

# Write at the Speed of Now: Power Writing for Law Firm Communicators

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# What kind of writer are you?

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# What kind of writer are you?



A. Slow and deliberate, hard to hit send

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# What kind of writer are you?



B. Deadline driven, adrenaline inspired

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# What kind of writer are you?

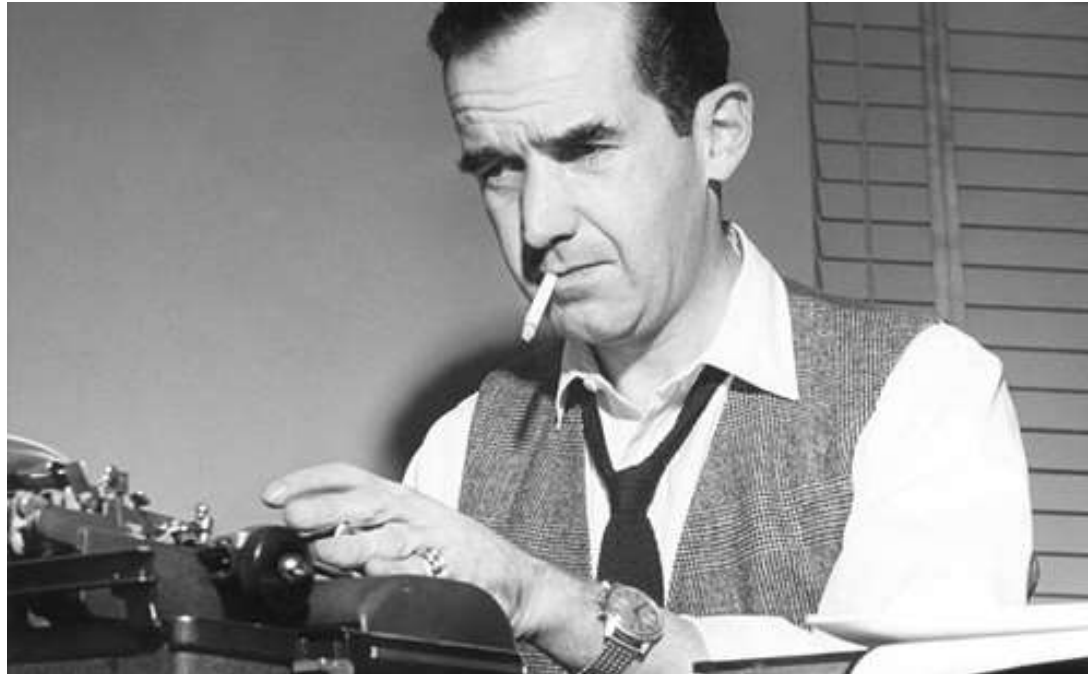


C. Creatively centered, looking for a fresh twist

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# What kind of writer are you?



- D.** Journalistic – just the facts, no Brian Williams, make it hard for people to rewrite you

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# What kind of writer are you?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Slow and deliberate, hard to hit send
  - Plan ahead, “back time” to your deadline
- Deadline driven, adrenaline inspired
  - Make the adrenaline work for you, not overwhelm you

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# What kind of writer are you?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Creatively centered
  - Balance creativity with a clarity check
- Journalist, fact driven
  - Facts are your friends, a can't-miss approach, watch for dryness

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# Who is your audience?

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# Who is your audience?



A. Internal only

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# Who is your audience?



## B. The world

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# Who is your audience?



## C. Lawyers

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# Who is your audience?



CBS

## C. Lawyers

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# Who is your audience?



## D. Clients and prospects

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# Who is your audience?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- **Internal**
  - Insider shorthand and less formal style for internal audience, sensitive to culture
- **World**
  - Make sure it's not inside baseball, talking to your aunt at Thanksgiving

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# Who is your audience?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- **Lawyers**
  - More leeway for technical and jargon, but don't bury the point
- **Clients and prospects**
  - Is it fresh and relevant, does it pass the “So What?” test?

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# How do you get started?

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# How do you get started?



