

Transcript | Writing Hacks for Public Servants

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00:00:10.870 --> 00:00:33.629

Ula Rutkowska: Hello, everyone! I am going to wait a moment to begin today's event, just so that everyone has a moment to make their way into the virtual room. So bear with us. I'll start talking once I see the the amount of folks joining leveling out slowly.

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00:00:34.900 --> 00:00:52.200

Ula Rutkowska: All right, let's see where we are all right. I am going to get started. Hello, and welcome to this writing event a welcome return to our ever popular writing hacks. Session. My name is Ula Rutkowska, and I'm a senior researcher here at Apolitical.

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Ula Rutkowska: It would be great to hear from all of you. So do post in the chat where you're joining us from, and what organization you work for today is all about sharing techniques and strategies, for improving your writing in government, whether that's writing clearly and concisely elevating the quality of your writing, to engage different audiences or utilizing tools to help you cut through administrative writing tasks

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Ula Rutkowska: for those of you who may be joining us for the 1st time. Welcome. Apolitical is the world's largest community of for government, used by over a quarter of a million public servants and policymakers from more than 170 countries.

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Ula Rutkowska: Our mission is to make government smarter, and we do this by putting the best knowledge and skills at the fingertips of public servants around the world. So as a reminder, and as you're joining, please do go ahead and introduce yourselves in the chat.

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00:01:46.660 --> 00:02:04.050

Ula Rutkowska: Say where you are joining us from, and what organization you work for. And I'm just going to read out a few of the folks that are joining us today, just so that we have a sense of who is here. So let's see, we've got. We've got Melania from Ontario

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Ula Rutkowska: in Canada. We've got we've got safi from Baltimore. I'm from Washington, DC. So from very close we've got Emma from Leeds. We've got Kim from St. John's in Newfoundland. We've got Paul from the Uk. Animal and Plant Health Agency. Very exciting. We've got folks from Manchester, from Edmonton, from Eastern Canada.

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00:02:30.940 --> 00:02:38.250

Ula Rutkowska: from Defra. So quite. Oh, and there's so many more. I was scrolling far too slowly. All right. We've got folks from London.

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00:02:38.300 --> 00:03:02.670

Ula Rutkowska: We've got folks from Peterborough all right. Well, thank you all so much. Keep those introductions coming. I will. I love seeing them to just get a sense of how many folks are joining us and where they are coming from. I'll also extend a special welcome to those of you who are already members of Apolitical's writing effectively. And government community.

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Ula Rutkowska: if you're not yet in the community. We're thrilled to extend an invitation to join today's speakers and nearly 7,000 of your peers across the global public service. This community is the place for you to ask questions and share advice, resources, and tips on all aspects of writing in government.

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00:03:22.600 --> 00:03:36.640

Ula Rutkowska: Alright, I've got a few technical notes that I need to get out of the way before we get to today's conversation. This event is recorded for on-demand viewing on the apolitical website, please don't record it yourself.

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Ula Rutkowska: Contact. Details for privacy concerns are on the apolitical homepage footer.

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Ula Rutkowska: Closed captions are available and can be toggled on or off in your screen settings.

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Ula Rutkowska: So before we introduce our speakers, we are going to run a few quick polls to get a sense of where you're coming to today's discussion from.

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Ula Rutkowska: Let's have a look at the 1st poll.

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Ula Rutkowska: And I'm just going to wait for that to pop up on all of our screens. There we are. Okay. Great. So the question is, what type of writing do you spend most of your time on

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00:04:12.630 --> 00:04:36.249

Ula Rutkowska: option? One. Emails and internal communications? Option, 2 briefing notes and reports, option, 3. Policy documents and guidance. Option. 4. Public facing communications, eg. Press releases website, content, option, 5 speeches and ministerial correspondence and something else. And if it's something else, please do share it in the chat.

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00:04:36.250 --> 00:04:48.849

Ula Rutkowska: I'd love to know what other types of writing it is that you are doing. I see loads of responses still coming in. So I'm going to give everyone a chance to respond. But right now, let me tell you.

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Ula Rutkowska: we do have one particular answer that is very much dominating, and that is emails and internal communications. And that, I think, is just the reality for everyone. It's certainly the thing that I spend the most time writing in my role as well. But we've also had a few submissions

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Ula Rutkowska: into what other things people are spending a lot of time writing, research reports, requirement documents and project plans and technical and software documentation. All right, wonderful. So we've got a second poll. So let's get to that poll.

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Ula Rutkowska: What is the number one thing that you want to improve in your writing

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Ula Rutkowska: option, one. Writing more clearly and concisely, option, 2. Structuring my ideas more effectively. Option, 3. Writing more persuasively or engagingly. Option, 4. Reducing jargon and making my writing more accessible.

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00:05:47.070 --> 00:06:08.840

Ula Rutkowska: Option, 5. Writing faster without losing quality, and finally something else. And again, if you do select something else which thus far none of you have. Please do write it in the chat. All right. Let's see, I'm still seeing quite a few responses coming in, but we should get a result in just a moment.

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00:06:12.960 --> 00:06:36.180

Ula Rutkowska: All right. Here we go. So what's the number? One thing you want to improve in your writing. It would appear that most of you would like to improve your clear and concise your clarity and conciseness in your writing, followed by structuring your ideas more effectively. All right. Thank you so much for taking part in those polls.

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Ula Rutkowska: I'm now going to introduce our speakers.

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Ula Rutkowska: We're fortunate to have 2 brilliant guests, Paolo Zinatelli and Elise, Sr. Wadsworth, joining us today. Paolo is a senior program. Lead with the people and organizational performance team in the Ontario public service.

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00:06:54.220 --> 00:07:23.319

Ula Rutkowska: His work is focused on creating learning and development opportunities for public servant communicators ranging from inclusive language, plain language, and accessible writing. He has been named Educator of the year by the Canadian Public Relations Society for his efforts in these fields, and is also a former journalist, so very well placed to talk to us about writing today. Elise is assistant director of people, transformation at Sheffield City Council and a Fellow of the Institute of Leadership.

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Ula Rutkowska: She champions inclusive, compassionate leadership and strategic change that empowers teams and delivers long-term impact.

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Ula Rutkowska: Elise has a track record of nurturing future leaders, employing data to inform decisions and utilizing storytelling to drive change.

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Ula Rutkowska: You can read the full bios by visiting the resources tab at the bottom of your zoom screen and heading to the speakers section. All right. So we are going to start with an icebreaker to kick things off.

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00:07:54.570 --> 00:08:18.840

Ula Rutkowska: Paolo. Elise hasn't quite arrived yet, so we're going to just start with me asking you to respond to this icebreaker, and once Elise does make it in, I will direct the same question to her. So if you wouldn't mind, it's just going to be you for a moment, but also before I pose the icebreaker, I am going to ask all of you to share your own responses in the chat, and then I'll spend a moment looking

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00:08:18.840 --> 00:08:31.520

Ula Rutkowska: at what you've all said as well. So in previous writing events, I have usually asked our speakers to tell us about a piece of writing that they have recently read, that they found useful, instructive, or simply well done.

