
~THE PORRO PASSAROUND - TIPS FOR COMMUNICATORS~

January 2006

www.porroLLC.com

GETTING OFF TO A GREAT START

It's January. The warm memories of the holiday season have faded, but the pounds we gained from all that fruitcake are still with us. So as we all resolve to make a new start in 2006, here are some tips to at least get your prose in shape in the new year.

- [1] OpEds and Speeches: Rip It from the Front Page
- [2] Speeches and Press Releases: Get Help from the Masters
- [3] LTEs: 'Pre-Write" for Success

1. OpEds and Speeches: Rip It from the Front Page

Want to make your communications timely? The answer may be as close as your newspaper, browser or TV.

Editorialists, speechwriters and other communications pros all know the advantages of giving their copy a timely hook pulled from the front page. That's because couching the introduction of your presentation or opinion piece in some current news event helps to tap the images that are already in the minds of an audience. And that ready-made context provides a writer with a way to make a point faster and more easily in any communications product.

Business, consumer and sports headlines are fertile sources for up-to-the-minute hooks for copy. And you don't need to refer to a monster story to make your point. While Enron, Katrina and O.J. provided jumping-off places for countless editorials and speeches -- news events closer to home can provide you with the same kind of contextual resource when you tackle local issues.

So turn on the evening news the next time you need to liven up your copy. You may just find a clever way to reach your audience -and editors.

Porro Associates LLC helps corporations and nonprofits improve the written and spoken materials they use to reach key audiences.
<http://www.porrollc.com/results.html>

2. Speeches and Press Releases: Get Help from the Masters

If you can't think of a zinger for your copy, you have no one to blame but yourself. When you are writing to accomplish a dollars-and-cents communications goal, it is not your business to create immortal prose. So why not leave it to some really great writers?

Clever quotes that contain the essence of your theme are everywhere. You can find them in that hoary standard, "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations," or you can search online for lists of quotes on almost any conceivable subject. There's nothing wrong with helping to make your point with "as Norman Mailer said..." or "Camus wrote that..."

Remember: "Good writers borrow, great writers steal." Who said it? Well, it's been attributed variously to Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway and T.S. Eliot. Guess that proves the point...

3. LTEs: 'Pre-Write' for Success

If you write letters to the editor, you already know that papers are bombarded with hundreds of them. And you also know that, like you, editors are on tight deadlines. Even so, it always gripes you when some of your best letters - the ones that seemed to hit all the right notes - never get printed.

Well, good writing always helps, but pros use every advantage at their disposal to get on editors' radar screens. And one way to get to bolster your chances of getting on the letters page is to get those letters out as expeditiously as possible.

"Pre-write" your letters to the editor.

It's not hard to do. If your work is geared toward preserving a client's reputation, you certainly are aware of most of the issues that affect - or could affect -- that client. Additionally, you probably already have lots of your boss's or your client's positions and arguments conveniently laid out in some of your communications copy.

So why not prepare for various scenarios by writing letters in advance that respond to potential flare-ups on your issues? That way you can have them "in the can" so that you can add a timely sentence or two and fire them off to newspapers as soon as they are needed.

Just make sure to make the letters lively and different enough that they don't look formulaic. You don't want to turn off editors by submitting too-similar letters on different issues.