

WRITING TIPS TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON YOUR SMALL BUSINESS

BY KATHERINE HUTT SCOTT

FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL
BEST WRITERS AND EDITORS

DECEMBER 8, 2020

BEST (WRITERS
& EDITORS)



23 years as a journalist for newspapers and wire services

9 years as a writer/editor, focusing on international issues

2 years running my own business, Best Writers and Editors



MY CREDENTIALS

COVID CONTEXT: CLEAR, CONCISE, AND COMPELLING WRITING HAS NEVER BEEN MORE IMPORTANT

- Since February, there has been a huge increase in people searching “how to get your brain to focus.”
- A neuroscience and psychology expert at Yale University says this is a response to the threat of COVID-19.
- When you are faced with immediate physical danger, your brain's prefrontal cortex shuts down to make way for the brain's more primitive parts, which can respond quickly and basically to protect you.





GOOD WRITING TIPS



- I will give you some tips about how to write in a way that will grab readers' attention and get your business noticed—even during a pandemic.
- As an example of effective writing, I will use excerpts from a document that I analyzed recently in a LinkedIn article: a layoff memo to the staff of Airbnb, written by company CEO Brian Chesky.
- A layoff memo is an unlikely example for graceful writing, but Chesky pulled it off. Here's how he did it.

1. GIVE PERSONAL DETAILS ABOUT YOURSELF

“This is my seventh time talking to you from my house.”

The layoff memo to Airbnb staff about layoffs—which were in response to the COVID pandemic—opens with some good personal details about Chesky’s life during COVID.





2. GO STRAIGHT TO THE POINT

“Today, I must confirm that we are reducing the size of the Airbnb workforce. For a company like us whose mission is centered around belonging, this is incredibly difficult to confront, and it will be even harder for those who have to leave Airbnb.”

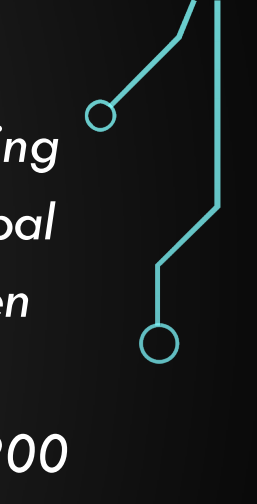
- Chesky goes straight to the point about layoffs, mentioning it up top in his memo and using plain language.
- He uses other good writing techniques: he introduces appropriate emotion, wrapped around the company’s mission statement.



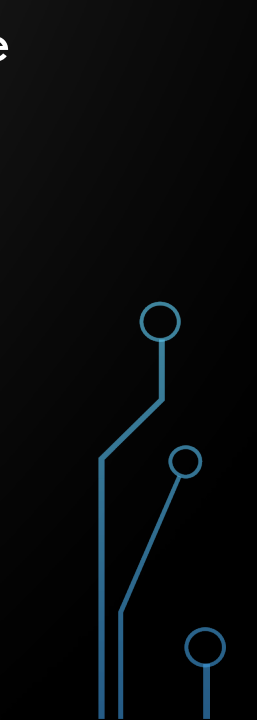
3. PROVIDE A SUCCINCT SUMMARY



4. USE UNCOMMON WORDS



“We are collectively living through the most harrowing crisis of our lifetime, and as it began to unfold, global travel came to a standstill. Airbnb’s business has been hit hard, with revenue this year forecasted to be less than half of what we earned in 2019 ... nearly 1,900 teammates will have to leave Airbnb, comprising around 25% of our company.”

- Chesky provides a succinct summary of the cause and effects of the problem that led to the staff reductions.
 - He uses uncommon words (“harrowing” and “comprise”) that accurately express what he is conveying.
- 

5. OFFER THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

“Travel in this new world will look different, and we need to evolve Airbnb accordingly. People will want options that are closer to home, safer, and more affordable. But people will also yearn for something that feels like it's been taken away from them—human connection ... This crisis has sharpened our focus to get back to our roots, back to the basics, back to what is truly special about Airbnb—everyday people who host their homes and offer experiences.”

- *The layoff memo includes early ideas about how the coronavirus would change travel.*
- *These ideas show that Chesky is well-informed and thinking about the future.*



6. SHARE INTERNAL DETAILS ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Chesky brings the reader into the process, by sharing some internal details about the management decision behind the layoffs. Some of the “guiding principles” of the decision that he lists are:

- Map all reductions to our future business strategy and the capabilities we will need.*
- Do as much as we can for those who are impacted*



7. CLOSE WITH EMOTION

“When we started Airbnb, our original tagline was, ‘Travel like a human.’ The human part was always more important than the travel part. What we are about is belonging, and at the center of belonging is love.”

Chesky’s memo closes with some heart-tugging emotion.

WRITING EXERCISE

Now that you have a few ideas to work with, let's practice them on a piece of writing that is crucial for any small business: your mission statement.

Given the disruption caused by COVID, you may want to update your statement.

Please take 10 minutes and finetune it, following at least one technique that I described.

After that, some of you will have the chance to workshop your rewrite with this group.





MISSION STATEMENT



- An organization mission statement is a concise statement that frames the organization's value proposition(s) and possibly also its culture, values, and ethics as they relate to its customers. The statement also may address the organization's culture, values, and ethics as they apply to its stakeholders, vendors, and employees.
- The statement usually is one sentence or a brief paragraph.



IN SUMMARY: GOOD WRITING TIPS

Give

Give personal details about yourself

Go

Go straight to the point

Provide

Provide a succinct summary

Use

Use uncommon words

Offer

Offer thought leadership

Share

Share internal details about your business

Close

Close with emotion





CONTACT
ME FOR
PERSONALIZED
SERVICES

Writing, including
Website Copywriting

Writing Coach
Services

Editing



BEST (WRITERS & EDITORS)

Schedule a no-obligation initial
call:

www.bestwritersandeditors.com

info@bestwritersandeditors.com