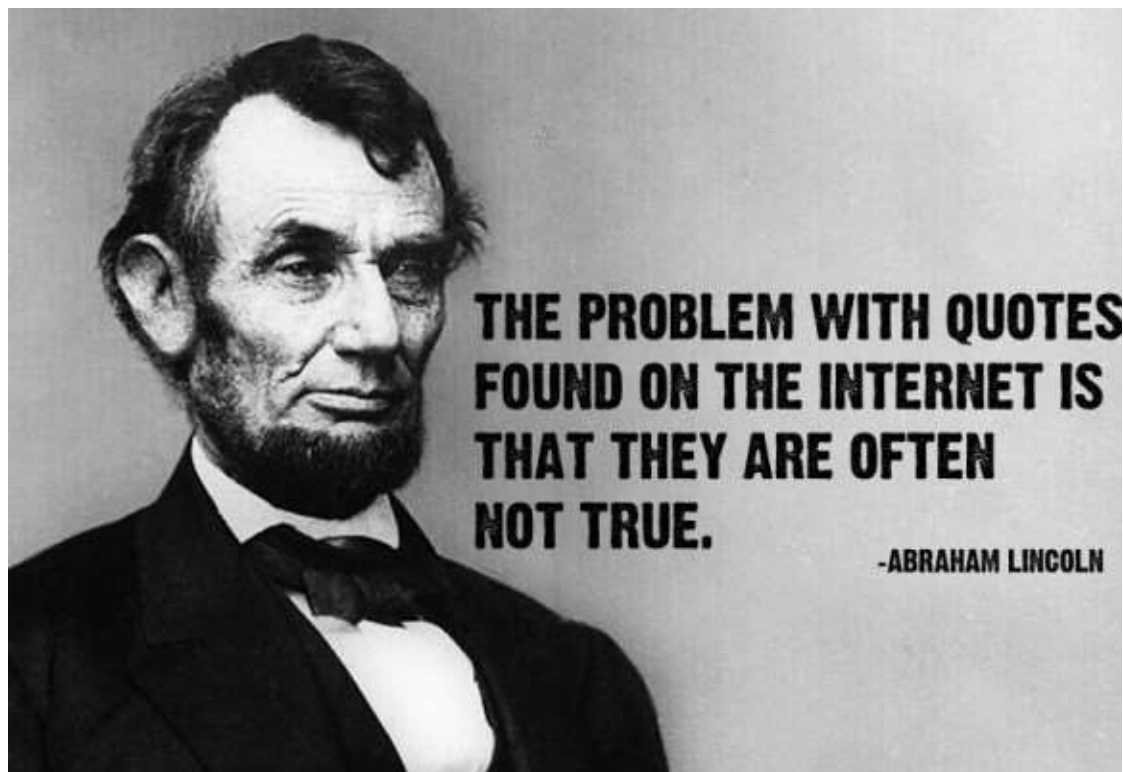
A. Seriously? Pose a rhetorical question!

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# How do you get started?



B. [Brainyquote.com](http://Brainyquote.com)

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# How do you get started?



C. “Once upon a time...”

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# How do you get started?



D. Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?

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# How do you get started?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
  - Ledes can take all sorts of forms, but there are some to avoid
  - Use gimmicks lightly and with intent, not out of laziness
  - Beware of dates
  - Straightforward is always appropriate

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# A great headline ...

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# A great headline ...



A. Is the logical summary of the article

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# A great headline ...



B. Fits on Twitter and on a subject line

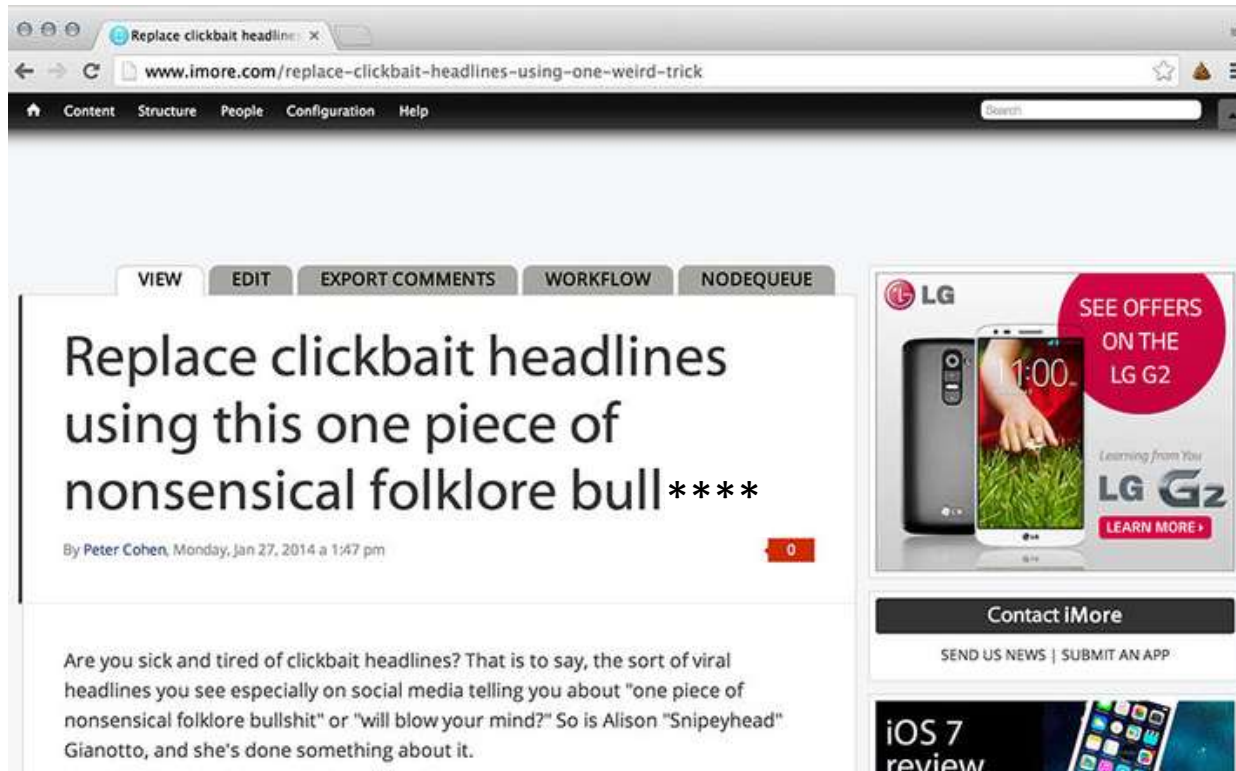
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# A great headline ...



