

## Member's Quarterly

Winter 2017 Edition

### Feature

# Your Written Communication

*What image are you leaving?*

**A**lmost every organization I walk into "complains" about problems with communication. When you hear that, what jumps to your mind? People withholding information? Leaders having trouble speaking? Somebody sore because they missed out on some gossip? The list is endless, and I believe the statement "The problem in this company is communication" is really a cop-out for a lack of truly wanting to be understood.

If you really want to improve your image and the image of your company, start with writing skills — your writing skills. Let's take the example of the company vision. Whose responsibility is it ultimately to make sure the vision is clear, understood and inspiring? Clearly this lies with the CEO. Communication is definitely sender oriented — true communication occurs only when the received or created meaning is the one intended by the sender. Now look at the roots of the word communication. The word comes to English from Latin and has two roots: com (for the Latin "cum" meaning "together") and munis ("binding by obligation"). It probably seems pretty alien to a lot of leaders that communication might imply a binding obligation together with the people they are leading. And it starts with the written word.

What creates the image of a leader? I believe that how you present yourself is the key to success in business (or any walk of life for that matter).

You communicate your total image in four related parts:

1. Your appearance and how you look after yourself.
2. Your writing skills.
3. Your face-to-face communication skills.
4. Your presentation skills.

Assuming you are looking after yourself, the starting point is to work on your writing skills — and there is plenty of opportunity. I quote Lee Iacocca:

"The discipline of writing something down is the first step toward making it happen. In conversation you can get away with all kinds of vagueness and nonsense, often without even realizing it. But there's something about putting your thoughts on paper that forces you to get down to specifics. That way, it's harder to deceive yourself or anybody else."

Good advice. However, there is a huge problem in the workplace today and it's only getting worse — that is the ability to write. The advent of the computer and e-mail has exacerbated the problem to the point where anything goes. What happened to the binding obligation?

You can improve communication throughout your organization by starting from within and learning to write better. Your messages will become clearer and you can insist on others improving the same way. Just think of the clarity that can be achieved inside your organization and with customers, suppliers, regulatory bodies, etc. Then you will have a professional image. And there's a bonus: writing helps define you. Once you master creating the intended message so that the receiver grasps your meaning, you will be in a far stronger position to transfer this professional ability to your verbal communication with people. Then you can communicate the image you want, be it the vision, a strategy or needed information.

*Murray Janewski is President, ACT One International Corp. and can be reached at [murrayj@aoic.ca](mailto:murrayj@aoic.ca).*



**Murray Janewski**  
President, ACT One  
International Corp.