

Why Grammar Matters for Your Business

Not a whole lot of people would name grammar as a favorite subject back when they were in school. Maybe you not-so-fondly recall your eyes glazing over as the teacher diagrammed sentences, explained the functions of gerund phrases, and went over the seemingly countless rules governing comma usage.

At some point, maybe on multiple occasions, you thought or even asked aloud “What is the point of all of this? Am I ever going to use this stuff?”

Now, you’re running your own business, and if you’re really conscientious about communications with clientele, you’re perhaps realizing that good grammar does indeed matter and that you need to use it on a regular basis. Whether, it’s through advertising, social media posts, descriptions on your website, or customer service emails, just to name some examples, written communication is still a big part of today’s business world, and good grammar counts. In fact, poor grammar can harm your business.

Let’s look at some reasons that grammar matters for your business:

No Second Chance To Make a First Impression

You know the saying, and you also know it’s true. Most people looking at your website aren’t going to be thinking things like “Wow, I really like how they use prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses,” but good spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure register subconsciously and make a positive impression.

On the other end, there is research showing that a customer visiting a poorly written website is less likely to make a purchase. The same applies to the outside of a restaurant, store, or other walk-in business. Many people are going to notice it when there are misspellings, misused apostrophes, etc. on signs, and it will deter some of them from walking in because, whether it’s fair or not, they will associate poor writing with incompetence and subpar service.

Professionalism, Reliability, and Competitive Edge

When good writing characterizes your messaging and communications, you establish a reputation for professionalism and reliability. Customers will view you and your business as trustworthy and competent, and that will build loyalty. It will also encourage them to recommend your business by word of mouth and on social media.

As your good reputation grows and traffic increases, you also will keep up with or ahead of the competition. Businesses turning people off with bad grammar and sloppy writing will fall behind.

Clear, Effective Communication

Maybe you've heard the joke about the panda that walks into a restaurant, orders a sandwich, eats it, pulls out a gun, and fires a couple shots into the air. When the confused waiter asks for an explanation, the panda says that's what he does, and he walks out, leaving a wildlife manual behind. The waiter looks up pandas in the wildlife manual and sees "*Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.*"

It's a joke, but it illustrates the importance of properly placed commas and what can go wrong when they're used incorrectly. For business owners, the message here is that spelling and punctuation errors not only look bad but also may cause confusion or deliver misinformation. Some customers may seek clarification, but many others won't, and there goes their business.

Better Productivity

Good grammar can also increase workplace productivity. If memos, emails, employee handbooks, and the like are well-written and easy to understand, employees will have a clearer understanding of policies and expectations, and there will be fewer mistakes and less time spent reviewing and clarifying.

Avoiding Messy Lawsuits

In extreme cases, poorly written communication can lead to misuse of a product or service. When that results in personal injury or financial loss, a lawsuit can result. Fighting even what seems like a frivolous lawsuit still can cost a lot of money. Good, clear writing is a common-sense measure, then, to protect you and your business and avoid unforced errors.

Ensuring Good Writing

Not everyone is a naturally skilled writer, and even strong writers make mistakes, but there are some simple ways to ensure that your grammar, sentence structure, and meaning are all sound.

The easiest and maybe the most common today is to use programs and applications that check grammar and spelling for you. Some will do this as you write, and many will even make suggestions instead of just identifying mistakes.

Unfortunately, this is not enough. These tools will still miss some errors, and sometimes the fixes they make are actually incorrect. Therefore, proofreading is essential. It's important to look your work over yourself, but if possible, have someone else check it as well. We sometimes miss our own mistakes because our brains know what we're trying to say, but mistakes often jump out more to another set of eyes. (Did you see what I did in that last sentence? That's a very common mistake!)

Finally, if you don't have the technical proficiency or the inclination to do your own writing and editing, (there are good writers who simply do not enjoy writing), that's okay. Hiring professional copywriters and editors is an option, as is hiring people who have strong backgrounds in writing if written communication is going to be a part of their duties.

With good grammar and effective writing, your business will attract more customers and assure them of your competence and professionalism, bolstering your company's stability and accelerating its growth. All those boring lessons weren't for nothing after all!

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