

# KB CommEntary

KB COMM • SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

Volume 6 Issue 3 • May 2014

## Greetings!

### May Warmer Weather Find You

It's hard to believe that we're almost halfway done with 2014, but the calendar's flipped to May and this long winter has finally ended. Pretty soon the kids will be out of school, the beaches full, and the grills dusted off. To welcome what's bound to be an excellent summer, we thought we'd take this newsletter to discuss everyone's favorite outlining tools: bulleted, numbered, and layered lists.

## 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 busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including communications to employees from the CEO and executive leadership team, customer presentations and letters, product marketing brochures and data sheets, and training materials
- Formatting and revising periodically reviewed manufacturing standard operating procedures and work instructions for a pharmaceutical company
- Writing manufacturing reports for a pharmaceutical company
- Drafting CMC modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of a pharmaceutical company
- Reviewing and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of a medical device manufacturing company

KB COMM LLC 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

### Feeling Listless?

We're all familiar with the bullets, numbers, and roman numerals that make layered lists possible. Presentations, outlines, and tables of contents wouldn't be the same without them. Lists are useful organizational tools and are easier to read than long sentences. While there are no hard-and-fast rules for setting up layered lists, a few best practices will help to keep yours consistent and on-point.

**1. Include at least two list items in each layer or level of a list.** It isn't a list if it doesn't have at least two list items at each level. The following example is correct because there are at least two list items at each level (we're assuming there's at least an item *II.* to follow *I.* *Project goals*):

- I. Project goals:
  - a. Attract new customers
  - b. Expand into new markets
    - i. Online
    - ii. Mobile apps
  - c. Increase efficiency

But the next example has some problems. Under *I. Our company:*, there is only one list item at the *a.* level and one item at the *i.* level. And under *II. Our culture:*, there is only one item at the *i.* level under *b. Collaborative.* If you find orphans such as these, you need to reorganize or rethink your list:

- II. Our company:
  - a. Efficient marketing
    - i. Variety of strategies
- III. Our culture:
  - a. Transparent
  - b. Collaborative
    - i. Group projects
  - c. Dynamic

**2. Numbers work best for processes and sequences.** If things must happen or be done in a certain order, use numbers to indicate each step.

How to solve a problem:

1. Empathize
2. Define
3. Ideate
4. Prototype
5. Reflect

The above list emphasizes process more clearly than:

How to solve a problem:

- Empathize
- Define
- Ideate
- Prototype
- Reflect

**3. Certain grammatical rules apply.** If a list item is a complete sentence (“The CFO will give a presentation.”), capitalize the first letter and end the sentence with proper punctuation. If the list item is *not* a complete sentence (“group discussion”), then capitalizing is optional and punctuation should generally be eschewed.

**4. Be consistent.** Different style guides have different layered list conventions—when to use roman numerals, for example, or how wide indentations should be. If you're developing your own style guide or if no guide applies to the project you're tackling, be consistent above all else. If one layered list uses bullets, make sure the next layered list does too. If you like *A./l./a./i.* better than *l./A./i./a.*, fine, but stick to whichever one you choose.

Other aspects of consistency include capitalization and sentence or phrase structure. If one list item is capitalized, they all should be capitalized. Also, phrases or sentences that comprise each list item should be structured similarly. For example, if the first list item begins with an imperative verb (do this, process that, etc.), the others should as well. This is called parallel construction and helps to make list items easier to read and comprehend.

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

Sincerely,

*Kathy*

Kathy Breuninger

**KB COMM**

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