

How you can shine

Lately, I feel that we live in a very mediocre world as it relates to communications and writing. Open up the newspaper most days and you will find a few articles that seem as if they were written by a teenager. Online, I see typos and spelling mistakes galore. On social media, I see a lot of rude behavior, I suppose reflecting the loss of civility evident everywhere.

But, as with all problems, there is an opportunity—an opportunity to shine. Because we are surrounded by mediocrity, working to be better will make you stand out.

Here are few ways to shine:

Mind your grammar, spelling and typing: Perhaps you need an editor or just a better review of your writing. And, if you aren't really that good at grammar, perhaps take a class or read a book to improve your skills.

Skip the passive voice: There is nothing like reading long passive sentences. It kills your writing. If you don't know what I am talking about then you never had a teacher who corrected your passive voice and made it active.

Avoid the cliches and jargon: Another dead giveaway that screams laziness and even stupidity is the overuse of jargon and cliches. People hide behind these words. For instance, the following excerpts are from a job description (let me know if you understand what this person does for a living):

- Stakeholder relationship management
- Standardizing processes, roles and responsibilities
- Outreach strategy
- Virtual collaboration

Be polite: If someone writes you an email or leaves you a

voice mail, respond. If someone comments on your blog, thank him/her. On Twitter, acknowledge re-tweets. Watch your swearing in a public space (yes, social media is a public space).

Think about your audience: If you think about who your audience is, and what information they need, you will be a huge step ahead. Considering your audience will help determine your language, your timing, etc.

Learn how to network effectively: Perhaps we are spending too much time with our gadgets, but it seems more people are less able to interact personally with others. If you go to a networking event, try speaking to other people. It is as easy as introducing yourself, and asking a simple question (how did you hear about the event, have you been here before, etc.) You may also want to follow up with the people you meet.

Be a LinkedIn rock star: Not a week goes by that I don't get a LinkedIn invitation that is a) not personalized and b) from someone I don't know. Sometimes, I go to somebody's profile, and it is missing information, does not have photograph, and lists an old position where the person is no longer working. So, you have the opportunity to shine on LinkedIn by:

- Completing your profile (include your photo)
- ALWAYS personalizing invitations
- Not connecting with every Tom, Dick and Jane out there.
- Having an updated job description
- Joining (and participating) in groups

How do you shine? Please share what you do to stand out from the crowd.