

T-Shirt or Stuffed-Shirt?

Some people write with a warm, personal, flowing style while others have a formal, impersonal, stilted way with words. The trend in today's e-commerce falls between the two extremes: "stuffed shirt" and T-shirt writing. Like our work clothes today, the preferred writing style has become business casual. And just as the business casual dress code has some people stumped, so has the business casual writing style.

Stuffed-shirt writing may be difficult to define, but it's easy to recognize. Those who write in a stuffy style bury their ideas in passive verbs. They select weak sentence beginnings and bury key actions. They add unnecessary qualifiers and intensifiers to vague abstractions. Finally, they drape their ideas in trite, verbose statements.

On the other extreme are writers who send e-mail that could pass for a T-shirt slogan. They use aggressive words and no tact. They make up words when they can't think of the correct ones. They ramble on and on, without sorting the main ideas and details from the irrelevant. They misspell, omit punctuation, and write incomplete thoughts, leaving clarity as the reader's problem.

Stuffed-Shirt: It can easily be seen that when large volumes of gas are metered and when variations in the gas temperatures become commonplace, the resulting circumstance will be a loss of revenue if corrective action is not taken.

T-Shirt: Large volumes of METERED gas--big problem--in about two months we're gonna lose our shirt unless somebody gets off their duff and okays something.

Simple, Direct: As we meter large volumes of gas, variations in gas temperature will result in lost revenues unless we take corrective action.

Leave T-shirt messages for the shopping mall.
