

Case Study: Write It Well and VerticalResponse

In 2011, Write It Well partnered with VerticalResponse to improve the e-mail messages the company’s customer service employees write. We adapted our Effective E-Mail workshop to meet the company’s unique training needs.

CHALLENGE

VerticalResponse provides an important service: empowering small businesses to create, manage, and analyze their own direct-marketing campaigns. When customers have questions, they need to sense that a competent, smart customer service agent is answering them. Some VerticalResponse agents’ writing styles were eroding customer confidence and affecting the company’s bottom line.

These VerticalResponse employees needed to learn general best practices for business writing—e.g., using concise, active, specific language that communicates clearly. Other challenges included anticipating a reader’s needs, identifying each e-mail’s purpose and main point, organizing information clearly, and writing eye-catching subject lines.

SOLUTION

We know from decades of writing-skills trainings that adult learners are more fully engaged when a workshop includes the documents they read and write for work.

We analyzed VerticalResponse employees’ writing samples for patterns of exemplary and problematic writing. This review showed what writing tasks the employees do every day, and it suggested ways the employees could improve their writing performance.

We carefully reviewed the company’s e-mail templates and developed a tailored, on-site training for these customer service professionals. We interviewed stakeholders and we used VerticalResponse writing samples to

customize the workshop fully with the organization’s own prose.

We developed workshop exercises and activities around the needs of VerticalResponse customers. We also drew on a key client resource: a repertoire of prepared responses for a variety of customer needs. We showed participants how to integrate this packaged material into seamless, fresh-sounding e-mails that give customers the facts and advice they need.

RESULTS

Busy adult learners left the workshop ready to write e-mails that intelligently represent themselves and their company. The workshop participants learned how to write effective e-mail openings and closings, convey the right tone, and use correct grammar.

The outcomes include less time spent crafting messages, a more polished and professional image for the entire company, increased writer confidence, and increased customer satisfaction.

The workshop was a success. Participants identified many opportunities to improve the e-mail VerticalResponse sends out. This success will translate into happy customers and a return on the company’s bottom line.

