



Technical Writing

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July 2011

Should I Call, or Should I Write?

Email Tips

“I didn’t say you had an attitude problem.”

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August 3, 1978

To: B.A. Karrasch, Manager, Plant Integration

From: D.F. Hallman, Manager, Plant Performance Services Sec. 1149

Subject: Operator Interruption of High-Pressure Injection

References 1 and 2 (attached) recommend a change in Babcock & Wilcox's philosophy of HPI system use during low-pressure transients. Basically, they recommend leaving the HPI pumps on, once HPI has been indicated, until it can be determined that the hot leg temperature is more than 50 degrees below T for the reactor cooling system (RCS) pressure. Nuclear Service believes this mode can cause the RCS (including the pressurizer) to be solid. The pressurizer reliefs will lift, with a water surge through the discharge piping into the quench tank.

We believe the following incidents should be evaluated:

1. If the pressurizer goes solid with one or more HPI pumps continuing to operate, would there be a pressure spike before the reliefs open which could cause damage to the RCS?
2. What damage would the water surge through the relief valve discharge piping and quench tank cause?

To date, Nuclear Service has not notified our operating plants to change HPI policy consistent with References 1 and 2 because of our above-stated questions. Yet the references suggest the possibility of uncovering the core if present HPI policy is continued. We request that Integration resolve the issue of how the HPI system should be used. We are available to help as needed.

D.F. Hallman



August 3, 1978

To: B.A. Karrasch, Manager, Plant Integration

From: D.F. Hallman, Manager, Plant Performance Services Sec. 1149

Subject: **Recommendation to Resolve Present HPI (High-Pressure Injection) Policy and Prevent Possibility of Uncovering the Core**

Uncovering the core is a possibility if present policy is continued. I will call you on August 7 to discuss strategies and resolution. Let's discuss the following:

Change HPI Policy

During low-pressure transients, leave the HPI pumps on, once HPI has been indicated, until hot leg temperature is more than 50 degrees below the saturation temperature for the RCS pressure.

Retain Existing Policy

Nuclear Service believes the proposed change could cause the RCS (including the pressurizer) to be solid, causing the pressurizer reliefs to lift and sending a water surge through the discharge piping into the quench tank.

Evaluation scenarios

1. If the pressurizer goes solid with one or more HPI pumps continuing to operate, would a pressure spike occur before the reliefs open?
2. What damage would the water surge through the relief valve cause?

Uncovering the core is a possibility until we resolve this issue. I look forward to speaking to you on August 7.

D.F. Hallman 703-770-1212

Organizational Principles

- Use an effective Title or Subject Line

- Use setups sparingly
- State purpose at beginning
- State deadlines at beginning

- **Preview and Prioritize**

- Use informative headings to highlight your main points
- Use complete, concise, and relevant details and explanations

- Conclude with purpose and deadline
- Provide contact information

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D.F. Hallman 703-770-1212

Plan Your Document

Email Tips

- Use a clear subject heading
- Minimize introductions, explanations, and preliminaries
- Get right to the point
- Be concise, use simple sentences
- Respond to clients within 1 business day (usually 24 hours)
- Don't allow email to interrupt important tasks
- Avoid casual tone
- Don't summarize

Plan Your Document

- File Name – Something that distinguishes it from your other documents
- Today's Date and Due Date – not necessarily the day you need to finish writing
- Purpose – What do you seek to accomplish and make the reader DO, KNOW, and FEEL
- Resources – Who can help? Has someone done something similar?
- Readers – List them all: Tax Partner, Audit Partner, Client CFO, Board of Directors, Unintended Audiences

Design Your Document

Jeff –

As you know, during the recent review of the WIPs for July 15, it was noted that the excess WIP for Client XYZ located in Arlington, VA indicates that the preparation of the tax return and the various state filings is significantly overbudget. The client provided the completed Tax Information Request less than a week before the deadline, necessitating the use of a senior to prepare the return. Client questions outside the scope of the preparation of the return added significant time at the senior and manager level, and then of course you traveled to the client location to attend the Board of Directors meeting which added mileage and parking as well as several hours at your billing rate. Please let me know as soon as possible whether you want to write off this additional time or whether you think some or all of it can be included in the next invoice which

Design Your Document

Jeff –

Excess WIP in XYZ Client can be traced to:

- Late PBC submission by the client, use of senior to prepare returns
- Out of scope consulting
- Partner attendance at Board meeting

Should we extra-bill for these items?

