

Why is writing well a disappearing skill?

Sally Falkow writes today in her blog, The Proactive Report, that good writing should be considered a primary public relations skill. I agree (and I wrote about that in my post Qualities of a PR Pro).

The question is not whether PR people should know how to write well, but why they don't. April Finnen (@AprilFin) , who writes the blog One Person Shop, said in a Twitter exchange with me:

"I think a big part of it is that good writing comes from good thinking, and that's becoming harder to find."

I answered:

Certainly true, but I do think many people just don't do enough reading either (maybe that's related to lack of thinking...)

To which April responded:

"Agree. If you can find a curious PR pro who reads everything, pretty safe bet they're a good writer."

In my opinion, writing well is disappearing because people are reading less. Why is this happening? It may be because they are not curious, not interested, not thinking, working too hard, or any number of other reasons.

If it is lack of curiosity or good thinking, as April says, how are these PR "pros" going to come up with strategies to drive a message?

I can't tell you how many PR people I have met who don't ever read books for pleasure or even a daily newspaper. How many PR firms offer grammar and writing courses for their associates? How many PR pros today were English majors in college? Fewer and fewer thanks to the devaluing of liberal arts education and the rise of career-focused majors. If all you studied in college was how to create a PR campaign, but you never read a classic novel, how are you going to appreciate the power of language to convey meaning and emotion?

Do you have thoughts on why good writing is on the decline? Please do share!