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Ula Rutkowska: Today I'm going to invert this, and ask you to tell me about something that you read recently that you really did not enjoy.

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Ula Rutkowska: Why did you not enjoy it? And what qualities did it possess that would make it poorly suited to writing in a government context.

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Ula Rutkowska: Paolo, over to you.

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Paolo Zinatelli: Thanks, Ula, so great question. I thought about this for a bit.

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Paolo Zinatelli: I recently. So I do a lot of personal reading just outside of work. Read a lot of novels, just a lot of a lot of reading, and I read a book recently. I won't say the name. I'll just say that it was like a light read. It was supposed to be like a fun read.

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Paolo Zinatelli: supposed to be a quaint murder. Mystery is all say, based off of a very popular American sitcom from the eighties and nineties, and I was very excited to read it. One of my favorite shows really was into it, and I got the book, and

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Paolo Zinatelli: I really disliked it. I could not get through it. I had to stop about a quarter of the way through. And the reason was, it was full of too many adjectives.

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Paolo Zinatelli: It was overly descriptive.

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Paolo Zinatelli: And so it was like it in. So, for example, like, I'm holding up a blue pen.

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Paolo Zinatelli: and instead of the book, instead of describing it as a blue pen, it was, you know, a small, clickable blue pen. Everything had 3, 4, 6 adjectives, and so the overuse of adjectives made it very difficult to read the over descriptive terms, the adjectives, the adverbs, and

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Paolo Zinatelli: to pull that into a government context. The overuse of adjectives and adverbs makes your writing less clear. And so by overusing over describing terms. When we're writing in our government communications. We make the writing denser and harder to get through for the public. So

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Paolo Zinatelli: yeah, that's that's something we read recently.

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Paolo Zinatelli: name names. I don't want to shame anybody, but I just really couldn't, did not like that book could not get through it. And yeah, that was one of the reasons why so.

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Ula Rutkowska: That's a great example. And I appreciate you pointing out this excessive use of adjectives. I think that's super helpful and just a reminder that if any of these sorts of types of writing that you've recently read, that you just don't think were particularly great, please do post them in the chat, but we do have a few coming through.

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00:10:51.560 --> 00:11:16.380

Ula Rutkowska: So let's see a business case that had poor sentence structures with too many clauses and unnecessary hyphens and too much hyperbole makes sense fiction book, where a character was talking about their experiences before World War II. However, the character was deliberately hateful. Racist, and biased so clearly unsuited to the public service. A legal request for a broad internal document. Search. All right. We've got so many

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Ula Rutkowska: of these coming in much appreciated. Please do keep them coming, because I actually think that there is something we often talk about good writing, but I think we don't talk about bad writing enough, and actually what it means and what it looks like. So

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Ula Rutkowska: let's get stuck into things.

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Ula Rutkowska: Paulo, you have prepared a masterclass drawing on some of your hard-earned writing lessons and hacks. As always, we will leave plenty of time for everyone in the audience to ask questions after. So please start thinking about those and posting them in the chat as we go. First, let's get started with Paulo.

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Paolo Zinatelli: Alright, thanks a lot. So I'm going to share my screen presentation.

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Paolo Zinatelli: So you should be able to see my screen. Okay.

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Paolo Zinatelli: yes, I can see it very well

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Paolo Zinatelli: perfect. So thanks everyone. Thanks for having me this morning. I'm really happy to be here. I put together some tips that I some practical tips that I use when I am writing. So I have been a writer, an editor working in communications in some capacity for 20 plus years in my career. As I said earlier, I was a journalist. Now I work in the public service, I work in communications, I teach others how to write. I teach at a college here in Canada, in a

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Paolo Zinatelli: public relations program. So I'm surrounded by writing and communications. So over the years I've gathered tips, tricks, things that help me with my writing, and I just wanted to share them with you this morning.

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Paolo Zinatelli: So let's get started with our 1st tip this morning.

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Paolo Zinatelli: which is here we go. So tip number one, read your work out loud. So this is something that I learned

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Paolo Zinatelli: when I was in grad school, when I was just early in my career reading your work out loud. I find it's really really helpful. You'll notice things like rhythm. So how does the language flow, or how does it not flow when you're reading it out loud? You don't often catch that. If you're just reading silently to yourself

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00:13:23.530 --> 00:13:34.650

Paolo Zinatelli: wordiness, do you have to pause for a breath or 2 because the sentence is too long. Sometimes we'll write a sentence, and we're trying to get all of that information into the sentence, but we're reading it

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Paolo Zinatelli: breath 2, 3 times to get through to the end of the sentence. It's just too long.

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00:13:43.210 --> 00:14:02.149

Paolo Zinatelli: Also awkwardness. Is there a word that makes you stumble. If something is difficult to pronounce, you want to try to find a plain language alternative, and this happens often where I'll write down a word, because I think it's the correct word that should be used in the writing, and then, when I start reading it out loud, I stumble on it. I can't pronounce it properly.

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Paolo Zinatelli: like the couple that always catch me are camaraderie

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Paolo Zinatelli: right? It's 1 of those difficult words that I don't often say correctly, a plain language alternative could just be to say friendship

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Paolo Zinatelli: or another one that I always stumble on is rest restaurateur. I always want to put that N in there restaurateur, but it's restaurateur.

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Paolo Zinatelli: And so you know, the more plain language way to say, that would just be a restaurant owner or cafe owner right? And so we often talk about, you know, trying to make things plain language, to make it simpler, easier to read. And one of the things about that is to you know, we often talk about writing shorter, not longer. So instead of one long sentence.

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Paolo Zinatelli: but also sometimes you need to use extra words to help explain things more clearly. So while restaurateur is one short word, restaurant owner, or cafe owner is the more plain language alternative, and you won't necessarily catch that if you're not reading it out loud. So for many years I worked in

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Paolo Zinatelli: government marketing communications. I was a copywriter, and I wrote a lot of government commercials like TV commercials, radio commercials, streaming videos, those things like things like that, anything that had a narration. And so whenever I knew I was writing a script that included some kind of narration. I would always read that work out loud. I would finish writing my script, my multiple versions of it when I got

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00:15:35.370 --> 00:15:37.330

Paolo Zinatelli: you know the the drafts that

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00:15:40.760 --> 00:15:42.510

Paolo Zinatelli: the content out loud

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00:15:42.530 --> 00:15:56.270

Paolo Zinatelli: around the office just do it, I mean, find a quiet spot, but read the words out loud, and you'll find when you do that you will catch those things like I said. Rhythm, wordiness, awkwardness. Where are you stumbling? Where are you faltering.