Design Your Document

- Subject Line – use a signal word and specific do/ know verbs.
- Purpose and deadline - use setups sparingly.
- Preview key points – highlights, benefits, risks
- Details – Create informative headings, include relevant information, clear and concise
- Review – restate the purpose and deadline, provide contact information

Signal Words

- Recommendation for...
- Request for...
- Warning about...
- Directions for...
- Proposal to...
- Invitation to...
- Agenda for...
- Procedures for...
- Options for...



Subject Lines

- MORTGAGE RATES HIT ALL TIME LOW!
- CHEAP PRESCRIPTION LIPITOR FROM CANADA
- GET 500 BUSINESS CARDS FOR \$1.99
- ITS WENDY! CHECK OUT MY NEW WEBCAM!

Subject Lines

SUBJECT: Form 1120

I have enclosed a draft of your tax return which is due next week. Please review the document carefully and provide me with any comments and questions as soon as possible so that we may deliver the signed return to you.

Subject Lines

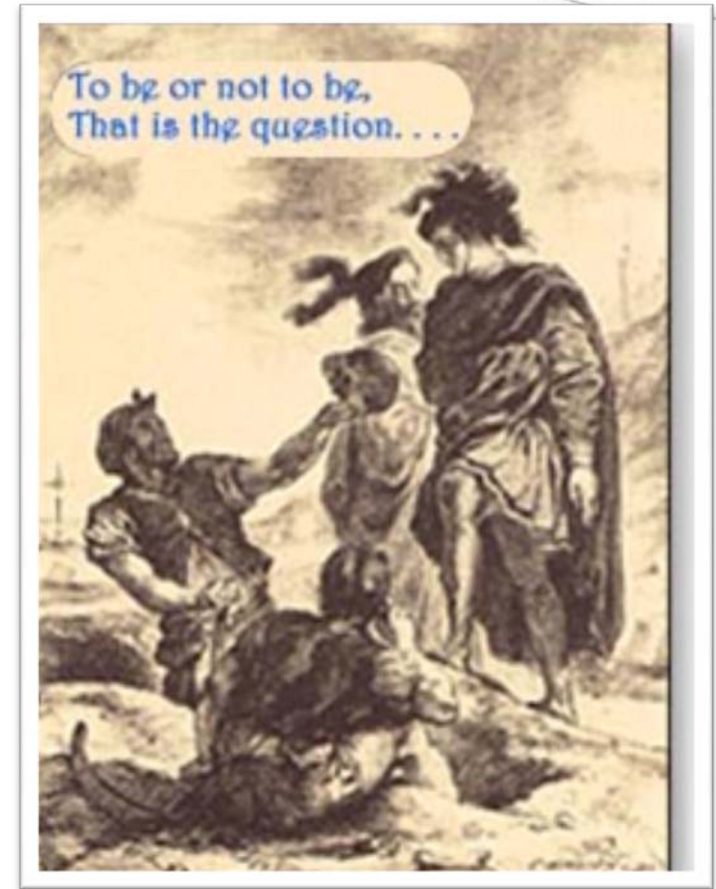
SUBJECT: Copy Machine

We need to get a new copier. For the past six months, our machine has broken down about twice a week. Repair costs and productivity losses are substantial.

Using Strong Verbs

Rewrite these sentences using strong verbs

- I am in agreement
- I am in receipt of
- She made reference to
- We made an attempt to
- Who will be the representative for
- Can you make a determination of
- We are in concurrence on
- This bears relation to
- We gave authorization for
- Provide documentation of
- We came to the realization that



Wordiness

Simplify the following:

“I imagine that you are harboring significant uncertainty concerning the precise number of times that the hammer of this particular multishot firearm was cocked, its cylinder was advanced, the hammer was then released at the rear of its travel, the round in the chamber was fired, and the cylinder was then advanced once again — and specifically whether the exact figure is six, or possibly only five. Indeed, given the ambient commotion, my preoccupation with the need to make multiple, simultaneous and consequential decisions with alacrity, the surrounding high-decibel acoustic percussion, and the substantial ramifications of the firearm having already been discharged multiple times, I myself am experiencing difficulty in quantifying the discharges with exactitude. But inasmuch as the instrument in question, having been manufactured by NASDAQ-listed Smith & Wesson (stock symbol SWHC) with a horizontal barrel dimension of 8 3/8” to propel a projectile with a diameter of nearly 1/2” at a velocity of over 1,000 feet per second and an energy of more than 1,400 joules, is arguably the most powerful firearm in the world (the uncertainty being a function of the particular metric that one might choose, such as overall terminal ballistics, external ballistics, or some combination of other factors), you should be advised that were the projectile from this instrument to strike you in the region between the apex of the cranium and the base of the lower mandible, it would completely sever this entire portion of your anatomy, and in addition transport it a considerable distance from its original location. As a result, it is appropriate that you pursue a specific and directed line of inquiry and self-examination: *viz.*, in view of all the facts and circumstances, and giving due weight to the relevant risk factors, is it your considered judgment that you are more likely than not to be relatively fortunate?”

