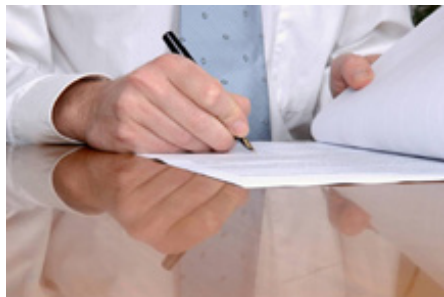




# Non-Technical Writing in a Technical World

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*Today's post is courtesy of Jennifer Shelby, CPSM, an account manager for Rhino Public Relations. Questions or comments? E-mail her at [Jennifer@rhinopr.com](mailto:Jennifer@rhinopr.com) or visit [www.rhinopr.com](http://www.rhinopr.com).*



Working within the realm of professional services we encounter some incredibly intelligent experts in their respective fields. Our job as marketing and communications professionals is to convey this expertise to a targeted audience. Just because that audience might be “targeted” doesn’t necessarily mean they speak the same technical language. Our challenge is to translate the brilliance of our experts into language the rest of us can understand.

Whether you’re writing a project sheet, technical brochure, press release, or proposal, turning or translating technical jargon into a corporate communiqué is an expertise just like any other.

## Get the details straight

It’s the details that impress our audience, and without them, we run the risk of losing our readers’ attention quickly. If we can’t hook them with an impressive contract amount or extremely deep foundation for example, we may as well be talking about the profession in general and not a specific project. Before you get started, make sure to gather the basics:

- Project title and location
- Client
- Person in charge for all major players
- Contract value if available or approved for this purpose
- Dimensions (e.g. square footage, acreage, depth, number of stories, etc.)
- Scope of work
- Services performed or to be performed
- Challenges and solutions

- Confidentiality waiver— make sure you have permission to write about this project
- Project photographs with captions
- Photographers' credits

### Don't brag

No one likes a braggart. That should be underscored for corporate communications. The personality of a company comes through with the language it uses to brand itself, and carefully chosen phrasing can go a long way towards leaving a positive impression on your target. Impressive facts speak for themselves, and modifying language is not necessary to get the message across. Keeping an understated and elegant tone is the appropriate, and perhaps more importantly, the most appreciated approach.

### Review

Early in my career, I once took down all of the necessary project details and drafted a project sheet for an engineer's review. He took one look at it, looked at me, laughed, and grabbed his red pen. It was completely wrong. Even though you have the details, make sure you understand what you're writing about. If you don't understand it, it will come through in your writing. Even if you get the facts straight, there are going to be nuances that the technical expert will be able to clarify for you. Although writing may not be their forte, they will be able to confirm, deny, or correct project details, and will appreciate the opportunity to sign off on whatever is being prepared. Making sure to get your technical expert to review and confirm what you've written is a crucial step in maintaining credibility at all levels.

### Ownership

Our industry experts are extremely proud of the work that they do, but are often shy about communicating this to their colleagues, and potentially to their competitors. However they embrace your project, respect their opinion and carefully explain that this type of marketing is intended to bring in new business and communicate thought leadership and excellence in their profession. By giving them ownership of the writing, either through input or review, you will most likely enjoy a more collaborative process and will definitely have a more rounded and complete piece.