

Those Extra Words Are Expensive!

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I wonder what communication would be like if we had to pay for our words as we pay for gasoline. Chances are we'd find a way to use fewer words.

Of course, we do pay for excess words all the time:

- We pay the price of confusion and lost efficiency when a colleague “saves” a long e-mail for later.
- We suffer financially when our proposal is put aside because the customer loses interest in extensive introductory material on our firm.
- We pay the cost of lost opportunity when we are unable to make our point in the five minutes allotted to us by the executive team.

Use the following tips to keep your messages short (and get them read):

- Shoot for one-screen e-mails and one-page letters.
- Avoid lumping messages together. It's more effective to send two distinct e-mails than one long e-mail that combines topics.
- Start reports and proposals with an executive summary that can stand alone.
- Start your presentations with a compelling slide—one that zeros in on the business need or pressing concern of your audience.
- Remember that readers and listeners aren't interested in your history; they are interested in how you can help them meet their goals.

There's not much you can do about outlandish prices at the gas pump. You can, however, control your words. Slash the price of excess words—you'll increase your communication success.

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