

## **Writing Tip: Put what you want to get done in paragraph one**

Adapted from *Writing to Get Things Done*® seminar

### **Productivity Tip**

To help your readers get things done, give them your "bottom line" up front. This writing tip is common sense, but not common practice.



**Stan Berry**

### **Common Sense**

It's common sense if you want to be more productive. You get things done by being up front and clear with the reader. Put your most important idea in the opening paragraph, and then make everything that follows support it.

It's common sense if you want to be read. The first questions readers ask of any document are, "How does this document affect me? Do I have to do anything?" When readers can't find these answers quickly or clearly, they stop reading. They put it down in their "to read later" file with good intentions.

### **Not Common Practice**

This writing tip is not common practice - which is unfortunate for readers, writers and the organizations in which they work. Look at most of the emails and other documents that you read (and maybe write!) Most business professionals put the most important thing to the readers - what they need to do - in the most difficult to find place: in the middle, near the end, or absent all together. Only a tiny percentage of emails - even those written by senior executives - state what needs to get done in paragraph one. This results in confusion that hinders progress and derails projects.

### **Try It and See What Happens**

Putting what you want to get done in paragraph one is a simple yet effective way to get things done. This common sense tactic is rarely used. Make it common practice and see what happens.



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