
THE PORRO PASSAROUND TIPS FOR COMMUNICATORS

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HOLIDAY GIFTS (?)

Ho, ho, ho, and all that. As 2006 gives way to 2007, below are what I hope are some holiday treats: a few tips that can get your New Year off to a great start.

- [1] Speeches: Learning to Love PowerPoint
- [2] Speeches: Fiorina Fan Club
- [3] Brochures: It's about "you" not "us"

1. Speeches: Learning to Love PowerPoint

It's easy to bash PowerPoint because it is used in so many deadly dull speeches. My favorite anti-PP story is about Jack Welch, former CEO superstar. Listening to a boring speaker who was using PowerPoint as a crutch, Welch cut him short. "Excuse me," he said. "I can read the slides as well as you can. Why not just hand them to me?"

You can find all kinds of specific tips out there on how to avoid the PP pitfalls, but Robert Ausura (www.robertwriting.com) points out, "A presentation is a medium that comprises three elements--speaker, words and pictures--all of which have equal roles in conveying the message."

The problem is that speechwriters know the first two elements but often don't have the clue about the third. (I certainly fall into that category) That can lead to two typical PP mistakes:

1. The visuals reiterate the speech.
2. The speech reiterates the visuals.

Ausura recommends using PP visuals with little or no text. If you're making a point about teamwork, put up an illustration of a football team. If you're talking about speed, put a rocket on the slide. The slides then don't rehash the speech. They illustrate it by analogy or metaphor.

(You'll more from Ausura at
http://www.washingtonspeechwriters.com/blog/_archives/2005/4/21/569469.html)

I would only add that, because I don't have a visual bone in my body, I usually work with a graphic designer when I'm asked to prepare PP slides.

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[2] Speeches: Fiorina Fan Club

I was lucky enough to hear former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina speak last month. Simply put, she blew me away. Whether she takes to it naturally, or has had to become a dynamite coaching, her speech had everything a great speech should have: superb delivery and gripping content. I hope to post the text of the speech on my site soon (I wish I had written it.)

In the meantime, any speechwriter who wants to get better should go to her site, <http://www.carlyfiorina.com/>, and click on "speeches." Here's how she starts her speech at the commencement ceremony of North Carolina A&T.

When I first received the invitation to speak here, I was the CEO of an \$80 billion Fortune 11 company with 145,000 employees in 178 countries around the world. I held that job for nearly six years ...

But as you may have heard, I don't have that job anymore. After the news of my departure broke, I called the school and asked, "Do you still want me to come and be your commencement speaker?"

Chancellor Renick put my fears to rest. He said, "Carly, if anything, you probably have more in common with these students now than you did before." And he's right. After all, I've been working on my resume. I've been lining up my references. I bought a new interview suit. If there are any recruiters here, I'll be free around 11.

[3] Brochures: It's about "you" not "us"

It's a compulsion that's hard to resist. When we're writing a brochure, ad copy, or Web copy that is designed to get us new customers, we have an intense desire to write about all the wonderful things we can do, the awards we've received, the clients who love us, etc.

But the next time you feel that tug . . . stop. Remember that, first and foremost, your marketing material is about building confidence. As Kim Gordon, small-business marketing guru, puts it, "First and foremost, your [copy] must be 'outer-directed.' That means the copy should focus on what the customer gets, not on what you offer, and the single most important word should be 'you,' not 'us.' "

A good test for copywriters: Look at your marketing copy. If the word 'you' doesn't appear, find a way to rewrite so it does.