

What the Media is Saying about *Writing to Get Things Done*[®]

We are pleased to share with you this feature article from the business section of the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. It highlights key benefits and concepts of *Writing to Get Things Done*[®]. It also reminds you of how important effective business writing is to the bottom line of your organization. We hope you will use it as a refresher for your ongoing learning and development.

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Here's how to write like you mean it

By TODD NELSON, Special to the Star Tribune

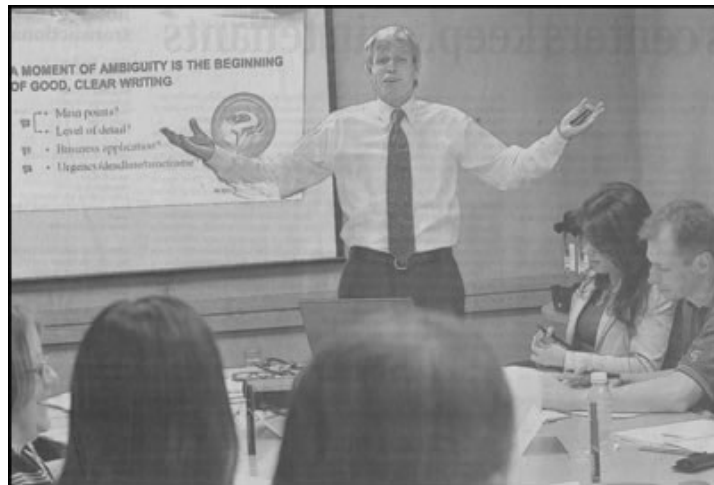
Writing retooled for business: A bottom-line approach to business communications can improve productivity, according to Berry Writing Group founder Stan Berry.

To find out how business writing coach Stan Berry believes he can boost your company's productivity, please continue reading.

"What differentiates our course from most others is that the whole focus is to use writing as a tool for getting things done, meeting important deadlines and keeping projects on track," said Berry, founder of Berry Writing Group in Minneapolis, MN.

Berry has taught more than 55,000 corporate and government employees since he started his company almost 35 years ago, riding out a number of boom-and-bust cycles in that time. Corporate clients include Land O'Lakes. Berry said he's also taught hundreds of employees at such companies as Target, American Express and Eli Lilly.

Corporate cutbacks mean companies are booking fewer seminars these days, Berry said, when most need it more than ever. "They've got fewer people trying to do more stuff, so they can't afford to have cluttered in-boxes full of rambling e-mails," said Stu Tanquist, Berry Writing Group's executive vice president.



Stan Berry, President of Berry Writing Group conducted a class at Land O' Lakes to help employees write more effectively.

Force multiplier

Still, Berry said, the last two years have produced record revenue of nearly \$250,000, and this year's sales appear to be keeping pace. More than offsetting the lost corporate work is a sharp rise in seminars for government clients, particularly the military, Berry said. He's done training at more than two dozen military bases and learning centers since he presented a pilot seminar in early 2006. "Working with the Navy and the Marines is probably 90 percent of our business," Berry said. "It's keeping us on track."

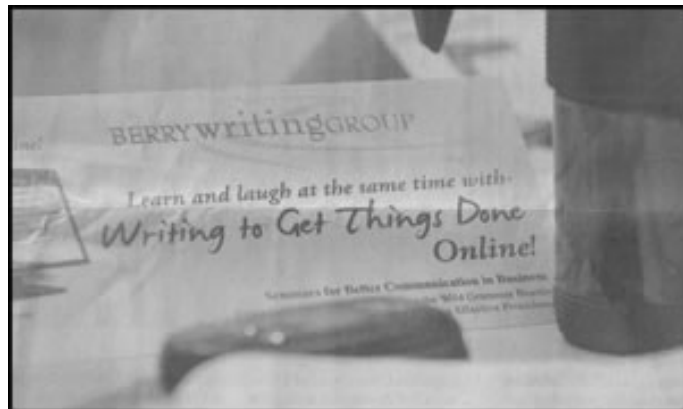
Ralph Soule, a federal government employee who has sent more than 100 of his people to Berry's training, describes it as a "force multiplier." "If you only have five people, it helps those five people communicate like 10 because it's so much clearer," Soule said in an interview. "A large part of what we do is communicate with people, make it clear what needs to get done and what problems we're having. If you can do that clearly, you don't need as many people to get it done."

Berry said he also expected to be busy this year training Social Security Administration officials. They, in turn, will train hundreds of employees who will rewrite the agency's policies and procedures according to Berry's method.

Online push coming

Berry and Tanquist spent most of a year developing the online course and another nine months testing it. It's the first and only such online course certified by the American Society for Training and Development, a national workplace training organization.

The new online course hasn't gotten much of a marketing push yet, and most of the 200 or so people who have completed it are military members, Berry said. Today, the company has only two employees, Berry and Tanquist. Berry scaled back from having as many as 12 people working at one point in the 1990s.



Since Berry started his company almost 35 years ago, he has taught more than 55,000 corporate and government employees. Berry's client list includes Land O' Lakes, Target, American Express, Eli Lilly and many others.

In the classroom, perhaps the greatest obstacle Berry faces is the deeply ingrained three-part academic writing model: introduction, body and conclusion. The problem, Berry said, is the academic style simply isn't effective for business writing. What you want to get done often ends up lost in the middle or near the end, with no sense of urgency.

His approach turns the English 101 model upside down. In business writing, he contends, the bottom line should go right at the top. That also serves as your introduction. The key, Berry said, is to figure out what you want to get done before you start writing. Just follow your statement of purpose with supporting details and a timeline or deadline, and you're done. "Everything people write on the job, regardless of the industry, can be presented in ... one of three models," Berry said. "The focus is productivity, not how to write a perfect sentence."

Berry taught his first course -- a how-to-study class for high school students -- when he was just 13. That was at a college prep and remedial reading school run by his father, a high school teacher in

St. Louis Park. He tagged along at night when his father taught writing classes at companies around the Twin Cities.

That experience formed the basis for Berry's business, which he started after getting a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Minnesota and a master's in arts and religion from Yale. "I saw early on that corporate people, engineers, very intelligent people, didn't know how to write for the business world," Berry said. "We're taught so much stuff from English 101 that gets in the way of good writing," Berry said.

The expert says: Avinash Malshe, assistant marketing professor at the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business, said Berry has an interesting product that meets a definite need.

"It's one of the most important skills that any manager should have," Malshe said of business writing. "Many times you see many great business ideas not making it because they're poorly written or because your audience does not understand what you want to communicate."

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