mifflin, and McGraw-Hill. I've also edited academic papers for publication in scholarly journals.

Executive Rewrites is based in Omaha, Nebraska (USA) but my client base is global. I help people all over the world communicate more effectively in English.

For more information or to discuss your specific editorial needs, email me at jbilden@cox.net or call me at 402-350-5967.