Active/Passive Voice

- Passive Voice
 - What was done by whom?
 - Hundreds of returns are printed by the tax department.
 - The Code and Regs will usually emphasize substance over form.
 - Special training must be given on book/tax and cash/accrual differences.
- Active Voice
 - Who does what?
 - The tax department prints hundreds of returns.
 - The Code and Regs usually emphasize substance over form.
 - Book/tax and cash/accrual differences require special training.

Active/Passive Voice

Rewrite these sentences using active voice

- The meeting was attended by the partners.
- The return should be signed and submitted by the due date.
- These items have been discussed with the CFO.
- I can be reached at 703-770-1212 if you need further assistance.
- The financial statements are not materially affected by these amounts.

Department of Redundancy Department

Simplify by eliminating redundant terms:

- Consensus of opinion
- A total of ten
- Absolutely essential
- Joint partnership
- Mutual cooperation
- Contributing factor
- Plan ahead
- End result
- Surprise upset
- Advance planning
- Past experience
- Close proximity



Accounting Jargon

- The Code and Regs
- Book
- GAAP
- The Financials
- 332 Reorg
- 1231 Property
- Chapter 11
- Consideration
- Goodwill
- Capital
- Depreciation

Pompous Abstract Gobbledygook

Benjamin Franklin's Supporters:

- It cannot be adhered to with any reasonable degree of intellectual or moral certainty that the inalienable right man possesses to exercise his political preferences by employing his vote in referendums is rooted in anything other than man's own nature, and is, therefore, properly called a natural right. To hold, for instance, that this natural right can be limited externally by making its exercise dependent on a prior condition of ownership of property, is to wrongly suppose that man's natural right to vote is somehow more inherent in and more dependent on the property of man than it is on the nature of man. It is obvious that such belief is unreasonable, for it reverses the order of rights intended by nature.
- Benjamin Franklin
- I own a jackass, so I can vote.
The jackass dies, so I can't vote anymore.
Therefore the vote represents not me, but the jackass.

Pompous Abstract Gobbledygook

Substitute simpler words for this bureaucratese:

- Commence
- Utilize
- Perspective
- Ramification
- Terminate
- Fabricate
- Transmit
- Accordingly
- Adhere
- Modification

False Subjects

Rewrite to eliminate the false subject

- It is this phase that is important.
 - This phase is important
- We decided that there were some details that needed to be explained.
 - We decided to explain some details.
- It will be necessary to ask additional questions as we work through the tax return.
 - We will ask additional questions as we work through the tax return.
- There are several footnotes that we need to discuss.
 - Let's discuss several footnotes.
- It is raining.

Singular and Plural

Identify as singular or plural:

- Consortium
- Basis
- Criteria
- Data
- Crisis
- Hypotheses
- Minutiae
- Parenthesis
- Symposium
- Synopsis
- Appendix
- Memorandum
- Consortia (pl)
- Bases (pl)
- Criterion (s)
- Datum (s)
- Crises (pl)
- Hypothesis (s)
- Minutia (s)
- Parentheses (pl)
- Symposia (pl)
- Synopses (pl)
- Appendices (pl)
- Memoranda (pl)

Punctuation

- Semicolons
 - Use to link complete thoughts that could otherwise stand alone as separate sentences
 - Use to separate items in series when one or more of the items has a comma
- Hyphens
 - Two or more words that act together to create a new meaning
 - Two or more words that act together to modify another word
 - Do not use hyphenated words AFTER the verb
 - Compound numbers from 21 (twenty-one) to 99 (ninety-nine)
 - Do not use for adverbs
 - Avoid using for prefixes, unless the prefix comes before a capitalized word
 - Words that must be divided at the end of a line

