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Writing Tips for the Digital Native

Posted in [Book Reviews](#), by [Doug Devitre](#) on August 13, 2015

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Let's face it. No matter who your customer is or what type of transaction you represent, each one of us can improve our digital communications. Whether you are exchanging e-mail, posting to social media, or texting, how you structure your message is as important as what's in it.

Do you ever ask yourself...

- How can I save time in an e-mail exchange and get to the point quickly?
- How do I increase the likelihood that more of my marketing e-mails get opened?
- What choices will help me be more concise and clear in my website text?



Credit: Alejandro Escamilla

Dianna Booher's *E-Writing: 21st Century Tools for Effective Communication* is more than a decade old, but the book is still overflowing with excellent lessons many still haven't learned. It's the perfect step-by-step guide to analyze your current writing skills and self-correct according to the certain types of messages, recipients, and situations that most often confront you in the workplace. It's a fast read, but in order to get the most out of it I highly recommend taking the time to fully absorb each chapter. If you purposefully make improvements as you read the book, you'll be able to see the difference in time savings and marked increase in the effectiveness of your communications.

Here are some quick tips from the book:

- **Don't use ALL CAPS in the subject line or message body.** This goes for promoting open house listings, sending out your newsletter, or requesting urgent responses. It looks like you're yelling.
- **Not every e-mail is a marketing piece.** A simple message to coordinate transaction logistics doesn't require your marketing brochure be sent as an attachment or your logo to appear beneath your signature. Along those same lines: It's a problem when your e-mail signature is longer than your message. Your awards, leadership participation, and services were meant for your website. Don't abuse this space.
- **Not all e-mails deserve a response.** Increase your productivity by only responding to e-mails that require a response. You may think you're being polite by responding to everything, but your replies take up the recipients' time, too.
- **Consider audience type when using emoticons.** Senior or corporate clients might

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see this as a turnoff, even if you're only intending to keep the communication lighthearted.

- **Short, abrupt messages may signal lack of empathy in certain situations.** Take that extra five seconds to send a warm message that shows you care.
- **Avoid conscious rambling.** If you notice yourself rambling when speaking to others there's a good chance it happens electronically too.
- **Change e-mail subject lines when a task evolves into a new direction or someone else gets involved.** Many professionals use e-mail subject lines to organize incoming messages; they'll appreciate you helping them be more efficient.
- **Distinguish between information vs. recommendations.** MLS statistics represent the information, but you add value with your interpretation of that data.
- **Differentiate your writing style for the occasion.** Your tone should vary when you're giving showing instructions, explaining home-buying processes, providing definitions of unfamiliar terms, and composing the Q&A section of your website. Always consider the needs of the audience in each situation.
- **Use speech-to-text tools.** The average person can speak three times faster than they can write. And typing on mobile devices is even less efficient than using a full keyboard. Practice using your computer, tablet, or mobile phone speech-recognition software to enter in new messages. This will improve your writing productivity and response time. Eventually you may be able to develop speech-to-text as an unconscious skill set, like driving a car.



Doug Devitre

Companies bring in Doug Devitre, CSP, when they want to improve sales and marketing using the latest technology with quantifiable metrics. He is a member of the National Association of REALTORS® Business Specialties Hall of Fame and earned the Certified Speaking Professional award, which is bestowed upon the top 10 percent of professional speakers worldwide. His new book, *Screen to Screen Selling*—published by McGraw Hill and available in October 2015—helps executives and sales managers increase sales, productivity, and customer experience without being physically present.

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One of the things we talked about during guest editor Sam DeBord's visit was Open Door Partners. Please take two minutes to learn about this safety initiative by watching Sam's talk at #ICSF. #RealtorSafety. (Or read Sam's article: <http://realtormag.realtor.org/.../lets-all-open-doors-for-rea...>)



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