

## **A Brief Primer on Plain Talk**

It's true with everything we do. The more we practice, the better we get. This principle applies to Plain Talk as well.

If you are currently working on a project, practice incorporating these key Plain Talk principles while you write:

### **Use Plain Talk principles when creating your document**

Plain Talk is not Step 2. While it is possible to apply Plain Talk principles to a document after it's been written, the question is why? Why write something twice?

### **Put the most important information up front**

People are busy. Even the clearest document runs the risk of being merely scanned for key content. If that information isn't visible at the beginning of the document, chances are the reader may not see it at all.

### **Keep sentences a reasonable length**

One of the most effective ways to improve writing is by keeping sentences a reasonable length. Periods are the breath in writing. Don't drown your reader in information. If you make sentences too long, you run the risk of losing your readers and making them start over to capture all the data.

### **Use familiar words**

When we create documents here at Revenue, it is because we have important information to share. That is not the time to break out those five dollar words we all have tucked away in our brains. Remember, the goal is to inform, not to dazzle. Use familiar words that most people will easily absorb.

### **Include white space, bold headers**

Design plays a significant role in the readability of a document. Few people relish reading through solid walls of text. Space paragraphs and use standard margins. Bold text highlighting key information also makes your documents easier to read.

### **Finally, remember this...**

There is more than one way to Plain Talk a document. Don't worry about doing it perfectly. The important thing is that you make an honest effort to be as clear and concise as possible. You'll find that the more you practice, the easier it becomes.