

Kirkus Discoveries Review

Words at Work: Powerful business writing delivers increases sales, improved results, and even a promotion or two.

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Tips, techniques and tactics for better business writing.

Professional writing coach McDaniel addresses the sad fact that business writing is becoming somewhat of a lost art, largely because of e-mail and other electronic communications. “When you write only short e-mail and text messages,” she writes, “your ability to develop your thoughts shrivels, along with your ability to persuade, sell, teach, improve, guide, change, contribute, and create.” The author provides a wealth of advice—including specific exercises—to prompt business writers to write well.

Unlike most business-writing courses and books that are dry and dull, McDaniel’s work is a breezy, well-written how-to guide, nicely held together with stories of her experiences. The author is unafraid to illustrate some of her lessons with personal challenges and failures, which may be the best teacher. The author covers all the basics: planning ahead, producing first drafts, the importance of the six key questions (who, what, where, when, why, how) and the essentials of editing. But she includes additional techniques that will be of great benefit to business writers, such as her “Brain Dump” process, and how to avoid “corporatespeak” and “WIIFM,” or What’s In It For Me.

Thankfully, McDaniel presents all of the material in the book clearly, concisely, and with a healthy dose of encouragement based on the optimistic belief that “everyone can learn to write well” and that “bad writers just stopped too soon.” There are some good suggestions even for seasoned writers, such as “Exciting to Write = Exciting to Read,” a section of specific ways to add interest and vitality to writing. The examples she uses demonstrate that even business writing can be done with flair. While McDaniel makes a sales pitch for her services at the end of the book, it’s a small price to pay for the wisdom she imparts. The book’s readability is proof positive that the author’s counsel is sound. A timely manual that business people at any level will find useful.