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00:15:56.290 --> 00:16:23.009

Paolo Zinatelli: and then you can fix that. I outside of work. I'm a short story writer. I write creative fiction, just short story. Try to, you know, work that writing muscle. Soon as I finish writing a short story I always then read it out loud, and then I will make edits as I'm going through, because I'll catch someplace where I stopped or I stumbled. This wasn't the right word, this I want to change that. So this is a really really big tip, and one that I've incorporated in my work for a very, very long time.

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00:16:23.930 --> 00:16:47.070

Paolo Zinatelli: All right, let's share another tip this morning, which is to save the good and the bad. So is there something that you read that you liked? Make note of content that you like? Did you see an interesting briefing? Did your manager write a really interesting email? And you found it really easy to read? Did you read a government report that was like, Oh, that was simple, plain language. I really like that.

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Paolo Zinatelli: start a folder and save it for reference. I have done this for many years. I have folders on my desktop, on my computer where I save Pdfs of documents that I want to go back and read and reference. I also do this on my web browser. So I come across an interesting article.

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Paolo Zinatelli: We bookmark it, put it into a bookmark folder, and then have it as a reference, so things that you like.

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Paolo Zinatelli: But on the flip side of that are things that maybe you don't like. So did you lose your spot when you were reading? Did you get to the end of a report, and you were left with more questions than answers. Well, stop and ask yourself why that was, and then maybe save that document to the folder. So you have your the good folder and the not so good folder. But the most important thing out of all of this, I would say, is to reference that folder. So go back regularly, read through those examples.

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Paolo Zinatelli: delete the ones that aren't relevant anymore.

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Paolo Zinatelli: I try to do this every couple of weeks. So every couple of weeks, usually on a Friday afternoon end of the week. Not always. But if a Friday afternoon is a bit quiet, I'll try to set aside half an hour. Go through that folder. What did I put in there over the last couple of weeks? Even if you do it once a month or every couple months. But go. But the important thing is not just to save the files that you like, but to actually reference them and go back and be like, oh, why did I like this?

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00:18:00.310 --> 00:18:20.620

Paolo Zinatelli: What? What was so great about this email? Oh, it was the plain language in that email. I like the terms that they used or the way it was formatted. Maybe it had a lot of like bullet points that were really easy to read, you know things like that and start making start noticing those patterns and just making a note of them, and, you know, start trying to incorporate those into your own writing.

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Paolo Zinatelli: So that's another tip that I have for you. And again, one that I've done for for many, many years, and I find super helpful.

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Paolo Zinatelli: And

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Paolo Zinatelli: the 3rd tip I have is to remember your reader. So who are you writing for? Think about who? What and why? Just a quick, you know some quick things to consider who is your target audience. I find jotting down a few key words or phrases to describe them really helps me

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00:18:44.740 --> 00:19:07.520

Paolo Zinatelli: a lot of the writing that I did for a very long time was public facing when I was a journalist. Even when I was in when I joined the public service here in Ontario. Like I said, I worked in marketing, and so I wrote marketing campaigns which are public facing, seen by millions of people who was the target audience. So I write. I personally start all of my writing. I start my drafts on a yellow legal notepad.

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Paolo Zinatelli: I start on my notepad, and so I will start jotting down my thoughts and ideas. But at the top of the notepad I always write down just a couple of bullet points on. Who am I writing for? Who is my audience? Is it Gen. Pop? Is it general population which is very common in government communications? We are writing for all of our all of the public. But it could be a very specific target audience. Maybe you work for a ministry or division that

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00:19:31.640 --> 00:19:49.479

Paolo Zinatelli: your target audience is seniors or youth, young people, 18 to 25. That's your target audience. Okay? So I write down a couple of those words and keep that as a reminder visually on my notepad, just as I'm writing the rest of my content, as I'm drafting my notes

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Paolo Zinatelli: so I can go back and reference it and be like, Okay, this is who I am writing for. How would they? How would they absorb the information that I'm putting out there?

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00:19:57.720 --> 00:20:20.080

Paolo Zinatelli: And then the second thing is what so identifying the action that you want your reader to take. So whether it's to register for something or to learn for something call to actions are important, and in government communications we do a lot of call to actions. We put a lot of information for the public to consider. And sometimes it's things like we have a new program or a new service. So we want the public to register for that.

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00:20:20.080 --> 00:20:28.949

Paolo Zinatelli: So making that very clear, but often it's not. We don't have a new program or a new service, but we have information that we are trying to get out to the public.

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00:20:28.950 --> 00:20:46.800

Paolo Zinatelli: And it's just an update about something. And so maybe there is not necessarily a physical action like Click, this link. Take this survey register for the program, but it is about absorbing or learning what the government is doing. And so, as public servants, maybe your call to action is just learning.

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00:20:46.860 --> 00:20:53.719

Paolo Zinatelli: but making clear what that is, so identifying what it is that we want our public or our audience to do.

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00:20:53.810 --> 00:20:55.369

Paolo Zinatelli: And then, finally, why

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Paolo Zinatelli: so, if you want your audience to listen to you. You have to make it worth their while. If they're not learning, you haven't done your job as public servants, we are imparting information. We are not just generally not just writing for ourselves. Even if we are writing internal communications in government communications, we are still sharing it with internal colleagues.

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00:21:21.530 --> 00:21:42.960

Paolo Zinatelli: our teams, and so forth. And so they will still be learning something from the writing that we are doing. So just remembering why it is that we are writing what it is that we are writing, and who it is that we are writing for. So always remembering the reader. And like, I said, the way I do. It is just a couple of notes, a couple of bullet points just at the top of the page, just to identify who it is what it is and what I'm trying to do.

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00:21:43.470 --> 00:21:49.989

Paolo Zinatelli: I find that is really helpful to making my writing clearer, and you know just making it better overall.

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00:21:50.500 --> 00:21:52.639

Paolo Zinatelli: So I will say, Thank you.

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Paolo Zinatelli: That is, that is my time.

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00:21:55.210 --> 00:22:19.369

Ula Rutkowska: Well, thank you so much, Paolo. That was absolutely wonderful. We will get to questions for you. But first, st actually, Elise, I am going to turn to you now for a moment, and I'm going to do the icebreaker with you as well, so that we can hear your perspective, and then we'll get to your presentation and come back for a Q&A with the both of you. So if you don't mind, everyone's going to have to bear with me asking this question again.

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00:22:19.370 --> 00:22:34.050

Ula Rutkowska: but I would love it if you could share something that you've read recently that you just didn't enjoy. Why didn't you enjoy it, and what qualities did it possess that would really make it poorly suited to writing in a government context?

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00:22:38.970 --> 00:22:41.759

Ula Rutkowska: Sorry, Elise, you are still on mute.

