

# Communication matters



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## About



Nearly 30 years experience in Journalism and Public Relations mean we can help you tell your story in a clear and engaging way no matter the medium or your target audience.

Drop me a line at the address below to sign up for my weekly update on anything and everything to do with business communication.

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## Death of print 'greatly exaggerated'

MANY owners and managers of small and medium-sized business have heard that print is dead and don't even consider using it as part of their marketing mix.

Mark Twain once wrote that the reports of his death were greatly exaggerated and the same is true of print and other technologies as well. Remember the panic and confusion in the music industry after digital downloads became the most popular way of getting new music?

The last rites were read over vinyl records and almost everyone agreed they had long passed their sell-by-date. Then a funny thing happened on the way to the funeral because vinyl refused to be buried and sales are now increasing again.

Much the same story played out in photography where digital looked like it was going to kill film off entirely. Many famous names went to the wall, as the bemused-looking Agfa teddy on my bookcase will confirm, but there are quite a few people still using film and instant cameras.

Print is another one of those formats that is not going to die. They've been talking about the paperless office and the death of books for years but it's not going to happen.

There will be changes and some newspapers will go under but printed paper will still be around. It's just so tactile and you can't destroy it by walking past a strong magnet or spilling a bit of your margarita on it.

Most smaller businesses now concentrate on marketing themselves via the Worldwide Web

and social media. They do usually get business cards printed but overlook the fact that print and paper have unique characteristics which make them really valuable marketing tools to complement your online efforts.

The thing is that printed materials potentially have a very long life and can lie around for months waiting for someone to pick them up.

"Print and paper have unique characteristics..."

For example, an application form for a cinema club lay on my hall table for six months before I got around to joining it.

The question is whether I would have bothered if the bored assistant had merely directed me to a website to sign up. Probably not. Their website is useful for checking session times but the printed form is what finally got me over the line.

A nicely written printed book, information sheet, catalogue, booklet, form, coupon or flyer can also be a valuable marketing tool. Your website is always on, it's true, but clients have

## English as she should be wrote

Seeing misused words in print and online is pretty common these days. Here are a few I've seen recently:

### WITHIN

This is very commonly misused word. It may sound more impressive but **in** is correct whenever the subject is in a definite place.

To say Jane is **in** the bar and the book is **in** her bag is correct because we know exactly where Jane and the book are.

To say Dick is **within** a kilometer of the bar on his way to meet Jane is correct because we don't know exactly where Dick is.

When in doubt it is better to use **in** than **within**.

### AFFECT AND EFFECT

Many people don't know the difference the two. **Affect** is a verb which means to influence something and **effect** is a noun meaning the result of something.

Heavy rain **affected** the flow of traffic. It had the **effect** of slowing it down causing long delays.

The worsening economic climate is **affecting** consumers. This has the **effect** that low-price supermarkets are becoming more popular.

# Another opportunity for publicity

SUBMITTING stories showing your business in a good light to online and print publications is a great way of spreading the word. Many large businesses and organisations employ specialists to do this for them showing the value they place on this type of publicity.

In fact, a favourable story in a magazine, newspaper or popular website is usually seen as being worth five times the cost of buying the same amount of colour advertising space. This is because readers view published stories as more reliable and thus more likely to be true than an advert.

Large organisations routinely publicise themselves this way but there is no reason why small businesses can't do so too. With a bit of thought you can most likely identify possible print and online publications that you could approach.

What these might be will depend on your activity and how newsworthy it is but possible outlets could include:

- Print and broadcast news



- Professional and industry publications
- Community news sheets
- Government and municipal publications
- Bloggers and podcasters in your area of expertise

The key to unlocking additional opportunities for publicity lies in the fact that good content is costly to produce and many publishers don't have a lot of money.

Publishers usually work on thin margins and will often jump at the chance of using content you provide to them for free. If it adds value to the publication the publisher will often be happy to use it to fill space that they might otherwise have had to buy content for.

Before rushing ahead and starting to write you might consider contacting the publication and

asking if they would be willing to receive a contribution from you on such and such a subject.

Ensure that the topic you choose will bring value to the publication's readers. Your chances of being published are higher that way.

Be aware that publishers (or the good ones anyway) have a house style which they impose on any text they publish to maintain consistency across many editions.

