# These five easy writing tips will boost your impact on compliance

By Anthony Yeung, CCEP-I

Featured in Esquire and GQ, **Anthony Yeung** (anthony@ampersantgroup.com), from Los Angeles, California, USA, develops compliance content, training, and media for leading, innovative companies.

Here's what you need to know in 16 words: You have less than eight seconds to grab attention with your writing before people tune out. But what does that mean for compliance professionals? Well, it's clear our jobs are evolving. Risks, weaknesses, and threats change faster than you can tweet and can lead to greater consequences than before. That's why, more than ever, we need to write messages that move, inspire, and persuade to strengthen your work and your mission. But what's the "traditional" approach?

The exact opposite.

Too often, you'll find blocks of text packed with legalese and instructions that read like an operating manual for a Boeing 747. And the reality is, whether you're writing a new code of conduct, a training guide, reports, or just work emails, that style of writing doesn't cut it anymore.

Sure, perhaps no company has ever had an ethical meltdown because they couldn't write. But if you want stronger results—for employees, managers, or those whom you report to—you need your words to persuade, because it ultimately doesn't matter how much you know, how important the topic is, or how severe the consequences are; if you can't get people to understand your message, then you might fall short of your goals. How you communicate, after all, is everything.

I've written articles for leading magazines, websites, and brands over the years and sales copy for companies with top-tier sales. Here, I'll share tips that will help take your writing to the next level, where your messages can create change instead of falling flat on its face. Hopefully, it'll make your work—and life—a lot easier.

## Tip 1: Understand your audience

Here's the most powerful word in copywriting, which is the writing for advertisements, websites, emails, and elsewhere to get people to buy things: "You." Everything is focused on the buyer and what they care about. But even though copywriting is about sales, this is a powerful lesson that applies directly to compliance. Before writing *anything*, ask yourself: *Who* are you writing to, and what do *they* care about?

Within your audience, are you writing to the CEO? A specific department? The entire company? Knowing your reader is big, because it shapes what you write. Every group has different motivations, skills, and, yes, even reading levels. Something that may work for the C-suite, for example, won't work for *all* employees and vice versa.

Then, figure out what motivates them, what they are worried about, and how things apply to them. Making more money? Getting a promotion? Hitting deadlines? Job fulfillment? Making a difference? Better relationships at work? Meet the reader where they're at.

After all, why do people need to follow the rules? Maybe your answer is something like, "To avoid getting fired

and going to jail." That's true. But if you keep pressing that button, people will tune out. After all, how many mornings do you wake up, turn off your alarm, and think, "Today's the day I won't go to jail!" (For me, only on Fridays.)

Unfortunately, the hard truth is people don't really care about anything besides their top priorities, which needs to be recognized. So if you fail to take the time to *understand* where they're coming from and the issues they're dealing with, you won't be able to find a way to make them care.

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