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00:22:41.760 --> 00:22:42.360

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: You can't.

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00:22:42.940 --> 00:23:01.509

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Hi everyone and apologies for being late, the classic technical issues. So when thinking about this, I couldn't really narrow it down to one thing, because, like many people on this call, most of what I read is for work. So the actual amount of leisure reading I do is quite limited.

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Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But there's a sort of common narrative tool that I see increasingly in fiction, and that's where it jumps around on the timeline. So murder mysteries where we're in the past and we're in the future. As a reader I find that so frustrating.

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00:23:21.490 --> 00:23:25.830

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and it made me think of

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Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: lots and lots of Government white papers, and you know some of the sort of statutory instruments and legal documentation we have to read, which similarly jumps about because it's categorized by the writer for a different purpose, and it's not for the audience. So Paulo's point about knowing your audience, and I think a lot of the things we read are not necessarily structured and written with us in mind because we weren't the original

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Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: audience when those things were curated. But certainly my personal hate is any book that takes us jumps us back and forth in time. Because I just I just find it utterly confusing.

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00:24:06.330 --> 00:24:07.449

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Thanks, Ula.

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Ula Rutkowska: All right. Thank you. That's a great. That's a great way of approaching this question. Well, Elise, I'm actually going to come right back to you, because it's now your turn to share your masterclass. I understand that my colleague will share the slides. You will speak so. Just say next, and we'll keep them moving along. But over to you again.

107

00:24:27.770 --> 00:24:39.339

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Excellent. It's a it's a pleasure to be speaking with you all this afternoon, wherever you are coming from, some of the things that I'm going to talk about are quite Uk specific.

108

00:24:39.340 --> 00:24:59.639

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: but it would be great if you could drop anything in the chat that you think might be the kind of things that you write in your region and in your organization. So I describe myself as a reluctant writer, and I promise you I'm not being cute, and I'm not being humble.

109

00:24:59.700 --> 00:25:07.950

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I'm not in any way like Paulo, a seasoned professional, but one of the things I wanted to sort of just sort of pick up 1st was.

110

00:25:08.780 --> 00:25:30.900

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: how is writing in government changing? So I am 20 years deep into my local government career in the United Kingdom, and what I am seeing is that what we are writing is expanding. So, as Paolo referenced, there's lots of public facing universal content to our customers and our citizens.

111

00:25:30.920 --> 00:25:43.330

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: but increasingly, there are elected member briefs. Capital funding bids award submissions, all sorts of recruitment, information, equality, impact assessments.

112

00:25:43.570 --> 00:25:57.489

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: the the volume and the breadth of documentation that we have to write within. Government is staggering, and I'd love to see some comments around what you write most frequently.

113

00:25:57.790 --> 00:26:10.949

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But what has changed is how we can write documents. So when I started my career much like Paulo, I would have had my my trusty notebook, and I would have taken notes and started with pen and paper.

114

00:26:11.070 --> 00:26:34.460

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But one of the things about the digital journey. And if you're going to use technology, and I'll reference technology and AI quite a bit through this, because we're running a pilot in Sheffield, and we're seeing lots of opportunities just on a very personal basis to use AI to increase the speed and turnaround of preparing documents, and certainly getting to that

115

00:26:34.500 --> 00:26:57.549

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: 1st draft. So if you are somebody who does like to work on pen and paper, AI is not going to be your friend because AI requires you to have all of your source material in a digital format, but that in itself is very easy to do. So you can scan things in. You can use technology. You can read things in. There's lots of ways that we can do it.

116

00:26:57.950 --> 00:27:06.299

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So I think what we're writing is expanding, and how we write is changing quite significantly.

117

00:27:06.610 --> 00:27:26.160

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But what seems to be much more static is our actual outputs. So if you were to look at perhaps a community consultation document of 5 or 6 years ago, prior to us, getting more digitally savvy as an organization and one of today

118

00:27:26.340 --> 00:27:31.829

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I would suggest that they'll probably look pretty similar, and a lot of our big

119

00:27:32.530 --> 00:27:51.880

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: tombstone documents. Everybody who works in local government will have a constitution document, you know. Ours is upwards of 300 pages. There's no summary version. There's no quick click through. There's no easy read version, for example, to make it super accessible, and I think in local government we are

120

00:27:52.010 --> 00:27:56.070

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of things we have to write.

121

00:27:56.260 --> 00:28:18.559

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and sometimes can't even keep up with the technology. But actually, our outputs, I think, are a little static, and I think there's a great opportunity for us to look at how we might want to reimagine the outputs of our writing, so that we can better utilise some of the technologies and some of the approaches for engaging with our customers and citizens in particular.

122

00:28:19.420 --> 00:28:20.650

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Thanks next.

123

00:28:24.530 --> 00:28:28.070

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So when I say that I'm a reluctant writer.

124

00:28:28.510 --> 00:28:50.760

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I am generally stand at the front. You know the fact that this is a virtual conference is utterly painful. The fact that I can't see you is torture for me. So I love to be in the room with people feeding off that energy. So I am not somebody who naturally lives in the written space.

125

00:28:50.910 --> 00:29:14.119

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and as a result of that I have made a lot of mistakes. So what I've got for you now is my learning, and some of the things are quite similar, so I won't repeat anything that Paolo has said, but I will share a couple of my fails just to reassure you that I'm not being cutesy when I say I'm a very reluctant writer. But what I have had to do is learn to write well enough.

126

00:29:14.470 --> 00:29:27.339

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And actually now, as a senior leader in local government, I spend much more of my time giving feedback on other people's written material. So I like to pass on and coach others in order to write well.

127

00:29:27.770 --> 00:29:49.379

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So I've got a 3 step process. Now, this works for a large, complex document, something that maybe is going to have a number of drafts, something that might have a sign off procedure sign off procedure and something that's going to, probably a senior or public consultation kind of space. But because this is my method.

128

00:29:49.460 --> 00:30:03.160

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I kind of do it in shorthand, even for that complex email that I've been trying to get the tone of voice right on, or that note to the team at the end of the week that I want to make sure that everybody's

129

00:30:03.600 --> 00:30:14.880

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: feel some appreciation for a good week of work. So before you even write a single word. You must know who you are talking to, and

130

00:30:15.630 --> 00:30:32.439

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Paolo covered that really really well, and made a few notes myself from that. But what I would say, is in government, knowing your audience can come down to individual stakeholders. So if you are contact, if you are

131

00:30:32.550 --> 00:30:51.390

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: perhaps writing a briefing for your C-suite, your executive management team? How well do you know their reading preferences? Are they scanners? Are they detail orientated? Are they going to drop to the executive summary at the bottom, the better. You know the stakeholder and the audience that you've got.

