

A small olive tree with silvery-green leaves and a few small olives, growing in a terracotta pot. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

# 6

## Big Reasons You Hate Writing For Your Business

*(and how to overcome them!)*



Depending on how you pronounce it,  
**c-o-n-t-e-n-t** can mean:

*“in a state of peaceful happiness” or  
“something that is to be expressed  
through some medium, as speech,  
writing, etc.”*

Which is ironic because most business  
owners feel anything but a “state of  
peaceful happiness” when it comes to  
writing about their businesses.

**It doesn't have to be that way.** When entrepreneurs struggle to create content for their businesses, it is almost always because they are making one of these six mistakes . . .

# {1} You Let Your Mindset Sabotage You

I'm in a suburban banquet room standing before a group of female entrepreneurs.

It's early in the morning and I'm the guest speaker at their monthly business owners group. I ask them:

*"How many of you are business owners? Raise your hand if that describes you."*

Everyone puts their coffee cup down and their hand up. Everyone. It's a sea of arms in the audience.

*"How many of you are writers? Keep your hand raised if that describes you."*

Just like that, the sea evaporates. Nearly every hand is back down on the table.

*"Last question. How many of you write for your business? Raise your hand if you blog, send a newsletter, put together proposals, answer emails..."*

Slowly the hands go back up, especially when I get to proposals and email.

It's time to stop ignoring the fact that as business owners, we write. A lot. And the act of writing makes us writers. Every time you think "I'm not a writer" or "I am terrible at creating content" you make it harder to do what you need to do.

It's like trying to type while your hands are clenched into two little balls of resistance. Content produced through this lens will sound stilted and timid. That's not you.

Release that mindset in favor of the truth: You're a writer. As an entrepreneur, you create powerful messaging that propels your business. When you get over yourself and your limiting thoughts around writing, you free yourself to do the work you need to do.

**As a published author and professional writer, I hereby deputize you. You are a writer.**

*"Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right." Henry Ford*



# {2} Your Grammar Ghosts Stop You Cold

I can remember her gray hair and silent orthopedic shoes, but not her name.

Fourth grade, English class, my teacher creeping up behind me, reading over my shoulder as my blue Bic scratched across college-ruled loose-leaf paper (*I was kind of a poseur in fourth grade*).

She pointed out all the grammar errors I was making as I was making them. It was torture. And yet, I survived. More importantly, Mrs. I-Forgot-Her-Name doesn't haunt me when I sit down to write.

I know basic English grammar, have proofreaders among my contacts, own plenty of books and found trustworthy online tools to figure out the rest.

**You do, too.**

*(Bonus: There's a list of all my favorite resources on page 16.)*

Don't let your worries about getting it right stop you from getting it down in the first place. You are allowed -- encouraged -- to write as you speak.

You get to sound like a warm, personable human being, not a stuffy grammar snob. This isn't a free pass to ignore spelling, basic grammar or sentence construction. You do need to make yourself clear and as error-free as you can.

**But please, go ahead** and let some sentences be fragments. Or start a sentence with "and" or "or" if that's authentic to your voice and your audience isn't made up of fourth grade English teachers in orthopedic shoes.

*"Ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put." Winston Churchill*



## {3} Your Inner Critic Is Running Amok

*“Really? You think that’s funny? No one’s going to understand. Why are you doing this? Seth Godin is such a better writer. He’s sold a lot of books. He knows what he’s talking about. You, on the other hand, can’t seem to get to the point. Do you have a point? Amateur.”*

The previous may or may not be a transcript of the rambling monologues of my inner critic. Short of a lobotomy, I don’t know of a reliable way to get rid of that voice we all have in our heads that chides, criticizes and scares us out of writing anything interesting.

However, it can be managed and muffled long enough to get some good work done.

**The key is to minimize its power.**

One of the ways I do that is to name my inner critic Roger Ebert, after the late, prolific movie critic. Just saying “I call my inner critic Roger Ebert” makes me laugh.

It reminds me that the inner critic’s voice is just fear speaking. Putting yourself and your words out there takes courage. Unleashing the true voice of your business is an act of bravery.

**Find what works for you to defuse your inner critic.** Yell at it, swear at it, politely tell it you’re ignoring it, put it to bed early, swat it away like a fly, imagine it embodied in a stuffed animal and fling it across the room.

Do whatever you can to keep the voice of your inner critic in its place as an annoyance that won’t shut up but has no idea what it’s talking about.

*“It’s not the critic who counts.” Teddy Roosevelt*

# {4} You Are Speaking Someone Else's Language

Back in journalism school, I was taught the fine art of neutral writing. Just stick to the facts, ma'am.