C. Is simply irresistible

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# A great headline ...



D. Can be genius, makes you want to read the story

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# A great headline ...



D. Can be genius, makes you want to read the story

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# A great headline ...

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Gets the reader to stop and read the story
  - Write your best headline, then edit it
  - When to write it: Before or after writing the article or post?

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# A great headline ...

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Gets the reader to stop and read the story
  - 50-60 characters long for email subject; 100 characters for Twitter, leave room for link, retweet
  - Use muscular, descriptive words
    - Avoid “am-is-are-was-were”

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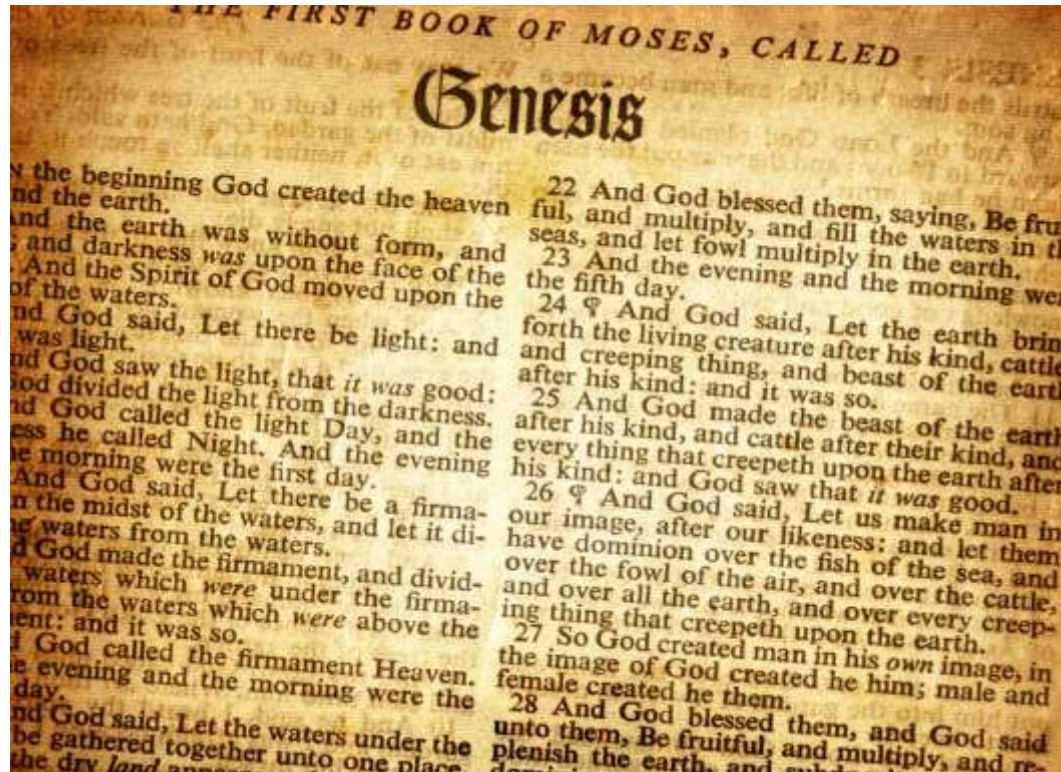


# An awesome photo ...

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# An awesome photo ...



A. Is not necessary – this is all about writing

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# An awesome photo ...



- B. Must include a caption describing exactly, in detail, to the ultimate degree, only what is pictured

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# An awesome photo ...



C. Is worth 1,000 words

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# An awesome photo ...



D. Might be the only thing people look at

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# An awesome photo...

