



Communications Digest

Because Good Copywriting Should Grow on Trees!

Welcome Mid-June!

With spring now fully upon us and our gardens or container plots growing, I'm pleased to send you another issue of "Communications Digest."

In last month's issue, I provided an "encore" article on Arlene Dickinson's recent book on failure and on work/life balance. Thank you to readers who wrote in with comments on Dickinson's ideas.

In this month's issue, I visit a simple but helpful article that distinguishes mindfulness from meditation--two processes that are often coupled together, but not always clearly defined in relation to one another.

Enjoy the beauty of spring now unfurled and best wishes for a happy summer ahead!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

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Article One: What is the difference between mindfulness and meditation?

With most of us anticipating summer holidays or at least a reprieve from the regular grind of fall and winter schedules, I've been thinking lately about how practices of mindfulness and meditation can enable us to relax and to enjoy the time we take away from work.

And while I practice some forms of both mindfulness and meditation, I haven't always been clear about what the difference is between them.

Kate Kendall, Director of Yoga at "Flow Athletic" (in a recent interview with Erin Cook of "Elle Australia,") says that *mindfulness* is a "state of being." It is "to walk the world conscious of one's actions, environments and inner rhythms," Kendall says.

Mindfulness is synonymous with "awareness" and cannot be practiced, except through a lifelong "moment by moment" way of living.

Kendall says that "mindfulness allows us to begin cutting through the 'untruths' (or conditions or beliefs) to stay aware and in reality." With that kind of awareness, we can ask ourselves: "Am I reacting to something that is happening now or in the past?" If we are mindful, we are available to respond to the present moment.

But achieving and maintaining that focus is challenging, given the pace of human life and industry.

Last year, Saskatoon editor and writer Wilf Popoff reminded me that the recommendation to live in the present is not a recent revelation, since many secular publications on mindfulness currently recycle "several older ideas for well-being. The idea of living in the present and not dwelling in the past or fearing the future has been around for ages" (Personal Communication, August 8, 2016).

That observation matters, because people often wrongly assume that mindfulness is a recent fad, in contrast to the millennia of history that meditation has.

But as a genuine contrast to mindfulness, meditation is a specific activity--of taking at least 10 minutes a day to be still and focus on your breathing. According to psychologist Jayta Szpitalak, a meditator lets go of any distracting thoughts by "acknowledg[ing] them in a non-judgmental fashion" (Cook 1).

Meditation has been traced through Buddhism for many thousands of years (longer than "mindfulness") and across many cultures.

So mindfulness is more of a "state of mind" that you cultivate for all of the activities you undertake. By contrast to that, meditation is a specific practice that differs from one experience to the next (no two sessions are the same). With meditation, sensations and emotions arise "for a reason and to be processed" (Kendall in Cook, 2).

Kendall says "think of mindfulness as a way of living in awareness and meditation as a [specific] tool" that enables you to transcend the slings and arrows of daily life (Cook 2).

Do you practice mindfulness and/or meditation as a part of your working life? What forms do they take?

Please share your thoughts through the "contact" page of my website. I'd be delighted to extend this discussion.

WORD NERD'S CORNER: The Plague of Wordiness



American etymologist (and legal scholar) Bryan Garner recently shared a blog posting on "The plague of wordiness."

While he was speaking of legal writing, his analysis applies to business writing (copywriting), academic writing and other formats.

I've presented examples of wordiness (sometimes called "verbosity") in earlier issues of this newsletter. In particular, Saskatoon editor Wilf Popoff has written extensively and presented entertaining talks on the subject.

And yet wordiness continues to flourish, even to the point of seeming to be a "plague."

In the legal domain, Bryan Garner says that a typical contract or legal brief that is prepared by reputable lawyers can regularly result "in a 25% reduction in the word count--without changing the meaning."

Garner contrasts two versions of a simple statement of IRS policy:

BEFORE editing: "The Internal Revenue Code contains numerous methods for challenging errors committed by the Internal Revenue Service and its employees, but it does not contain a provision subjecting IRS employees to personal liability for damages [34 words]."

AFTER editing: "Although the tax code contains many methods for challenging IRS errors, imposing personal liability on IRS employees isn't among them [20 words]."

Do you also find much wordiness in your daily work? Please feel welcome to share your stories with me, through the "contact" page of my website.

SHOP NEWS

Every busy writer and editor is glad to have a mentor who shares from their vast experience. So special thanks this month go to Professor **Kathleen James-Cavan** of the U of S, whose knowledge of *non-academic* (and not only academic) writing was deeply illuminating when we discussed the ebook project on which I'm working. Thank you, Kathleen, for sharing your time and suggestions so generously.

Those in Saskatoon's editing community will benefit from Kathleen's increased participation in upcoming months and years.

Thanks also go, this month, to **Monica Kreuger**, Co-founder and Chief Visionary Officer of Praxis School of Entrepreneurship. This month's conversation with Monica (stimulated by an article I am writing) enabled me to think about the entrepreneurial approach I take toward writing, whereby writers needn't be romanticized as starving bohemians! I conceive of the combination of writing and editing projects that I do as entrepreneurial storytelling, and as a productive and legitimate vocation.

A deep thank you also to **Lori Jestin-Knaus**, Business Advisor and Convenor of the Mentoring Circle, who has led that group through another entrepreneurial year. I am departing from this group to focus on networking activity elsewhere, but remain grateful to Lori (and to fellow Circle members) for their support and insights!

Another nod of appreciation to watercolour painter **Bob Pitzel**, for caring about the quality of the writing of his website and newsletter. As some of you know, Bob's painting of the Smith-Windsors' country cottage was given as a farewell gift to Kent Smith-Windsor, the recently retired CEO of the Greater Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce.

The gift was commissioned by the Raj Manek Mentorship Program (RMMP) and presented at their annual banquet, last winter.

Both Kent and Bob have served the RMMP (and many other organizations) for many years, for which proteges like me are especially grateful.

To view some of Bob's extraordinary watercolour art and future changes coming to his website and newsletter, please visit **www.bpitzel.com**.

And thank you to local entrepreneur **Dani vanDriel** for continuing to discuss the journey of freelancing with me. Dani's painting (including oil and watercolour) are astonishingly powerful and I hope that I can soon direct you to an exhibit or website of her work!

And a final thanks to fellow women of the **Freelancers' Roundtable Group** now convened by Ashleigh Mattern, and that includes Leanne Bellamy, Katherine Duncombe, Julie Barnes and Amy Rederburg. We gladly share highs and lows, tips, best practices and troubleshooting in our work. And we enjoy doing so on sunny patios, now that better weather has come!



ABOUT US

Since 2011, Elizabeth Shih Communications has chronicled the stories of small- and medium-sized businesses and some not-for-profit organizations on the Prairies and across Canada.

Do you need to tell your entrepreneurial or business stories?

Please contact me through my website, via the CASL-compliant email form, on the right-hand side of each page (www.elizabethshih.com).

After I have received your permission, I'll be pleased to discuss projects with you!

I tell stories of how entrepreneurs succeed and at the same time give back to their communities. And I do so through ebooks, articles, press releases, blog postings and more. And new to 2017: I now edit resumes, business plans and award applications (ABEX, SABEX and more)!

Please visit my website for more information (www.elizabethshih.com)