Focus on P.O.W.E.R.
CIGIE Quality Assurance Working Group
April 7, 2022

Plain Language is

- Reader-focused
- Objective-based
- Organized
- Clear
- Concise
- The basis of P.O.W.E.R.

Unconscious Bias

- Perception bias
  - Negative influence
- Affinity bias
  - Positive influence
- Confirmation bias
  - One example proves the point
# Persona Profile for an IG Report Writer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. <strong>WHO</strong></th>
<th>2. <strong>TASKS or GOALS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is this person?</td>
<td>What do they need to do? What decisions do they need to make? How will they know if they are successful?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is their situation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do they work?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. <strong>SKILLS NEEDED to GET RESULTS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on their role and their goals, what are the skills most needed to serve as an effective IG Report Writer?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. <strong>CHARACTERISTICS</strong></th>
<th>5. <strong>INFLUENCERS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do they do? What behaviors do we observe?</td>
<td>Who do they listen to? What are they hearing from others? What are they watching and reading?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What can we imagine them working on?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. <strong>VALUES &amp; MOTIVATORS</strong></th>
<th>7. <strong>PAIN POINTS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are their wants, needs, hopes, dreams?</td>
<td>What are their fears, frustrations, anxieties, road blocks?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. <strong>TYPICALLY ASKED QUESTIONS?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What have we heard them say? What can we imagine them saying? What is their focus?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. <strong>SKILL BUILDERS</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are examples of learning experiences to build the skills of an IG report writer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. WHO</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is this person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is their situation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where do they work?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3. SKILLS NEEDED to GET RESULTS**

Based on their role and their goals, what are the skills most needed to serve as an effective IG Report Writer?

- Patient, persistent, knowledgeable, flexible, detail-oriented, articulate, good listener, CREATIVE

**4. CHARACTERISTICS**

What do they do? What behaviors do we observe? What can we imagine them working on?

- Research, observe, listen, analyze, focus, create solutions

**5. INFLUENCERS**

Who do they listen to? What are they hearing from others? What are they watching and reading?

- Legal counsel, Congress & lawmakers, media, public, stakeholders

**6. VALUES & MOTIVATORS**

What are their wants, needs, hopes, dreams?

- Good info, media, $, impactful

**7. PAIN POINTS**

What are their fears, frustrations, anxieties, roadblocks?

- Time constraints, no follow through, politics

**8. TYPICALLY ASKED QUESTIONS?**

What have we heard them say? What can we imagine them saying? What is their focus?

- Can we support it? Is it important? Why? Is it impactful?

**9. SKILL BUILDERS**

What are examples of learning experiences to build the skills of an IG report writer?

- Practice, read published reports, peer review, post-mortem/lessons learned
Objectives
What are your objectives?
Who sets your objectives?
Do you understand your objectives?

Consider Your Purpose
To inform
To explain
To persuade

Fact, Opinion, or Assumption?
• Facts can be proven.
• Opinions are a fact plus a belief.
• Assumptions are a jump in logic.
Know Your Reader

- Who are you trying to reach?
- Who will you reach?
- Who wants to be reached?

Reader-Focused Considerations

- What the reader needs to hear… not what you want to say
- How to serve the reader’s interest… not how to protect your interests
- A clearly expressed message… not overwhelming words or statistics

Know What Your Reader Knows

- PRIMARY
  - Know a lot
  - Want to act
- SECONDARY
  - Interested
  - Impacted
- TERTIARY
  - Open to knowing more
Creative Approach to Organization

Logical Approach to Organization

Problems? Solutions.

- Are there holes in your logic?
- Does your evidence support your conclusion?
- Are your main points clearly stated?
- Are there limitations or flaws in your support?
- Did you keep your objective in mind?
### Type of Heading Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Heading</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heading in the form of a question</td>
<td>Why Do We Use Headings? What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement (noun + verb)</td>
<td>Headings Help Guide a Reader Daylight Savings Time is Making You Sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic (word or short phrase)</td>
<td>Headings Frequently Asked Questions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Bulleted Lists

- Multi-level, meaningful headings
- Pull-quote
- Table
- Overall use of white space

There is a smart-alecky one (Corey Feldman), a mature one (Josh Brolin), a precociously responsible one (Sean Astin), a weirdly inventive one (Ke Huy Quan) and an effervescent fat one (Jeff Cohen) who steals half the film. Two girl Goonies (Martha Plimpton and Kerri Green) are also on hand…

Who are the Goonies?
- Corey Feldman is the smart-alecky one,
- Josh Brolin is the mature one,
- Sean Astin is the precociously responsible one,
- Key Huy Quan is the Weirdly inventive one, and
- Jeff Cohen is the effervescent fat one who steals half the film.
Why Vary Sentence Length?

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five more sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen in what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It’s like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage them with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the clash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

Simple sentences: a single clause with no dependent clauses

The dog is sleeping.
The Chairman spent the funds.

Compound sentences: two independent clauses

The dog is happy for his new ball.
We asked about the payment but they talked about the expenses.
Complex sentences: a single clause with one or more dependent clauses

Although he was tired, the dog still ran to greet me.

We reviewed the records, made note of the missing data, and notified the relevant officials.

Sometimes complex sentences of considerable length, a sentence discourse with energy and build with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals— that's the sentence you need.

Hidden Verbs

- Conduct an analysis
- Present a report
- Do an assessment
- Provide assistance
- Came to the conclusion

Careful Use of Jargon

1. Use sparingly, as necessary
2. Keep reader's needs front of mind
3. Use terms consistently
4. Remember, words are easier to read than acronyms
Plain Language in Three Parts

Preparing
- Know Yourself
- Understand Your Objectives
- Know Your Purpose
- Identify Your Reader

Organizing
- Logical or Creative
- Identify Holes

Writing
- Meaningful Signposts
- Smart Paragraphs
- Active Sentences
- The Right Words

Organizing
- Logical or Creative
- Identify Holes

Writing
- Meaningful Signposts
- Smart Paragraphs
- Active Sentences
- The Right Words
Focus on P.O.W.E.R. Plain Language Resource List

Online Resources

- Plain Language website: https://www.plainlanguage.gov/
- Chicago Manual of Style: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html
- Grammar Girl website: https://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl

Recommend Reading

- *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, by Lynne Truss
- *The Elements of Grammar*, Margaret Shertzer
- *The Elements of Style*, William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White
- *The Grammar Devotional*, by Mignon Fogarty
- *Grammar Girl’s 101 Misused Words You’ll Never Confuse Again*, by Mignon Fogarty
- *How to Not Write Bad*, Ben Yagoda
- *On Writing Well*, by William Zissner
- *Perfect English Grammar*, by Grant Barrett
- *The Subversive Copy Editor*, by Carol Fisher Saller
- *Writing that Works: How to Communicate Effectively in Business*, by Kenneth Roman