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Always use something visual, if possible
  - Use captions (cutlines) to spotlight core message
  - 1-2 concise sentences work best
  - Write to picture, enhance mood of photo, don't duplicate it
  - Can include info additional to article

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# An awesome photo ...



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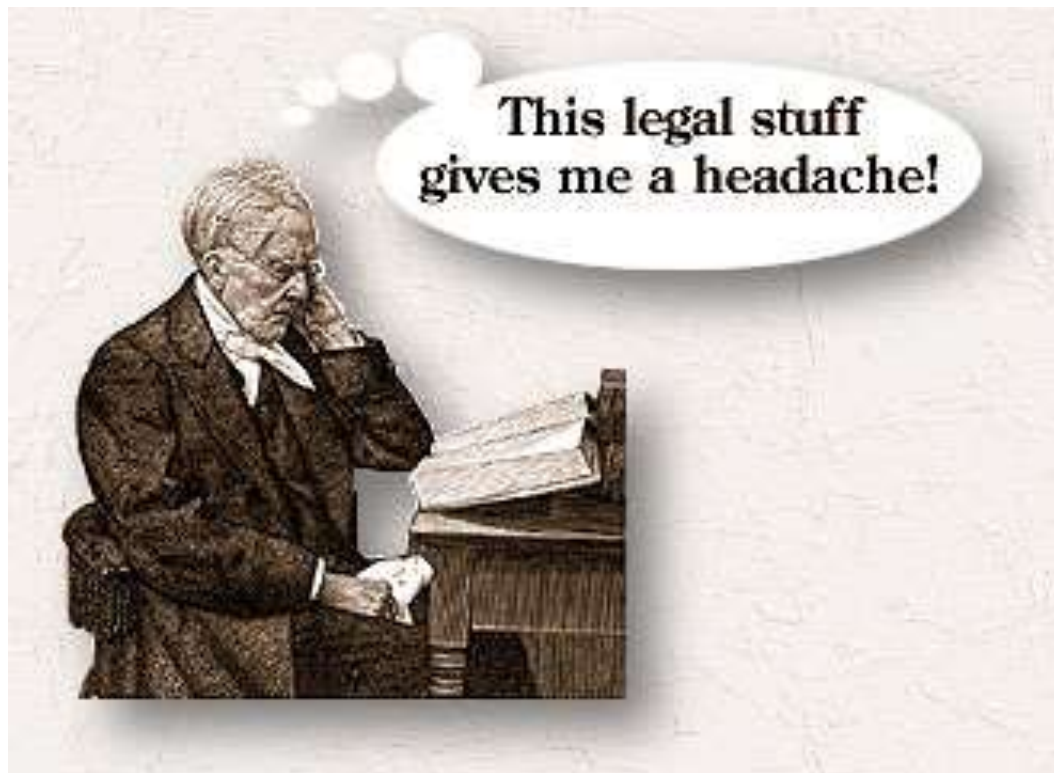
# The Lightning Round!

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# When should you use legalese?



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# When should you use legalese?

- A. You'll know the answer when you see it
- B. Never
- C. As much as possible, making sure it's in *italics*, Capitalized and (“shortened parenthetically in quotes”)
- D. As little as possible, and only when it's necessary to make things clearer or more precise

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# When should you use legalese?

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- D. As little as possible, and only when it's necessary to make things clearer or more precise

# When should you use legalese?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Lawyers like good writing, too
  - Using legalese doesn't mean you sound smart
  - Legalese drains interest and shortens attention spans

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# How about clichés?



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# How about clichés?

- A. Best thing since sliced bread
- B. #awesome for social media
- C. Show you're hip and happening
- D. Best avoided like the plague

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# How about clichés?

- A. Best thing since sliced bread
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# How about clichés?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Don't confuse clichés with conversational
  - Close the “-gates” and don't be a “hack”
  - If you've seen it on too many blogs, don't use
- Keep them away from the critical areas: headlines, openings, endings and captions

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# What else should I pay attention to?



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# What else should I pay attention to?

- A. Type-o's and prooofreading
- B. Run-on sentences and paragraphs and sentences and paragraphs and sentences ...
- C. Punctuation!
- D. Grammar rules, and when to break them

# What else should I pay attention to?

## POWER WRITING POINTS

- Neatness and consistency always matter to lawyers
  - Follow or create a style guide
- Watch out for client conflicts
- Little things can cause big distractions, sweat the small stuff

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# Resources for Writing

- Ben Zimmer
  - [benzimmer.com](http://benzimmer.com)
- Ann Handley
  - “Everybody Writes” and [annhandley.com](http://annhandley.com)
- Mignon Fogarty (a/k/a “Grammar Girl”)
  - [www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl](http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl)
- New Yorker’s Comma Queen
  - [video.newyorker.com/series/comma-queen](http://video.newyorker.com/series/comma-queen)

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# Thank You(!)

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