Politically Incorrect

Crippled

Handicapped

African-American

Stewardess

Waitress

Chairman

Mailman

Fireman

Guys and Girls

Man and Wife



Cliches

It is what it is

It goes without saying

Agree to Disagree

**Think Outside
The Box**

To be totally honest

Going Forward

That being said

Question:

At the end of the day

With all due respect

On that note

Let me be clear

The fact of the matter is

Commonly Confused Words

- And/Or
- Adjacent/Contiguous/Coterminous
- Affect/Effect
- Ante/Anti
- Appraise/Apprise
- Assure/Insure/Ensure
- Biannually/Biennially
- Bimonthly/Semimonthly
- Capital/Capitol
- Cite/Site
- Compliment/Complement
- Councilor/Counselor



Commonly Confused Words

- Disburse/Disperse
- Emigrate/Immigrate
- Eminent/Imminent
- Extemporaneous/Impromptu
- Fewer/Less
- Imply/Infer
- In regards to/Irregardless
- Its/It's
- Principal/Principle
- That/Which
- Uninterested/Disinterested
- Who/Whom



Commonly Confused Words

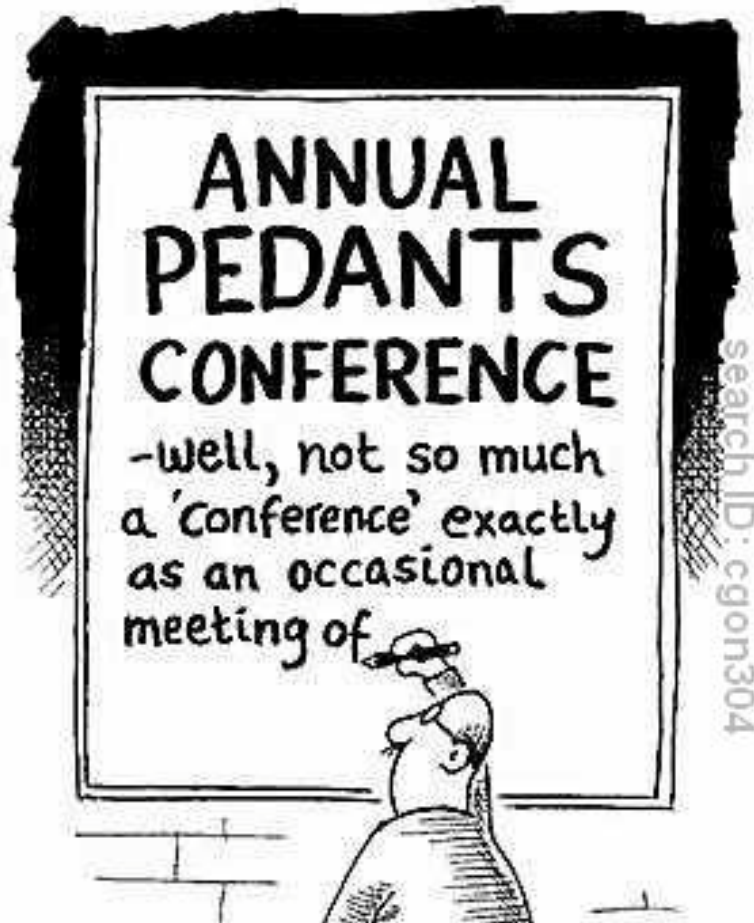
- Flaunt/Flout
- **Stationary/Stationery**
- Flak/Flack
- Pore/Pour
- Flounder/Founder



Split Infinitives

- The company's goal was to rapidly retire its mortgage to avoid the tax on debt-financed property.
- The company's goal was to retire its mortgage rapidly to avoid the tax on debt-financed property.
- To totally avoid splitting infinitives, the writer decided to eliminate all infinitives from the sentence.
- To avoid totally splitting infinitives, the writer decided to eliminate all infinitives from the sentence.

Don't be a Pedant



Revising and Editing

- Let it cool
- Do not rely on spell-check and grammar check
- Check grammar
- Check punctuation.
- Chuck smelling
- Check citations
- Be concise
 - It is fortunate that strategies for the reduction of costs were implemented by the Department of Finance at an early date. (21 words)
 - Fortunately, Finance implemented cost-reduction strategies early. (6 words)

Revising and Editing

- Business Tone
 - Polite
 - Professional
 - Informative
 - Helpful
 - Sincere
- Admonishing Tone
 - Objective
 - Impersonal
 - Assertive
 - Formal
 - Never use a tone that is condescending, blunt, discourteous, or sarcastic.



Nonprofit Organizations

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