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Top Ten Tips for Writing a Professional Overview or Biography

By Tara Kachaturoff, Executive Coach

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Executive Coach

A professional biography or overview, showcasing your background, experience and expertise, is a necessity for every business owner. This often overlooked marketing tool is an excellent way to introduce you and your business to potential clients and possible strategic business partners. Potentially, it might open up opportunities for speaking engagements, radio or television interviews, or a feature print article. While any information about you and your business is helpful, information that is presented in a professional, well-polished manner can make all the difference in how others perceive you. Consider these important points as you craft your own professional biography.

1. One page wonder. Your professional biography should be a few paragraphs and kept to one page or less. One page is perfect for copying on the reverse side of a handout or flyer. Several paragraphs, left justified make it easier to read and skim.

2. First, second, or third person? Always write your biography in the third person. That is, refer to yourself by your name or she/he as appropriate. It sounds more professional as it appears that a third party wrote the text. For example, "Alexandra has been featured in the New York Times, Forbes, Newsweek, and Time magazines."

3. Business in brief. Not only do readers want to know what you do, but also they want to know who you work with - because they might want to work with you! A professional biography should include a sentence or two about your business niche (or niches) as well as the types of clients you serve. A modified version of your 30-second elevator pitch might be perfect.

4. And the winner is.... Make sure that you include a list of awards that you have received. Readers are interested in knowing about your talents and the organizations that recognize you for them.

5. Organizations. Include names of the organizations, clubs, or associations to which you belong. A reader's interest might be highlighted at seeing that you belong to the same alumni association or

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professional business group. Again, these connections might possibly lead to some interesting and exciting business opportunities.

6. Certifications and designations. Include any professional certifications or designations you hold. Make sure you write out their names in full, rather than use abbreviations. Not everyone might know that CMA stands for Certified Management Accountant. And, perhaps, in a different discipline, it might represent something else - like a Certified Materials Analyst. If you no longer hold a particular designation, but it has played a major role in who you are and what you do, don't hesitate to make a reference to it. For example, "Ann is a former Certified Data Processor and spent the last decade as an adjunct faculty member teaching higher mathematics at the University of Colorado, Boulder." Don't include abbreviations of college degrees, like MBAs as it looks unprofessional. The only exception to this would be for a Ph.D. designation.

7. Published? Have you written any articles, books, e-courses or e-books? Self-published or not, your works add to your level of professionalism and credibility. Showcase them in your biography and you might earn additional royalties in terms of new clients or other opportunities.

8. Did I mention the media? Have you been a guest on talk radio or television? Were you or your business featured or even mentioned in a newspaper article? If so, readers want to know. Again, these types of "mentions" add to your credibility and presence.

9. Call me any time. People who want to know about you will read your biography for just that reason. And, if it's compelling, rich, and includes the information they're interested in, they'll want to contact you. Include complete contact information like your title (if any), name, address, telephone, fax, email, and website address. Make it easy to find this information by including it in the last paragraph of your professional overview.

10. Write, rewrite, and do it again. After you have written your biography, edit, edit, and edit again. You may need to do a dozen or so revisions before you get it just right. Eliminate extra words, use descriptive words, keep the sentences short but varied in length, and write in the third person. Ask some friends to provide input as well. Make sure to revise your biography regularly to keep it up-to-date and refreshed.

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Ten Tips to Simplify Your Business Correspondence

By Linda Elizabeth Alexander

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You write to express, not to use every word in the dictionary. Here are ten tips for using those words to make your writing clearer.

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1. Simplify language Avoid using big or vague words. Use fewer words, but make them count.
2. Shorten sentences Business people don't have time to read 10–page letters. Cut out run–on sentences. Eliminate extra words as long as it doesn't change the meaning. You can also combine a short and a longer sentence into one to remove extra words.
3. Use active voice Instead of, "A good time was had by all," say, "We had a good time." This changes the subject from "good time" to "we." It also puts emphasis on the verb, making the statement stronger.
4. Use present tense Stick to the present tense wherever you can. Also make sure you don't switch tenses in the middle of a sentence.
5. Use bullets where appropriate Since people have little time to read, put important points in a numbered or bulleted list. This makes it easier to scan so your readers get the meaning without reading every word.
6. Never use exclamation points in business writing! Unless you're writing an advertisement or an excited letter to a friend, skip the wow factor! It doesn't belong in a memo, report, letter, or other serious–toned business writing!
7. Eliminate jargon Avoid it at all costs if your audience will not understand it. It will be like a foreign language to them, and your point is to make your writing clearer – not more complicated.
8. Avoid fragments and one word sentences A fragment. Is an incomplete sentence. No subject or no verb. Really. A complete sentence has both a subject and a verb and contains at least two words. "She walked" is a sentence because it meets all three criteria.
9. Proofread your writing You know to use your spelling and grammar checkers. But you should also go over your writing yourself — the spell checker cannot distinguish between "to" and "too" or "their" and "there." It can't tell you if you said "and" where you meant "an." If possible, get somebody else to read it before handing it in. Two sets of eyeballs are better than none.

10. Avoid repetition and redundancy!

Use these tips every time you write and you will avoid ten common mistakes that cloud your writing.

Linda Elizabeth Alexander is a business writer and marketing consultant based in Longmont, Colorado, USA. Improve your writing skills at work! Subscribe to her FREE ezine. Write to the Point at lalexander@write2thepointcom.com or visit <http://www.write2thepointcom.com/articles.html>.



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