



Purpose

You can build on the foundation of focus by writing with your stakeholders' goals and interests in mind. But if you want to develop a truly effective story you need to appeal to your readers' sense of purpose as well. This way you create a text that is both intellectually sound and emotionally compelling.

Most organisations appear to be dominated by logic, quantitative analysis and decisions based on financial targets, at least if you only look at their use of language. Like most other organisations, yours will discuss abstract things like 'synergy' and 'high performance' or talk about 'increasing shareholder value' and 'exceeding customer expectations'. This approach has its merits, particularly as a way to facilitate decision-making and get people to focus their thinking on important organisational issues.

And yet, this is a stale kind of language that most people find difficult to relate to (imagine what would happen if you asked your partner for more synergy or a cutting-edge night on the town). This is because a purely rational approach to business writing doesn't engage people on the level of their identity. As a result, traditional business writing fails to achieve full support for the organisation's mission, vision, strategy and day-to-day operations.

Your business writing will become more effective when you complement your organisation's logical approach with right-brain relational skills. Chiefly, this can be done by analysing business issues in terms of their purpose and explaining what this means to people's lives or the organisation. The principle of meaning is the subject of the next chapter, this chapter will tackle the principle of purpose in more detail.

Purpose in and of organisations

The notion of purpose may be an odd one within today's corporate environment, particularly when a word like 'goal' seems more familiar. While both words imply a desired outcome, they differ in a way that is significant for your ability to write well. Goals are formulated in response to changes in the competitive environment, are based on intellectual analyses, and are defined in quantitative or qualitative terms. Examples of goal-oriented statements are: