

Greetings!

School's (Almost) Out

Yes, the school year is winding down, and the field trips, permission slips, and party plans are gearing up. Our young scholars have sniffed that first tantalizing scent of summer, spelling doom for any lingering intellectual inclinations.

Unlike the kids, your business documents never take a break. In the interest of year-round education, this issue of *KB CommEntary* continues with suggestions for making your documents look consistently professional.

What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB Comm, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us fully engaged. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including a video script, a communications style guide, an employee newsletter, a technical reference document, and sales and marketing brochures and data sheets
- Writing, formatting, and performing quality control reviews of large, complex chemical residue studies intended for regulatory submission on behalf of a federally funded, cooperative research organization
- Writing supplements and formatting modules of electronic submissions to FDA for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company

KB Comm is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

Tips and Tales

Making Your Documents Look Good, Pt. 2

In the last issue of *KB CommEntary*, we presented Part 1 of a multi-issue series of tips for standardizing basic formatting elements in Microsoft Word to make your business documents appear more consistent and professional. You may recall that we discussed choosing and implementing standardized fonts and line spacing. What, you don't recall? Perhaps a review is in order. Archived issues of *KB CommEntary* are available at kbcommllc.com

This time around, we will delve into adopting standards for page size, orientation, and margins plus paragraph indentation and justification.

Page Size, Orientation, and Margins

Page size for US documents is normally 8.5 x 11 inches. Microsoft Word defaults to this page size, so you usually don't have to worry about it. However, if you work with colleagues overseas, you may receive documents from them that are formatted for other page sizes, especially A4. At a casual glance, A4 looks a lot like 8.5 x 11, but it's different enough to cause formatting issues. If you're formatting a document you received from someone else, it's a good idea to check the page size before you do anything else.

Page orientation is either Portrait (higher than wide) or Landscape (wider than high). Business documents are usually Portrait, but you might need to switch to Landscape to accommodate wide tables or graphics. Note that you can change the orientation of individual pages as required, but you must insert section breaks before and after the page in question to keep from changing the whole document to the different orientation. Section breaks can be tricky to work with; we will devote the Tips and Tricks section of a future newsletter to them.

Margins are the amount of blank space that appears around the edges of each page. Word has margin defaults for both Portrait and Landscape page orientations that work fine for many documents. We recommend margins of at least 1 inch for a Portrait-oriented document. Whichever margins you choose, apply them consistently within and among documents. Please avoid the temptation to fiddle with the margins to jam a little more text onto a page.

Paragraph Indentation

Left-justified block paragraphs are the default in Word. In other words, the left edge of paragraph text is aligned with the left margin, the right edge ends wherever the words wrap (ragged right), and the first line of each paragraph is flush left, not indented. Not coincidentally, this paragraph formatting scheme is by far the one most commonly used for business documents.

Alternatives you sometimes see include indenting the first line of each paragraph and/or making the text fully justified, so that both the left and right edges of the text align with their respective margins. Newspapers often use fully justified, indented-first-line formatting for paragraphs because it works well in the relatively narrow text columns they typically employ.

We recommend you stick with the default, left-justified block paragraphs for your business documents. The ragged right edge makes it easier to keep your place when reading the text and eliminates the wide "rivers" of white space that sometimes occur in fully justified text.

That's all the space we have for now. Next time we will discuss headers, footers, and page numbers; placement of graphics and tables; and style sheets and templates.

Ideas?

To help us make *KB CommEntary* more useful to you, feel free to suggest topics you would like to see addressed. Send your idea to kathy@kbcommllc.com and we will consider featuring it in an upcoming edition of the newsletter.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

Kathy

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