



Next Third Thursday Webinar

**MARCH 16, 2017**

### **Dealing with Irate Customers**

It's going to happen. No matter how wonderful you are, you're going to have unhappy customers.

How do you handle it when those customers "blow up"? What phrases help? What words make things even worse?

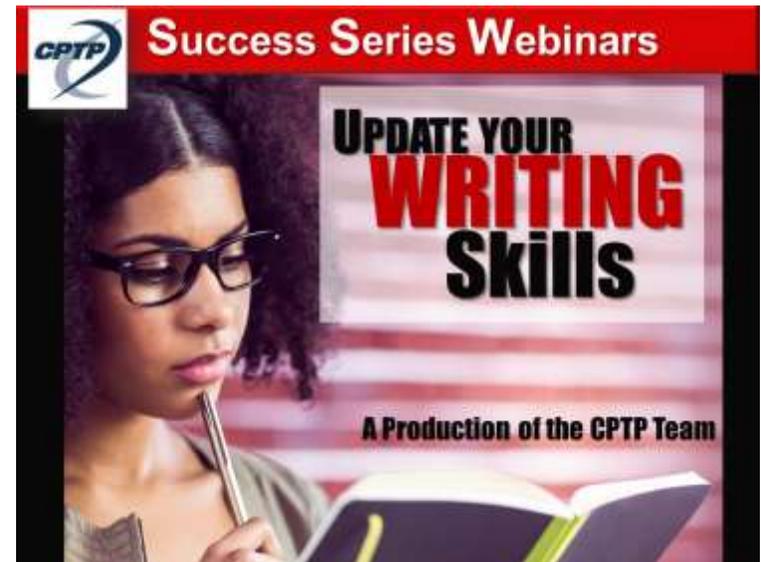
Let's share our best ideas to get through these situations with grace, style, and an absence of curse words.

**APRIL 20, 2017**

### **Get Your MOJO Back!**

It's time to remember the things that motivate you and bring them back into your everyday life. What's your passion? What are you good at? What do you want to be when you grow up? We'll ask some of those questions and help you find ways to bring that excitement into your workplace.

Watch for the videos of our latest series of webinars coming soon to the CPTP YouTube Channel. <https://goo.gl/iSOiJP>



Our written words are often the only contact we have with citizens, customers, vendors, and many of the other groups we work with every day. How do those words represent you and your agency?

Take a moment to open your email. Go to your *Sent Folder*. Look at the wording of the last three emails you sent.

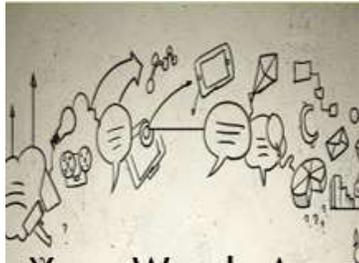
Now answer these questions:

- How clear was your message?
- Was the tone of your message positive or negative?
- Did you see any spelling errors, typing errors, or misused words?

If you received these emails, how would you rate them?

- A. Excellent! No improvement needed.
- B. Good, but they could have been more effective.
- C. Okay, but not great.
- D. Oops. Some of these missed the mark.

If you found any errors, anything that could be misunderstood, or just didn't think your writing was excellent, it's time for a writing refresher! Read on for some tips that will sharpen your writing style. And if you decide you need more help, look through the CPTP catalog for web-based and instructor-led classes that can boost your writing skills.



## Your Words Are a Reflection of You, Your Agency, and Your State.

- ❑ First, narrow the reason you're writing to a single sentence.
- ❑ Put the most important information first, especially if it's an email. That way, if the person only looks at the message in the preview pane, he or she still sees the most important part of the communication.
- ❑ Use your subject line to sell your email. You're competing with hundreds of other emails to get noticed. You need to ensure that your subject line grabs the reader's attention.

- ❑ Review the rules of grammar. Believe it or not, some of them have been relaxed in recent years. You can use these or, like many of our webinar attendees who are grammar purists, you can stick with what Mrs. Landry taught us in school.
- ❑ Some rules that have become more lenient include:
  - You can end a sentence with a preposition.
  - You can split an infinitive. (*Star Trek* did it with: To boldly go where no man has gone before!)
  - You can put punctuation inside quotation marks – even if it's not a complete sentence. (This one will be a hard one for many of us to do, so understand that you still have the option to put it outside the quotation marks if you prefer.)
  - You can use commas more liberally, especially with long sentences that need a pause for a breath.
  - You can use a sentence fragment for effect, but don't overdo it.

- ❑ Get rid of wishy-washy language. Make us feel confident about your words.
  - Eliminate words such as: *kind of, sort of, a little bit, just, I guess*
- ❑ Enlist a proofreader.
  - Ask others to proofread your documents. It's difficult to proofread your own work.
- ❑ *Everyday* comes before the noun it's describing. *Every day* comes after.
  - These are my everyday clothes.
  - I wear this every day.
- ❑ Use the correct word.
  - If you mean to *accept* an item, don't say *except*.
  - You can *advise* a person to do something or you can give them *advice*, but you can't switch those two.
  - Do you mean *your* or *you're*? The first is possessive and the second one means "you are."
- ❑ When in doubt, consult your supervisor to discover which grammar rules are used in your agency or department.

- ❑ Use positive language. Get rid of phrases like:
  - Can't
  - It's just policy
  - But
  - Should have
- ❑ Practice Parallelism. Keep lists parallel by using the same grammatical structure for items in a list. Which one doesn't belong in the list below?
  - A. Running in place
  - B. Jogging on the street
  - C. Swimming in a pool
  - D. Jump on a trampoline

If you said *D*, you're right!

All the others begin with a *gerund* (a word ending in *ing*). If you wanted to keep this list parallel, you would have said "jumping on a trampoline."



Need more help? Have we got a class for you!

Professional Writing Skills  
Participate in Training Virtual

- ❑ Use the active tense to make your writing more dynamic. In this tense, the subject does the action. Example:
  - You completed this report in record time!
- ❑ Use the passive tense to soften a negative message. In this tense the subject is acted upon. Example:
  - This report was completed incorrectly.

(See how the passive tense gave the reader the benefit of the doubt? You didn't say the reader was the one who completed the report, so someone else could have made the mistake!)

- ❑ Use online resources.
  - [Owl.English.Purdue.edu](http://Owl.English.Purdue.edu)
  - [LousyWriter.com](http://LousyWriter.com)
  - Google "grammar girl"
  - [hamilton.edu/academics/centers/writing/writing-resources](http://hamilton.edu/academics/centers/writing/writing-resources): Click the link to the *Seven Deadly Sins of Writing* and go to the bottom of the page to download posters to help your team sharpen their writing skills.