132

00:30:51.760 --> 00:30:54.579

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: the better. You will plan your work

133

00:30:55.560 --> 00:31:09.930

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: because I'm not a very good writer. I like to standardize things, so I standardize anything that I can. I will use templates, clauses, frequently asked questions, anything to avoid writing new content.

134

00:31:10.030 --> 00:31:25.619

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And when you're working with perhaps starting to work with a new program board or a new set of elected members or a new community group, it's really good to use these things to sort of train each other into what to expect from written communication.

135

00:31:26.640 --> 00:31:54.460

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: The why is particularly important. So I'm a firm believer in starting with the end in mind, but not just the content end. What is the answer? What? So? What do they want? So what do you want your audience to think, feel, or know, for example, and thinking about it in that way. Well, the call to action, as Paolo said, is absolutely in there. I'll give you an example of this.

136

00:31:54.460 --> 00:32:08.220

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I was redesigning some customer communication a number of years ago, and we wrote an excellent letter. Go off, go, team, Sheffield, and we sent the letter to every housing tenant that had a gas appliance.

137

00:32:08.540 --> 00:32:15.690

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and it said, Contact us to arrange your servicing appointment for your gas appliance.

138

00:32:16.210 --> 00:32:22.739

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So as the biggest social housing authority in England, we had about 10,000 phone calls.

139

00:32:23.570 --> 00:32:52.370

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So what we thought about was not the action we actually wanted. The letter we should have written was a here's your appointment. Let us know if it's not convenient. So really think about what the action you want at the end, and test that through your internal process, and finally, before you work, what's your timeline work back? I am a last minute, Annie, as you can probably tell by my joining the call, so make sure you know your timeline and work back from that.

140

00:32:52.750 --> 00:32:53.480

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Thanks.

141

00:32:54.400 --> 00:32:55.929

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Next one.

142

00:32:56.520 --> 00:32:56.880

Ula Rutkowska: Okay.

143

00:32:56.880 --> 00:33:19.459

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So, and then drafting. So I always start with an outline shape my heading, start that drafting process because I find that scary, blank white sheet of paper is just too much, it's too overwhelming. I'll close my laptop. I'll wander off. I'll do something else. I'll probably speak to somebody, so I make sure that I fill that blank page very quickly with an outline.

144

00:33:20.100 --> 00:33:20.990

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And

145

00:33:21.280 --> 00:33:41.249

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: what was the last thing your audience heard on the subject that you're writing about. So is this a follow up? Is this the 1st thing that they've heard? Always think about? What was the last point of contact you had with that audience on this subject matter, because that's where you're picking it up. And if it was a long time ago you might want to start with a little summary.

146

00:33:41.510 --> 00:33:57.550

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Also gather all your references together. So if you're going to making, if you're going to be using references, data or evidence and appendices, etc. Gather it all up into a folder before you even start writing, so that everything's accessible to you as you draft your content

147

00:33:58.590 --> 00:34:07.230

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: because I'm not a natural writer. I use dictation a lot. I think best verbally. That's how my brain works. So I do use dictation. An awful lot.

148

00:34:07.790 --> 00:34:09.480

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Thanks. Next one.

149

00:34:11.670 --> 00:34:19.389

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And then the editing. This is where we've particularly found that technology is just transforming what you do.

150

00:34:19.710 --> 00:34:40.500

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I find that writing quickly works for me. If I'm struggling with something. Then I will just quickly write it. And I taught art a very long time ago, and one of the things you teach young people to do is quickly fill the page, because the blank page is very intimidating, and it's exactly the same with the written word.

151

00:34:41.150 --> 00:34:54.789

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And if you get stuck I often think that that's where AI can come in. So you can ask AI to give you a suggested format, or to summarize a content or summarize one of your references.

152

00:34:54.860 --> 00:35:19.659

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and whether you like the AI prompt or not, what I find is even discarding. It helps unblock me. So, using AI just to get through that mental block that you might have around writing, because, like me, when I've got to write, I've generally got not enough time to produce something that I'm happy with. So if I get stuck, I get very frustrated. So I find AI helps unstuck me.

153

00:35:20.010 --> 00:35:35.739

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And in fact, use AI. Anyway, once you've got a basic content. I use it to reduce the word count, increase the formality, reduce the formality. We know that the average reading age in our organization is about 9,

154

00:35:35.980 --> 00:36:03.020

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: which UK broadsheet is written at age 14. So it's quite, you know. It's quite a basic level of English modern age. You can absolutely get them to repitch it, and I know a lot of age will be restricted. We are running a pilot, so we've got copilot running, and we've all got licenses. So I am talking, for we've got it built into our core.

155

00:36:03.640 --> 00:36:13.430

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: its products. It's great for summarizing references. It's great for doing summary document for you, and it's great but cautionary note.

156

00:36:13.450 --> 00:36:34.159

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: check it, always check it, and, in fact, check it twice and get somebody else to check it, because, depending on which AI you use. It makes things up, and it doesn't like blank sheets of paper, either. So you're accountable for it. But I think that copilot has absolutely transformed

157

00:36:34.160 --> 00:36:46.640

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: the writing experience, and how anxious I feel about writing, because it's not a skill that I naturally have. I find I get very anxious doing it, and I found that AI has really helped me feel less anxious.

158

00:36:46.740 --> 00:36:48.310

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Lovely thanks, Una.

159

00:36:50.370 --> 00:37:00.430

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But then there's the day to day stuff in local government. And some of this is really obvious. But I have to say I am a bit of an email pedant.

160

00:37:01.440 --> 00:37:08.870

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And I think it's really important when you're writing that you use the right channel for the right communication.

161

00:37:09.030 --> 00:37:17.819

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So if you need a really robust audit trail, then by all means use email. But don't copy people in unnecessarily

162

00:37:17.890 --> 00:37:25.119

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: make sure that you top and tail it with your with your signature, so that people can make alternative contact.

163

00:37:25.150 --> 00:37:51.199

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: do email well. And I think the read aloud all sorts of things that technology does for us now allows us to do that. But I'm sure, since Covid, most of us will be using teams and zoom and other digital technologies. But it's really important that how we write in one is not going to be the same as how we write in another, and I think it's really important as professional public servants

164

00:37:51.850 --> 00:38:08.879

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: where we have the highest level of transparency around our work. So anything I write could end up in the public domain. Anything I write could end up at the recipient's inbox. So, making sure you use professional communication.

165

00:38:09.100 --> 00:38:13.370

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and being short and to the point is always is always helpful.

166

00:38:14.420 --> 00:38:20.520

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: In a previous life I was a data protection officer, and I learned very painfully

167

00:38:22.100 --> 00:38:44.630

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: that you should write as though you were writing into the front page of your local newspaper. Now it may be confidential, but if it was public, would you stand by the tone and your decision making and the professionalism. So I find that it's just really important that anything I write I assume at some point the subject, the public a reporter.

