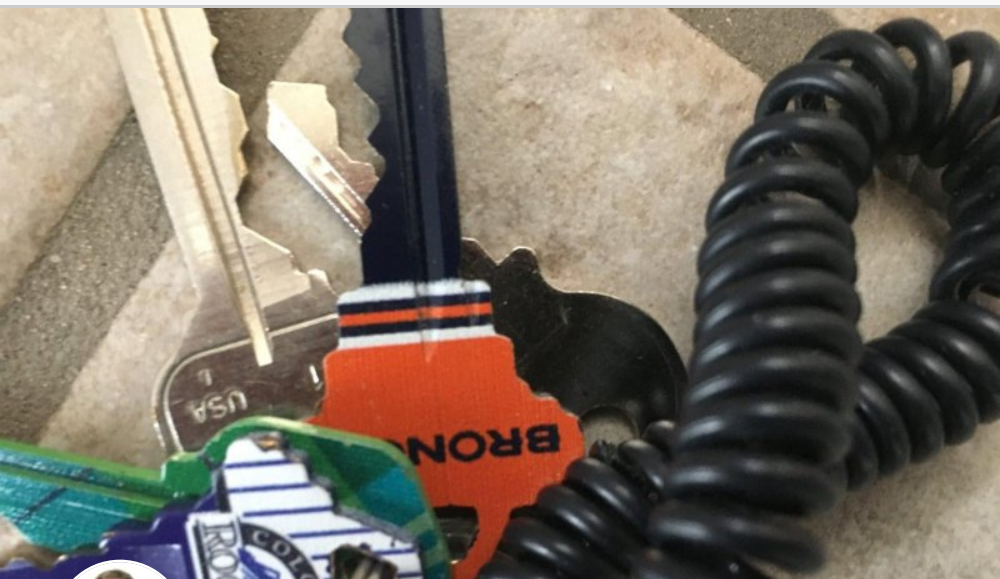


Five New Keys to Effective Writing Josh Natha...

Saved to Dropbox • Sep 17, 2017, 5:34 PM



Josh Nathan

Communication Professor | Writer & Editor | H...

Five New Keys to Effective Writing

September 17, 2017 • 0 Likes • 0 Comments

Many of us, including myself, often forget that if we have yet to capture a reader's attention by about NOW - *in this first sentence* - we're like a holiday ham: cooked; finished! But it's not solely the result of the much-discussed [shorter attention spans, spanning research since 2015](#). Social media isn't the reason your writing may be overlooked either. The sad and simple truth about good writers whose work may never even

0 Likes

0 Comments



environment.



In the world's libraries, our attention doesn't usually drift every eight seconds (in most cases...I hope). Attention and attention spans

aren't synonymous. But our minds do determine whether they want us to keep hovering over a book, an unusual staircase, or whatever caught the attention of the gentleman in my photo whose focus has clearly drifted away from work on his laptop in Munich's Juristische Bibliothek.

Our decision-making processes in the short-term tend to follow our preferences and our interests.

What effect does all this have on the way in which we should, but often don't, approach writing?

EVERYTHING...

Professors say the key to great writing, apart from great prose, is generating genuine interest. I'd argue it's now much more about turning an author's attention back to what he or she writes about and whether adjustments to style and organization on the following *five new keys to effective writing* have been made:

1) Generating attention in those *critical* first eight seconds. Sometimes salacious and sadly

often without merit, "attention getters" are designed to do just that and are extremely effective. Like ephemeral but stunning views from a plane high above, say, Greenland, these phrases shuttle our attention around. Yet if aligned and integrated within our stories, they enhance incomparably. They improve the fabric of the story while capturing our attention right from the start. The longer the story, the greater the need to weave "mini" attention getters throughout to keep your reader's mind focused on the landscape you've created.

2) Knowing - and catering to - your audience or demographic. While discussed consistently in public avenues, this knowledge is rarely fully realized. Think about the HUGE team involved in steering the Chevrolet Nova to success only to realize, when it was too late, that the very name of the car - "no va" - tells any Hispanic speaking prospective buyer to beware of the car because the direct Spanish translation means "no go." Knowing your audience goes far beyond the basic hallmarks of income, age, and culture. If those are your benchmarks when writing too, it's time for a change.

3) The depth and breadth in understanding your *own* topic. Much discussed too, this tenant is also often either inadvertently or intentionally overlooked. It takes time to learn so much more than will be revealed in what we write that it's, of course, easier to take a seemingly more direct route and avoid researching the side streets. Who will know? (Usually, only your demographic or the people interested enough to actually read what you write and ask questions).

4) Be clear and concise! Still, I prefer to include anecdotes and alliteration, even if only for my own amusement. Writing should be fun as well as fresh and, many times, it opens the keys to a fairytale castle comprised of personal and memorable work.

5) Ending with a strong residual message that resonates. It isn't an entire article or book that often sticks with us. Rather, like a well performed speech, since our minds are our literally our "timers", what we write in the final two sentences, or the equivalent of eight seconds of reading, can be more important than anything else because it's most likely to be remembered.

Of course, that means #1 on my list becomes just as key by default otherwise no one will *ever* get to our final phrases that, ideally, like hearing music long after the radio goes silent, pack the power to resonate most.

With so much press on our lower attention spans, I wonder how many have realigned the rules of the written road. With so many great books on how to write - and write well - I wonder how many have been revised recently. I wonder how many people still claim William Shakespeare was a great writer.

*As a friend once said, Shakespeare will always be revered and read. But how many folks tell you they just want to sit down and relax with (**not in**) a little Hamlet?*

Shakespeare's language is cumbersome while the basic stories are re-tooled and re-told time, and time, again in popular genres. Many argue that's all Shakespeare did too, having lifted much of Hamlet from Danish historian and storyteller Saxo who wrote a version about 700 years earlier.

Perhaps a little lascivious, certainly scintillat-

ing, and a bit weird with maybe a slight twist on a tale we all know, these are the tales to which many of us cling.

If you wish your work to be read and enjoyed, it's time for a tune-up. After all, when was the *last time* you *made time* to *adjust those precious tools*?

If more than a few years or after lots and lots of tears, perhaps now is a good time to pull to the side of the road, stop, and think again...like those at Chevrolet who named a car the Nova.

© 2017 Josh Nathan, All Rights Reserved.

Written by



Josh Nathan

Communication Professor | Writer & Editor | Hu...

0 comments

Leave your thoughts here...