When I moved into corporate communications, I was rewarded for how many buzzwords I could cram onto the page. (Granularity at the intersection of synergy and operationalization, anyone?)

**When I started my business, I was thrilled to set aside both constraints, because people don't engage in a conversation where one person sounds like a robot that was force fed business lingo.**

Think about it. What business gurus do you turn to for business advice? What coaches do you follow? There are plenty to pick from, and we all have our favorites.

The reason we choose one over another is not just what they say, but also how they say it. They have crystallized the unique language of their business. And that language speaks to us. Otherwise, we'd all be reading textbooks.

If you haven't identified the overall tone and most important core messages of your business, then your business may be speaking the wrong language and failing to set yourself apart from the all the other entrepreneurs working in the same space.

There is a reason you are in the business you are in, do the things that you do, in the way you do them for the people serve. And it's not the same reason as the coach or caterer next door. The gold is in the differences, that's where your business's unique language lives.

*"The one thing that you have that nobody else has is you. Your voice, your mind, your story, your vision." Neil Gaiman*



## {5} You Have No Plan

Writing while you're in the warm embrace of the muse who is feeding you coffee and cookies sounds like a fantastic experience. It is also a terrible marketing strategy.

Content is a conversation. You can't pop in every once in a while when you finally have a good idea and all the time in the world to put it together, then expect your audience to be sitting there waiting for your words of wisdom.

**You need a plan. It doesn't have to be complex, but it does have to be defined.**

Your plan, or what the marketing and publishing worlds call an "editorial calendar," is simply a map of when you're going to reach out to your audience, with what content, in which media.

In my corporate days, I used detailed Word tables to track editorial calendars. If you have a strong stomach, google "editorial calendar examples" you will find some world-class, exceptionally detailed spreadsheets color coded and segmented within an inch of their lives.

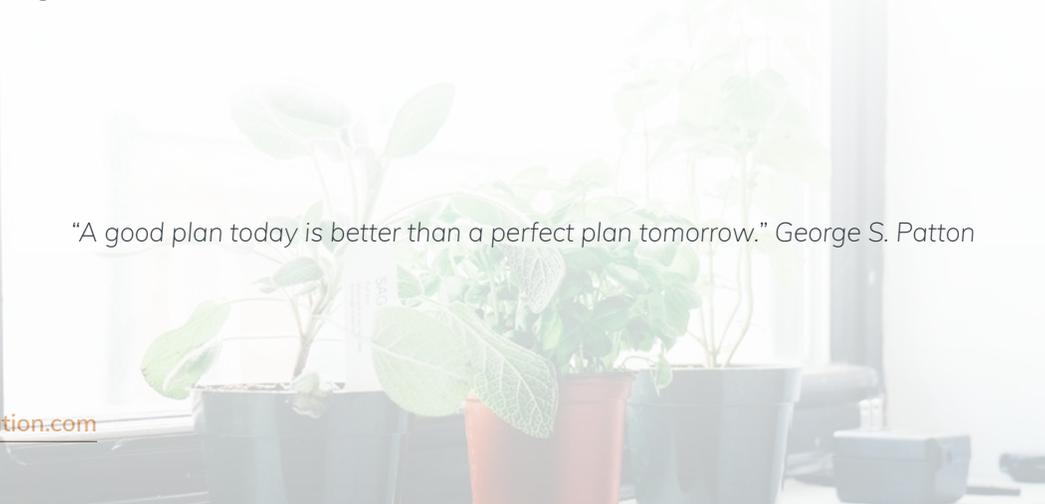
If that works for you, and you like or have someone who can track the smallest detail, go for it. Your calendar can also be exceptionally simple, and maybe even built into the existing calendar on your phone. The calendar's format isn't as important as its job to keep you on schedule and on message.

**The current 4.23 Communication editorial calendar, for instance, is a pretty bland Word-based calendar of the when, what and where of my outreach.**

**When:** "Well Said Wednesday" blog posts every other Wednesday; Friday Inspiration quotes on Facebook every Friday; The 23rd Newsletter once a month; additional posts on occasion as the news or spirit strikes.

**What:** I draw content first from my key messages and my services that I know can make a difference to my key audiences; then I look for any holidays or public events I can use as an entry point into my key messages; finally I look at any material I can share that fits within my key message parameters. Did I mention that topics should be related to my key messages? I also keep a running list of content ideas that I can draw on for those moments when the muse is not bringing the cookies and coffee and I'm on my own.

**Where:** At the moment, my outlets are pretty narrow: the 4.23 Communication blog, Facebook page and monthly email newsletter, The 23rd. I will experiment with some new tactics and media later this year, but I don't have the time to devote to it right now, so I'm sticking to what I know I can do well and be consistent with.