This can include whether to use British or American spelling for a word, which words get a capital letter or how to write place names. The more your copy conforms to the publication's house style the less work the publisher will have to do to bash it into shape and the more likely they are to choose to use it.

## Death of print is 'greatly exaggerated'

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to make an effort to visit it and it can't lie around on the hall table as an ongoing reminder.

You hope potential clients will look at your website after they get home from the event where you handed them your business card. The snag is they will have received cards from many people and may not even remember who you were.

But what if you differentiated yourself and handed them a nice little brochure as well? Isn't there a bet-

ter chance they'll scan it when they get home and take action or even leave it lying around where they, or others, might see it later?

Printed materials you hand out represent your business and you cannot afford to make a negative impression with bad design or poorly written text riddled with grammar and spelling errors.

At Allan Jackson Communications we can help you tell your story clearly and work with experienced print designers to produce printed materials that'll get you over the line with your customers.

# Writing a book for business

A DEPRESSINGLY small number of authors ever manage to make a living by writing books but doing so is still a good idea for many business people. It is a great way for people whose intellectual property is their stock in trade to use to publicise themselves. A book can be sold or given away to add value to courses and lectures they might give.

Having a book to show impresses people and it helps to convince them you really know what you're talking about. I experienced this after I wrote a book of historical snippets about Durban, my former hometown.

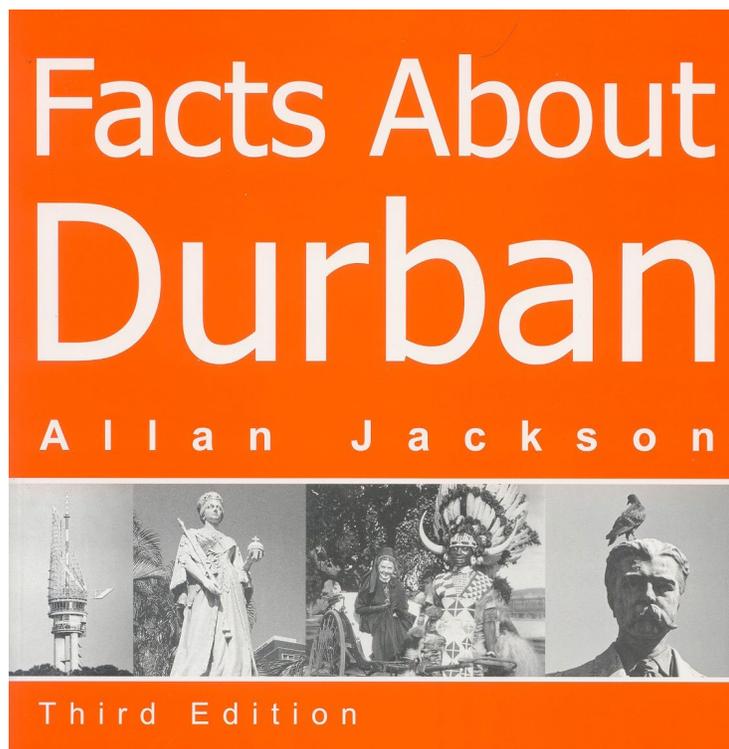
As soon as I had a manuscript to show, the city council took an interest and pre-ordered copies. Community groups began to approach me to speak at their meetings when the book hit the streets. I became an authority overnight.

Writing a book is good way to establish your credentials but there are a number of hurdles to cross. Chief among these is that the book's content has to be well-written, error-free and contain information that will be of interest to the target audience.

Other hurdles occur during the actual writing and production of the book but their effect can be minimised or eliminated by following a few simple rules.

## Talk to the printer first

I have laid-out a number of books for my clients and bitter experience has taught me that you can avoid a lot of trouble if you talk to the printer first.



"You avoid a lot of trouble if you talk to the printer first."

This applies to anything you want printed because you need to establish what the technical requirements are for the file/s you will hand them. It can be quite a list (including the exact sizes of spine and covers) and you will ignore any detail on that list at your peril. Never assume that they will be able to work from any old Microsoft Word file.