168

00:38:44.670 --> 00:38:52.490

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: our regulatory body, the Information Commissioner's office might be reading that at some point, and that just

169

00:38:52.680 --> 00:38:58.600

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: keeps you out of trouble. And I certainly have had a few emails that have had to be shared in fois which I have.

170

00:38:58.820 --> 00:39:02.619

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Oh, not my finest moment. So a painful lesson.

171

00:39:03.480 --> 00:39:08.160

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And finally, as I said, we're running a co-pilot

172

00:39:09.030 --> 00:39:27.490

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: pilot within our team, our program team at the moment, and the difficulty with engaging with new technology like copilot, which you do have to learn how to write effective prompts. It's better when you're polite. It likes, please, and thank you very bizarre.

173

00:39:27.780 --> 00:39:48.260

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But you need to share hacks. So one of the things about the communities that we've got on the website. Apolitical is that there's lots of opportunities to share hints and tips, share them in your community share them in your team. Somebody last week showed me the history button in a sharepoint site. I kid you not. My life is transformed.

174

00:39:48.260 --> 00:39:58.799

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: absolutely transformed, because I'm forever looking for documents, so share those tips and make sure that we share our learning as we go along.

175

00:39:59.520 --> 00:40:06.749

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: The final thing I wanted to share was just a little bit of a story of what? Why this matters.

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00:40:07.100 --> 00:40:16.459

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So I'm running a big program of a pay strategy, equal pay driven program at the moment, and

177

00:40:17.030 --> 00:40:20.490

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I did a very similar piece of work about 10 years ago.

178

00:40:21.080 --> 00:40:31.179

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and one of the reasons that we're doing it again is because we didn't have a robust audit trail of the decisions that we'd made between then and between now.

179

00:40:31.620 --> 00:40:47.360

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So it's so important to remember that sometimes our writing has more than one purpose. Yes, it will be to get that individual decision, or to communicate that particular outcome to a customer or citizen.

180

00:40:47.790 --> 00:41:10.970

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But the the cumulative impact of our all of our communications is to give us that historical, organizational memory of what we did when and why, and long after, I move on from Sheffield City Council. There will be a very clear audit trail around the program that I'm delivering, so that in 10 years time, hopefully, nobody else has to do it.

181

00:41:11.360 --> 00:41:12.560

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Thanks, Ula.

182

00:41:14.460 --> 00:41:33.319

Ula Rutkowska: Thank you so much to both of you for those great masterclasses. Now, to everyone who is attending today, please remember to keep sharing any questions that you have for today's speakers. We have a lot of questions from you already, both pre-submitted and in the Zoom. Q. And a.

183

00:41:33.320 --> 00:41:42.080

Ula Rutkowska: To ensure your question gets seen and not lost in the chat. We want to ask you to submit in the Q. And a. Which you should see at the bottom of the zoom screen.

184

00:41:42.080 --> 00:42:05.080

Ula Rutkowska: so we'll give you a minute or 2 to type in your questions, and whilst you are doing so, I just wanted to remind you all or share for the 1st time for those of you who weren't here for the opening remarks that we have a fantastic writing effectively in government community. Many of you may already be members. But for those who aren't, this is a really active online forum. We are on the cusp of 7,000 members. So

185

00:42:05.080 --> 00:42:20.709

Ula Rutkowska: lots of tips, lots of tricks, lots of different activities. Actually. So it's a space where you can share advice, insights and resources on government writing with peers across government. It's open to all apolitical members. So let's get started with the Q&A.

186

00:42:21.440 --> 00:42:37.440

Ula Rutkowska: We have lots coming in, and I am going to start one with one for you, Paulo, and it is from Laura, and it is what keywords or phrases did you write down to identify us as your target audience.

187

00:42:38.483 --> 00:42:57.549

Paolo Zinatelli: Good question. So when I was preparing this, I thought, I'm going to be speaking to public servants, professionals. You know, the key. Words that I wrote down were public servants, professionals, someone people with an understanding of government

188

00:42:57.550 --> 00:43:18.449

Paolo Zinatelli: communications, or how government works or government in big letters. That's kind of what I wrote down. But yeah, like public servant professionals is what was what I had. So I wasn't. You know, I'm not speaking to an audience of students like my my students in my classroom. I'm not speaking to the general public. I'm speaking to you with

189

00:43:18.890 --> 00:43:27.099

Paolo Zinatelli: an understanding of how government works, or I'm making the assumption. Since we're public servants, you understand how government works. So that's what I did. Yeah.

190

00:43:27.280 --> 00:43:29.630

Paolo Zinatelli: yeah. Good question. You got me, yeah.

191

00:43:30.310 --> 00:43:44.140

Ula Rutkowska: Yes, I believe there's quite a lot of positive feedback for that particular question. And I quite like it. Actually, all right. Next question, this one is from Kim, and I'm going to direct this one at you, Elise.

192

00:43:44.140 --> 00:44:08.020

Ula Rutkowska: How do you edit up? If your content has been edited by your supervisor, their supervisor and executive, and it is no longer content that you stand by in terms of plain language. So I guess, to put it another way, something has been through loads of rewrites edits, and in the process it has sort of become distorted by a lot of other people's voices who may not have the same view

193

00:44:08.020 --> 00:44:13.829

Ula Rutkowska: of writing as you do. How would you approach negotiating that kind of challenge.

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00:44:15.140 --> 00:44:19.360

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Oh, another great question, absolute, brilliant question.

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00:44:19.500 --> 00:44:24.260

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And one of the things and it comes to one of the standardization tips

196

00:44:24.380 --> 00:44:49.969

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: is, and I have to say. That is exactly where I was about 6 months ago. I report to a chief operating officer who reports to our chief executive, and they both love a bit of wordsmithing they love, and they rarely read to the bottom before they start, you know, putting their style or their pros. So one of the things that we did is we have a cover sheet for everything. So on that cover sheet, it says what it is.

197

00:44:50.160 --> 00:44:57.589

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Who's the audience, and what does the document have to achieve? And everyone is working back to that.

198

00:44:58.150 --> 00:45:22.620

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: The other thing that we do is that we make sure that we manage the sign off timeline very tightly, and make sure that there's always a read back time within our program to make sure that by the time we release it from the program environment. But I've certainly found that that sheet that that control sheet at the beginning just keeps people on track.

199

00:45:22.750 --> 00:45:52.399

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I think the other thing I would say is, it's a little bit about the point that we've both made about knowing your audience. So if you know that you have somebody upward in your management line that is going to do that wordsmithing move things around. Then I think you've got to look at your stakeholder management in other respects, because if they're not the subject matter expert, then I think that's probably a sign that you're not managing your senior stakeholders effectively.

