

ARE YOU COMMUNICATING OR JUST MAKING PRETTY SHAPES

The rise of social media has proved a bonus for sporting clubs in that it affords great exposure opportunities. However, there are more than a few traps.

Media and communications professionals are taught the Dos and Don'ts while amateur communicators go in blind, often to the detriment of the communications process.



STORY TELLING: (The following applies both to electronic media and print media.)

You need to grab attention and get the message across quickly. It really is the K.I.S.S. principle.

The average adult reading speed for non-technical content is five words per second. Facebook's statistics show that the average time spent on content is 1.7 seconds by mobile users and 2.5 seconds by desktop users. In other words, the average adult only reads about **8.5 words on mobile and 12.5 words on desktop per post**. As 95% of Facebook visits are on mobile devices, 8.5 words per post is THE magic number.

This doesn't mean that your story should only be 8.5 words. But it does mean that this is the ideal number of words to capture attention so they will read on.

So how do you do that? There's a trick. Picture yourself in a rowdy group of friends. Suddenly there's a break in the conversation. You have the briefest time to grab their attention.

Grab the bones of the story and a key attention grabbing point or two. Use Active voice in preference to Passive. In active voice, the subject performs the action – "The dog chased the car"; in passive voice, the subject receives the action – "The car was chased by the dog."

Approach your story telling with this scenario in mind and it will happen for you.

Don't be verbose or show off your language skills. Keep it simple and straight forward. You are not writing a thesis. The average tabloid newspaper is designed for an average mental age of 14 and that's a pretty good benchmark.

PRESENTATION:

DO NOT fall for the trap of creating something that looks liked a colouring competition. Type against a solid background (reversed) and colours that create an adverse emotional response will have readers turning away in droves.

Advertising guru, David Ogilvy, maintained that advertising copy should never be set in reverse. Colin Wheildon, the editor of a magazine with more than a million readers, set out to test this maxim.

Here are Wheildon's findings using serif (serif is the one with curly bits) type:

Colour combination	Comprehension level
• Text printed black on white:	Good 70%, Fair 19%, Poor 11%
• Text printed white on black:	Good 0%, Fair 12%, Poor 88%
• Text printed white on purple:	Good 2%, Fair 16%, Poor 82%
• Text printed white on royal blue:	Good 0%, Fair 4%, Poor 96%.

All three versions of white text printed on a coloured background produced horrendous reader comprehension! Readers complained of experiencing a form of light vibration, which seemed to make the lines of type move and merge into one another.

Some people say that reversing is only problematic if serif type is used. The argument is that the fine strokes and serifs tend to disappear when the text is reversed because printer's ink tends to fill in spaces a little on paper (depending on the quality of the paper).

To test this hypothesis, Wheildon prepared the same printed articles set in 10 point Univers, a common sans serif (type without the curly bits).

Publishers have long known that even when printed black on white, sans serif returns poorer comprehension levels than serif - Good 14% Fair 25% Poor 61%.

These results are bad enough, but when he tested reverse type in sans serif, the results were even worse! Good comprehension plunged to 4%, Fair comprehension was 13% and Poor comprehension rose to 83%.

CONCLUSION: A reversed type reduces readability. **NOTE:** If it is all capital letters it's worse

Don't let the designers destroy reader comprehension! A print layout that looks pretty is totally useless if only 4% of readers understand the body text.

It is essential for readers to understand the content. Only then can they understand the information, and form opinions and determine what actions they want to take from reading it.

HOW TO GRAB SOCIAL MEDIA READERS – BREVITY, BREVITY, BREVITY

Users are becoming more and more selective, so it's harder than ever to capture attention through the onslaught of content. The shorter the post, the higher the engagement rate. Based on media consumption, reading patterns, and reading stats, these numbers make intuitive sense.

Facebook's data shows that users are interested only in social media featuring:

- Stories that can be absorbed in less than 2 seconds.
- Main points in the first line & on the left in as few characters as possible.

According to [Buffer](#) & [Hootsuite](#), [Social Media Today](#) & [Social Report](#), here are the optimum character counts per post for the 3 main social media platforms:

- Facebook: 1-40 characters: Facebooks posts with 40 characters receive 86% more engagement than those with a higher character count.
- Twitter: 71-100 characters: Tweets shorter than 100 characters have a 17% higher engagement rate.
- Instagram: 1-50 characters: posts with 126 characters or less will have their whole caption displayed

REFERENCES: [Surveys](#) and [research](#), [Facebook's own statistics](#), [95% of Facebook visits are on mobile devices](#), [Buffer](#), [Hootsuite](#), [Social Media Today](#), [Social Report](#).

(Colin Wheildon's book is available under the title: *Type & Layout: are you communicating or just making pretty shapes?* Author Colin Wheildon, publisher The Worsley Press, Melbourne, Australia, 2007.)

Serif type is more easily read than sans serif, because the reader skims the type, often only taking in the top half of the letter. Serif type's pronounced ascenders allow easy recognition.