

## Cat Got Your Pen?

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### *Do your clear ideas turn to mush when you try to write them down?*

You can picture exactly what you want to say. You've gone over it in your mind again and again. The concepts are crystal clear, and you even know some of the words by heart. You can visualize the finished product and feel the paper it's printed on. Images of your prospective readers—and their reaction to your work—cause you to smile. Damn, you're good! Then you snap out of your reverie. That vast piece of blank paper—or the terrifying infinity of an empty screen—still stand before you. You write the first five words, hate them, and spend the next half hour rewriting them before you finally give up. It happens to all of us—even those who write for a living.

### *Great business writing is a rare and valuable commodity.*

Your written materials could be driving clients to your business, building new relationships and enhancing the ones you already have. They could be giving you a powerful edge over your competitors. They could demonstrate your creativity and give clients a good taste of what it might be like to work with you—or a potent reminder of why they've already chosen to work with you. They could put your ideas—and your unique advantages—before the marketplace. And they could be created without a lot of sweat and tears on your part.

### *Why is the disconnect between idea and workproduct so great?*

Fear dooms more great ideas to premature burial than anything else. Among my clients, the biggest fears are:

- Their ideas aren't good enough.
- Their writing skills aren't strong enough.
- They don't know enough about sales and marketing.
- Their presentation isn't "professional" enough.

One client of mine—a successful executive coach—came to me with a nagging sense that he wasn't marketing himself as effectively as he could. He knew what he wanted to say to his clients, and had developed a lot of well-written materials that more or less got the message across. But he wasn't getting the response he wanted. At his seminars, people would come up and talk to him—and get excited by what he had to offer. Then they'd take his marketing package and go home. And he'd never hear from most of them again. Understandably, he was concerned about this. Fortunately, the problem was pretty easy to fix. This guy is a crusty, no-nonsense sort with a very distinctive appeal. This came across perfectly in his presentations—and attracted a lot of people. When it came to developing his marketing package, however, he'd been afraid to stray from the narrow path of "professionalism." His single largest sales hook—his voice—was lost in a sea of non-distinctive language. All he had to do was edit his materials a bit so that he genuinely came through. His revised marketing materials are now out there, helping him convert more interest to sales.

### *You can bridge the gap.*

Getting your ideas out in writing that draws business to you can be a lot easier than you think. It'll take some time—and practice—but you'll find it well worth it in the long run. These six steps tell you

how Evoke does what it does—and how you can do it, too.

- 1. Don't be afraid.** NOTHING will happen if it doesn't turn out quite the way you want it to the first time.
- 2. Think of what you're presenting as a story.** How does it begin? How does it end? What happens in between? Tell it that way, keeping it simple at first and filling in detail as you go along.
- 3. Keep yourself in it.** A lot of what makes things interesting is the people who present them. It's your story; it couldn't even happen without you. So, in spite of what you may have been taught, it's okay to use the first person in most cases—and almost mandatory when marketing a small service business. (Besides, the acrobatics of third-person presentation can be really confusing.)
- 4. Picture your audience and pretend you're having a conversation with them.** You might tell the same story to your kids, to your best friend and to the guys at the local bar, but you would tell it differently to each of them. Bear that in mind while you're writing.
- 5. Work quickly; fix it later.** The most important thing is to get the first draft down. Don't worry about spelling, grammar or whether you could find a better way to say something. You can polish it later. Capture your thoughts—and keep them fresh. There's way too much stale, overworked language in the world; please don't add to it.
- 6. Balance the load your sentences carry.** We're bombarded with information these days, so we read everything quickly. Try to deal with only one idea in each sentence. If necessary, spread an idea over a few sentences. It's even okay to be a bit choppy in the first draft. Sweep and flow are useless if they take your reader out to sea.
- 7. Still having trouble? Call Evoke.** Sometimes it really is easier to get a bit of help. Somebody outside your organization can help you see your own strengths with greater precision—and really get at your creativity. That's our specialty.

You can learn to put your ideas in writing more effectively. It takes a little time to develop your voice and practice to get the words right, as well as the courage to “put it out there.” But in a world where there is so much indifferent—even bad—business writing, it is well worth it.

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### **Your ideas, perfectly Evoked.**

For over twelve years, I've helped professionals communicate with clarity and passion. I love language and am deeply sympathetic to people who have trouble capturing and using it to get their ideas across. Working with me, clients tease out their thoughts, their importance in the marketplace and their unique value propositions. We capture all of this in clear, vibrant language and put it to work—in the marketplace and within their organizations. If you think you might need Evoke's help—or are just curious—we'd be glad to have a conversation with you—at no charge. Call Evoke at **212.967.7611** or visit us at [www.evokestrategies.com](http://www.evokestrategies.com).