200

00:45:54.300 --> 00:46:18.609

Ula Rutkowska: Super helpful. Thank you for that answer. And I actually think that this next question and it's come from Connor is a bit of a follow up to what you just said, Paulo. So Connor says. I made a bit of a jokey comment in the chat about this earlier. But how do you prepare yourself mentally and practically, for the somewhat repetitive task of having to rewrite and summarize all your content for different audiences.

201

00:46:18.670 --> 00:46:31.100

Ula Rutkowska: and it has a sort of addendum, which is, it feels as though you're repeating yourself again and again, and you start to lose the motivation because you're repeating yourself again and again. So how do you? How do you manage that kind of you know

202

00:46:31.550 --> 00:46:34.029

Ula Rutkowska: context switching and the repetitiveness of that.

203

00:46:34.030 --> 00:47:00.090

Paolo Zinatelli: Yeah, it's a good question. So like I mentioned earlier, I worked in government marketing for a long time as a copywriter for many years, and so we would always, I would always have to start with like, what is the key message I would write like I would always start with the longest piece of writing. So whether that would be like my my television script or my radio script, and that would be the longest part. And then, once all of that kind of got approved, and it went through all of the all the way up, and everybody signed off.

204

00:47:00.090 --> 00:47:26.639

Paolo Zinatelli: Then it had to be broken up into like, okay, now, it needs to become a shareable piece on social media. So an Instagram ad, or it needs to become, you know, shorter bits, and it's the same message now being pulled out and repeated. And so you're using the same keywords and key phrases. So what I always did was always start with the longest one. Get all that settled. Make sure I was happy with that, but as I was writing it, I always knew that eventually I would have to.

205

00:47:27.160 --> 00:47:42.749

Paolo Zinatelli: It would have to like be burst into all other formats some longer, some shorter, mostly shorter, and so I would start like highlighting. These are some of the things, some of the key phrases that are going to be pulled out eventually. And just sort of it is a bit

206

00:47:43.000 --> 00:48:00.739

Paolo Zinatelli: like you said. It's a bit repetitive, but if it's part of the work, right? So so it's just like preparing yourself and getting that set up in advance templates really helped a lot. We had templates that we would use. So it's like, start here and then just start filling in the templates. And yes, it's a bit of a repetitive task, but

207

00:48:00.740 --> 00:48:13.949

Paolo Zinatelli: you know that as you're filling the template in with the with the content that it's good work because it's you've you've done the legwork of getting the longer part of it done, the and all the approvals done, and now it's just sort of

208

00:48:14.080 --> 00:48:23.970

Paolo Zinatelli: filling it in and and spreading it out as it needs to be done. But but like you said, Yeah, it is a bit repetitive. It's just getting yourself into the so using things that help templates really helped a lot.

209

00:48:26.050 --> 00:48:51.710

Ula Rutkowska: Super helpful. Thank you, Paolo. At least, I'm going to ask you this next question. It is from Victoria. And I actually really quite like this question. So Victoria says, I understand the place of preciseness in writing, but I have been told to tell more stories in my briefings. What is the limit of preciseness or being too detailed. And do you have any advice on navigating precision and storytelling?

210

00:48:53.310 --> 00:48:57.869

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: Oh, another amazing question. Thank you, Victoria.

211

00:48:58.070 --> 00:49:16.660

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So one of the things that I certainly have learned is that and I've got a number of people in my current team who are highly detail orientated experts in their field and definitely favor the high precision, high content.

212

00:49:17.390 --> 00:49:29.460

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And it comes back to who are you communicating with, and why so rarely is anything we write an exercise in communicating everything we know in that subject.

213

00:49:29.900 --> 00:49:33.520

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So the 1st thing we've got to do is edit.

214

00:49:33.740 --> 00:49:49.700

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: People don't need to know everything in order to deliver that decision, enact that call to action. So, reminding ourselves what it is, we're asking people to do as a result of receiving that communication will help pare back

215

00:49:50.010 --> 00:49:56.959

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: any erroneous content. Content that is accurate, but not necessarily strictly necessary.

216

00:49:57.280 --> 00:50:19.679

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I think the storytelling, however, works beautifully in certain settings. So we have a program board where we share a lot of complex information. And one of the things that we decided to do was to use an employee's journey. So rather than give them a very precise and technical

217

00:50:19.880 --> 00:50:26.379

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: explanation of what equal pay auditing, and job evaluation looks like

218

00:50:26.750 --> 00:50:46.599

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: we actually explained it all from an employee. So we told the story of an employee going through the journey that wouldn't work for every audience. So I think, Victoria, you have to understand what the expectations of your audience are, and I would say, Try it, test it, get a practice audience.

219

00:50:46.600 --> 00:51:10.399

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: maybe have the 2 versions, one that has a narrative arc in it, something that says, where you introduce it, you build your story, and then you land on your call to action at the end, and something that is perhaps a little bit more forensically structured and test that out actually. And I think through that you'll get the right balance of doing it. But it's

220

00:51:10.850 --> 00:51:15.470

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: it's not an easy thing to do, and not everybody loves

221

00:51:15.940 --> 00:51:26.879

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: high storytelling narrative, especially in official documentation. So getting that balance right. But I would use your peers is the other thing that I would recommend.

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00:51:28.580 --> 00:51:38.679

Ula Rutkowska: Thank you. So we've already heard quite a few of Elisa's thoughts on how AI can be used in government writing.

223

00:51:38.800 --> 00:51:51.020

Ula Rutkowska: And actually, Paulo, I wanted to hear your thoughts on it. So there's a question from Angelina. AI is being used more and more in writing. How do you see this tool affecting government comms and marketing.

224

00:51:51.460 --> 00:51:57.196

Paolo Zinatelli: Yeah, it's a good question. It's, in fact, a question that we're having on my team right now. Thanks, Angelina.

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00:51:57.620 --> 00:52:20.999

Paolo Zinatelli: we've been in discussions about like, How is AI to be used with within government communications and so forth. And at least you said, you're using copilot right? You're using doing a pilot on copilot copilot for us in the Ontario public service is the only authorized AI tool that we can use. So there were others, but we cannot use them anymore. So we're focusing solely on copilot.

226

00:52:21.130 --> 00:52:23.009

Paolo Zinatelli: And so yes.

227

00:52:23.160 --> 00:52:38.189

Paolo Zinatelli: people use it. It's about like it's about entering. The correct prompts, the the please, and the thank yous, which is a funny thing, but it really does help get you better responses. But also one of the things that came up in discussion last week, actually, among my own team was.

228

00:52:38.460 --> 00:52:49.120

Paolo Zinatelli: you don't? Don't feel pressured to use AI like everyone is, you know, it's there. Everyone talks about it. AI tools. How is it going to affect if you don't want to use it? Don't use it.

229

00:52:49.120 --> 00:53:10.759

Paolo Zinatelli: If you are literally, if you are comfortable, just writing things down and brainstorming with your team and collaborating with others, and that works for you. Great. But I think what the thing to remember about AI is that it's a tool, and you, like. One of my colleagues says, you know copilot is called copilot, because you are the pilot.

