

On writing: PR pro Karen Addis is succinct

This month's On Writing interview (which is being published early because of the upcoming long Fourth of July weekend) is with PR maven Karen Addis. I connected with Karen several years ago through a Restaurant Week "PR ladies' lunch bunch." We share a love of food, and a belief that writing skills are slowly vanishing. Following are her thoughts on writing and its importance.



Karen Addis, APR

Karen Addis, APR, is the senior vice president at Van Eperen, a full-service boutique public relations agency in North Bethesda. Karen leads new business development and manages the agency's national and international health, science and technology accounts.

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1. What role does writing play in your work and how important a skill is it?

To be an effective communicator, you need to have excellent writing skills. I write every single day for a variety of audiences and formats, ranging from new business proposals and contributed articles to blogs and tweets.

2. Does writing well still matter in a digital/text/emoji world?

Absolutely! You need to be able to communicate clearly and succinctly, especially in the digital/text/emoji world where every word and symbol matters.

3. What's the best advice you've received or would give on how to improve writing skills?

Never stop writing and be well read. You also need to have a thorough understanding of the rules of grammar and punctuation and then know when it's okay to break them.

4. What are your top three writing resources or references (digital or paper-based)?

Strunk and White's *Elements of Style* never goes out of fashion nor does the dictionary or thesaurus.

5. Do you follow a style guide, and if so, which one?

Having graduated with a degree in journalism and having spent my entire career working with the media, the *AP Stylebook*, of course!

6. What's your top writing/grammar/usage pet peeve?

The random use of the comma. No one seems to know how to use commas anymore!

7. What's your favorite word and what's your least favorite?

Favorite word: It's a toss-up between vacation and chocolate...or Chardonnay! Least favorite word: utilize. I absolutely *loathe* this word! Use is shorter and means the same thing.

Having recently copy edited a document in which I had to add

dozens of commas, I agree wholeheartedly with Karen that people don't seem to know how to use the comma. Do you agree or disagree? Share your thoughts in the comments, and be on the lookout next month for the upcoming On Writing interview.