

Solution 7. Coach using two simple questions.

One straightforward way of thinking about a writing project is to answer two key questions. Encourage employees to answer these questions so they can write each document effectively:

- What do I want the reader to do?
- What does the reader need from me in order to do it?

Using this approach, a coaching dialogue might go like this:

Employee: I'm not sure if I should include background information at the beginning of this announcement.

You: What do you want readers to do from reading the announcement?

Employee: I want readers—the associates—to know that they can now request tuition reimbursement online.

You: Is that all you want them to do—just *know* about it?

Employee: No, I want them to use the new online system rather than sending me their paperwork.

You: Do the associates need background information at the beginning to know about the new system and use it?

Employee: No—they just need to know it exists and how to log on to it.

You: Then it sounds like that's your answer.

Here is another sample conversation:

Employee: Should I include pricing information in my initial letter to prospects?

You: What do you want prospects to do?

Employee: I want them to be intrigued about the success we have had with other clients and be interested in hearing about it when I follow up by phone.

You: Would pricing information help them be intrigued?

Employee: No, it would probably distract them. . . . I'll leave it out.

Whenever an employee is struggling with writing, coach the person to answer the two questions: What do I want the reader to do? What does the reader need from me in order to do it?