230

00:53:10.770 --> 00:53:25.710

Paolo Zinatelli: right? So you like. It's it's helping you. It is not in charge. You don't follow it, it follows you. So, using it as a tool, of course, as Elise, as you said, like double check it, triple, check it, quadruple check. What comes out of it because

231

00:53:25.710 --> 00:53:47.059

Paolo Zinatelli: may not be correct. So it is a tool that we can use to help, for, like plain language for summaries, for for 1st drafts really really useful. But I don't think it should be like a crutch that we lean on. It is just one tool in the many arsenal tools that we have that we can use and like, I said, if you're not comfortable with it. Don't use it

232

00:53:47.060 --> 00:53:57.989

Paolo Zinatelli: if you don't want to use it, you don't have to. So there's other things that you can do just because everybody's on the AI bandwagon. You don't have to follow suit if you're not comfortable with it. So just keeping that in mind as well.

233

00:54:00.120 --> 00:54:17.929

Ula Rutkowska: Thank you, Paolo. I actually always use AI for second drafts, but not for 1st drafts. Because and I'll share why, and I'm going to chime in as the moderator here I'll share. Why? Because I actually think that the 1st draft is my ideas, and then AI will tell me

234

00:54:17.990 --> 00:54:41.569

Ula Rutkowska: what's up, and what's good about my ideas? What's bad? Provide feedback, and then I'll make it to a 3rd draft a bit quicker, because you don't have that moment where you're second guessing your writing. But I like to retain my own original thinking, and really make sure that what comes that? What is on the page in that original moment is my idea, and is the unique thing that my brain can come up with. But then AI is great at telling me whether or not it was silly, or if someone else thought of it.

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00:54:42.405 --> 00:55:09.179

Ula Rutkowska: Which is so, that's my tiny chiming in Elise. This next question. I am going to pose at you, and we actually are almost at time. So this I'm hoping to squeeze in one for each of you still. So let's see from Suzanne Elise, you highlighted opportunities to reimagine outputs for writing what are some innovations or thoughts on this interactive documents, wikis etc.

236

00:55:11.100 --> 00:55:11.810

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: So

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00:55:12.310 --> 00:55:18.570

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: one of the things that I think that we in government, because we've generally got lots to do.

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00:55:18.700 --> 00:55:21.650

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: We tend to approach our outputs as one and done.

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00:55:22.190 --> 00:55:30.180

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: And if you are inclined to let's use any government constitution which is generally a bit of a tombstone.

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00:55:30.970 --> 00:55:41.030

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: We've got a youth. Parliament, for example, could we ask them to work with the Constitution and come up with

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00:55:41.400 --> 00:55:58.950

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: a version that is suitable for those that are taking part in Youth council, and our young residents who are interested in the ways of working of local government without them having to read maybe 50 pages of Localism act and all sorts of other fun things.

242

00:55:59.030 --> 00:56:12.059

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: I think only having one version of things is a mistake, and it's something that it's an opportunity that we miss, we will always need some big longhand documents. That's the nature of government and bureaucracy.

243

00:56:12.060 --> 00:56:32.970

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: But actually, I think, providing easy read versions. We have as an employer. We have a code of conduct, and one of the things that one of my team has done is work with some working age. Adults with learning, difficulties to create a code of conduct which is a 40 page document with lots of Do's and don'ts.

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00:56:33.250 --> 00:56:38.599

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: and create a 5 page picture orientated version.

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00:56:38.620 --> 00:56:58.459

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: which means that people with low literacy people where English isn't the 1st language, and people with support needs will be able to access information in a way that's accessible for them. So I think if you're trying to do something different, working with the target audience is really important.

246

00:56:58.460 --> 00:57:23.370

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: there's all sorts of digital options there. And that's not really my area of expertise. But in local government we do lots of co-production, and I think we're missing an opportunity to link our recipients of our writing with how they receive that. And it might be, you know, so much that we read now is in 250 characters, or you get the minute count of how long it'll take you to read

247

00:57:23.370 --> 00:57:33.339

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: that article, and I think we are still communicating in longhand. Most people need to read something, or hear something 7 times

248

00:57:33.340 --> 00:57:55.929

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: to know it and understand it. So if we just do things once and done, then we're probably, you know, it's a pretty low bar, I think, but I think I'd be interested in other people's ideas, because there's almost untold opportunity if we just decide to switch our mindset to say.

249

00:57:56.050 --> 00:57:57.380

Elyse Senior-Wadsworth: let's do something different.

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00:57:58.760 --> 00:58:23.109

Ula Rutkowska: All right. Thank you, Elise. I'm afraid we only have 1 min left. But, Paolo, there was a question that I really wanted to direct at you, and maybe you can answer it in the chat, which was basically someone has asked you talked about adjectives. What about adverbs like, nevertheless? And however, how should one approach them in government writing? So I'll let you maybe type something in quickly in the chat if you can, while I keep us moving towards the end of this.

251

00:58:23.110 --> 00:58:45.849

Ula Rutkowska: Thank you both. What incredible wisdom from both of you! I just want to ask everyone here to join me in giving Elise and Paulo a virtual round of applause, and also thank you to all of you, the attendees today for investing in learning and being so engaged in the topic.

I mean this amount of hearts and applause, and everything is just actually quite overwhelming. Thank you so much. Both.

252

00:58:45.850 --> 00:59:09.130

Ula Rutkowska: The team is going to pull up a quick poll to find out how you felt about today, which will help us continue improving our content. And we really appreciate your responses. So please let us know, on a scale of one to 10 rank your agreement with the following statement. The event was a valuable use of my time. Whilst you are responding. I want to reiterate that this isn't the end, but the beginning of a conversation.

253

00:59:09.130 --> 00:59:37.610

Ula Rutkowska: We'll keep sharing ideas and challenges and questions in the writing effectively in government community as a special thank you. To everyone who attended today we are delighted to be able to give you all access to a bonus bit of content that we have created, called the 6 best writing tips apolitical members have ever received. We have spent some time fielding advice from your peers in the global public service, who have kindly shared some fantastic rules, resources, and tools that you can use to improve the standard of your writing.

254

00:59:37.610 --> 00:59:58.970

Ula Rutkowska: to claim your link to this curated resource. Go to the writing community and leave a comment on the post pinned at the top of the page. We'll send you the link in a few days. All right, that is all that we have time for today. We hope you found it helpful. And we want to say a huge thank you once again to everyone who's made today happen. And to you for taking time out of your busy days.

255

00:59:59.170 --> 01:00:09.809

Ula Rutkowska: Keep an eye out for the email coming your way with today's recording and resources, and we hope to see you at another apolitical event very soon. Have a great day. Goodbye.