## Do the writing

Don't worry about layout at first. Writing and layout are two different jobs needing two different thought spaces. This applies even if you're doing both things yourself

## Hints for the writing stage

- Use Microsoft Word or an equivalent and just write.
- You can add footnotes and end notes to your text as you write.
- Start a new document for each chapter.
- Make a note at the location where illustrations are to be inserted.
- Edit and refine until the text is perfect. Your costs can spiral completely out of control if you're still making major edits during the layout process.
- Use Word's styles panel to go through your text and designate chapter headings, subheadings and text that is to be bold or in italics. Whoever lays out your book will thank you for not using the bold and italics buttons on the toolbar.

Now do the layout but remember what the printer told you. That's not negotiable.

## More English as she should be wrote

### ACCEPT AND EXCEPT

They are often used incorrectly in place of each other. When you **accept** something you either agree to receive it or you believe that something is valid or correct. **Except** means 'not including'.

He **accepted** the nomination as club treasurer.

I **accept** that the theory of evolution is correct.

Everyone is happy with the decision **except** Jane and I.

### ADVERSE AND AVERSE

**Adverse** means harmful or unfavourable while **averse** means having a strong dislike of something.

The drought has had an **adverse** effect on farm productivity.

The banks are becoming **averse** to making loans to farmers.

### COMPLIMENT AND COMPLEMENT

If there is a **pli** in the word it means there is no cost for something or that praise is being given. If there is a **ple** the word refers to things that complete each other.

Jane **complimented** me on my writing and handed me a voucher for a **complimentary** meal.

Bob and Jane **complemented** each other and were a perfect couple.



## Network with me

I'm a member of Key Business Network's Inner City branch which meets every Tuesday at the Paddo Tavern for breakfast. Why not come along and meet me.

It won't cost to talk. 😊

You might consider joining our supportive community and giving your business a real shot in the arm.

W: [keybusinessnetwork.com.au](http://keybusinessnetwork.com.au)

# Checking your writing

The other day I was surfing the Interwebs and came across a tool called Grammarly. The free version checks your writing as you go and highlights spelling and other common mistakes in real-time. The paid version also highlights mistakes it finds in grammar and sentence structure. In both cases, the tool offers one-click corrections.

The Grammarly apps include an online version, one that lives on your Windows or Mac desktop or in MS Word, Chrome, Firefox and Safari. All check your text as you type or allow you to write in a Grammarly editor. The online version also lets you upload files typed in other programs for checking. I like the Chrome app most and I often use it when typing emails or social media posts.

### THE GOOD

- Even the free version highlights a lot of mistakes.
- The Chrome app is working very well for me so far and I mostly use that.

### THE BAD

- The paid version is quite expensive (\$11.66-\$29.95 per month).
- It disables MS Word's undo feature which I don't like.

Go to [Grammarly.com](http://Grammarly.com) and give it a try. You will have to sign-up for an account and don't forget to choose the British English setting. Grammarly is not infallible so please check everything you type.

ISSUE

# 01

# Communication matters

## Writing tip

Try and use the active voice rather than the passive voice in your writing. The difference is that in the active voice the subject of a verb acts on something rather than being acted on.

'Dick flew a kite' is in the active voice – Dick is the subject and acts on the kite.

'The kite was flown by Dick' is in the passive voice – Dick is still the subject but is acted upon by the kite.

## Safeguarding your web domain

You spend a lot of time and effort getting your message across to your target audience and that includes developing a web presence and making sure that potential customers are able to contact you if they need you.

Have you ever considered just how important your email address and the address of your website are to your business and what trouble you'd be in if you ever lost access to them? Imagine if you suddenly had to change your website and email addresses and start from scratch publicising them and trying to notify customers about the change.

Your addresses depend your domain name and you lose control of them if you ever lose control of your domain. It sounds far-fetched but the way domains are registered may leave you open to losing that control.

The first way it might happen is that the domain may not even be registered in your name if your web developer registered it for you. It could

have been registered in their name. The second issue is that domain registrations include three email contacts and it may be that your web developer is one of those.

That's all fine and dandy while you're on good terms with them but they could block you if you ever decide to move to move your website to another location. All three contacts are notified of any intended move and any of them can block transfer and make life difficult for you.

My advice would be to register your domains yourself and even buy the website hosting space yourself. This has the benefit that neither your web developer or your Internet service provider can prevent you moving your site and retaining your address. Another plus is that the bills for the domain renewals and web hosting come to you and you can ensure they are paid.

Domains lapse if not paid for and can then be bought by anyone. I know of at least one case where this happened. Don't be the next one.