*"A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow." George S. Patton*

## {6} You Have No Process

Gretchen Rubin's *New York Times* bestselling book "Better Than Before: Mastering the Habits of Our Everyday Lives" annoyed me.

The author identifies people by four types based on how they approach habit creation. She is the type who takes up habits effortlessly. According to her quiz, I am the type who has a deep streak of "you can't make me and neither can I."

The book is full of Gretchen's self-experiments that are a piece of cake for her because that's how she is. The advice for the rest of us boils down to "be more like me!"

Not helpful, Gretchen. (Though later I read that she didn't put much in the book for us "rebels" because she didn't think we'd buy the book.)

**As much as I still sometimes push against it, habit serves me well as a content creator.**

It is especially potent when your "real work" has nothing to do with writing blog posts, newsletters or Tweets.

**Set regular blocks of time** on your schedule for content creation and honor that schedule. You'll start to associate those blocks with writing and over time it will get easier to get into the flow. Plus, you'll always have time in your schedule to get writing done.

**Start small.** You can always expand as you get into groove. For me, Mondays are reserved mostly for content and planning work. Friday afternoons are regularly devoted to content, too. I also write something, usually freeform journaling or a few sentences of something bigger, every day because I enjoy that habit.

**Pay attention** to how you structure that time, as well. It can be very helpful to develop a set of small rituals to begin and end a writing schedule. In his book *"The Power of Habit"* (which did not annoy me), Charles Duhigg describes the cue-routine-reward cycle of creating a habit.

**The cue is the trigger.** Get started the same way every time. When I start to write I always put my phone in airplane mode and turn off notifications (and sometimes WiFi) on my computer, turn on some low-key singer-songwriter or instrumental music, and make a cup of coffee. The routine is the writing. The reward is the satisfaction that comes from getting all the words on the page and knowing you are creating the conversations you need to propel your business. Sometimes, the reward is a nice comment from a reader. It would be great to have money flow directly into your bank account for each syllable you typed, but that's not the way it works.

**When you create and honor a routine, you start to realize that writing becomes a lot like doing sit ups.** At first, they are annoying and seem pointless. But the more you do them, the easier they become and the more pleasing the results. It doesn't happen overnight, but it does happen.

"There's nothing you can't do if you get the habits right." Charles Duhigg

{IN CLOSING}

# Become the Writer Your Business Needs You to Be

When you recognize and release the grip of the six biggest (and most common) stumbling blocks to creating great content:

- Your writing will get better
- Your messages will get clearer
- You'll make better connections with your audience

Need more structured and personalized support to unleash the unique language of your business? Learn to **Master Your Message** working one-on-one with 4.23 Communication Founder and Content Strategist Barbara Govednik.

**Master Your Message** is an 8-week, guided program to help business owners and entrepreneurs skip the constant struggle of finding the right words and become the confident content creator your business needs you to be.

- Define your business's unique WordBrand™
- Create an engaging, doable Conversation Calendar
- Work one-on-one with Barbara in four private Message Mastermind sessions
- Learn from professional editing and feedback on submitted content
- Stretch your thinking about content and writing through personalized support
- Access the 4.23 Content Toolkit of resources, templates and guides

After our eight weeks together, you'll approach writing business content in a whole new way. A way that works. Set up a free **Master Your Message** exploratory call with Barbara by clicking below.

[SCHEDULE CALL](#)

# {BONUS} My Favorite Writer Resources

## Spelling

- [merriam-webster.com](http://merriam-webster.com)
- [dictionary.com](http://dictionary.com)
- [oxforddictionaries.com](http://oxforddictionaries.com)
- [Google](http://Google)

## Grammar/Usage Books

- Grammar Smart
- Webster's New World Pocket Style Guide
- AP's Guide to Punctuation

## Grammar/Usage Online

- [Grammar Girl](#): Website, Newsletter, Book & Podcasts
- [Online Writing Lab](#): Usage, guides, English as a 2nd language
- [Grammar Monster](#): Quizzes, Worksheets, Searchable Grammar Help
- [Grammarly](#): Browser Extension, Free and Premium for real-time spell check and grammar help

# {BONUS BONUS} **Other Sources of Inspiration**

Use these as a resource for upcoming holidays, events or goofy celebrations.

- [Global Holidays](#)
- [News and Events](#)
- [Goofy Days](#)

My Favorite Photo Sites to complement your writing.

- [Death to the Stock Photo](#)
- [pixabay.com](#)
- [stocksnap.io](#)