

In this issue:

How to get teams on the same page, the end of the apostrophe, and what it means to give good email.

asterisk



Insights and smart practices from your content team

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CONFIRM YOUR SUBSCRIPTION!

Canada's Anti-spam Law is in effect. If you haven't had the chance yet to give your express consent to continue receiving asterisk*, you can do so by clicking [here](#).

feature*



STICK TO THE SCRIPT

It's a common challenge for organizations of all sizes: getting people talking the same talk, delivering key messages consistently. Branding takes care of some of this, though usually at a high level. But the branding process is often a time-consuming exercise -- and meanwhile there's still business to get done.

That's where a focused, practical messaging script can be a huge benefit.

Messaging scripts give readymade language and consistent direction for communicating what an organization does and how it stands out from competitors.

Usually these scripts include mission and vision statements, a value proposition, key messages,

differentiators and even sometimes notes on corporate voice ("how we talk").

Say your company makes whiteboard markers: a script can give your marketers and salespeople messages to use in promotional emails, PowerPoints, etc., about why your markers are exceptional. And it can provide sets of messages for different audiences or customer segments -- e.g., teachers (fun scents!) or executives (last longer!).

Unlike full-on branding, a messaging script can usually be developed through a single facilitated discussion with strategic leaders and key stakeholders. It's a lean exercise that delivers a tool with broad application.

If your organization could benefit from a go-to messaging script but you're unsure where to start, email dale@ascribeinc.ca.

punc'd*

IS THE APOSTROPHE ON THE BRINK OF EXTINCTION?

PUNC'D tells the hidden stories of punctuation marks and how they make writing clearer and more powerful.

The apostrophe is such a debated punctuation mark that experts can't even agree on its origin. Was it first used in Italian scholar Pietro Bembo's 1496 "De Aetna" or did French engraver Geoffrey Tory invent it in 1529? Whatever the case, its use and popularity have changed continuously over time.

At its height, the apostrophe littered the language in words like th'art (short for thou art) and 'zbud (short for God's Blood). Today it's generally reserved to substitute for missing letters, mark the possessive case or signify the plural of acronyms, numbers or letters. And even that is changing. Social media posters limited by 140-character counts are dropping the apostrophe to save space, while brands like Starbucks, Tim Hortons and Shoppers Drug Mart have foregone grammatical correctness for the sake of simplification.

So is the apostrophe headed the way of the pilcrow, virgule and interrobang? There's no way to know for sure, but judging by the public outcry around a recent decision in Cambridge, England to ban apostrophes on street signs, it looks like this piece of punctuation may be stickin' around for a while yet.

content matters*

FOLK 'N' FASHION FOR HOPEWELL

Ascribe is proud to be a supporter of the Hopewell Eating Disorder Support Centre's Folk 'n' Fashion fundraiser at Shenkman Arts Centre on November 23rd. The event will feature a performance by Canadian singer-songwriter Lynn Miles and a fashion show by Wear Your Label -- a Canadian brand tackling the stigma associated with mental illness. You can purchase tickets through the [Shenkman Arts Centre](#).



TFO CANADA LAUNCHES ARTISAN HUB

This fall, Canada's Trade Facilitation Office (TFO) is bringing more than 250 distinctive fabrics and garments from artisans in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to exhibition shows in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Ascribe is proud to have helped write the associated website for this "Artisan Hub", where you can see spectacular, traditional wares created by talented international artisans and learn more about the project: www.artisanhub.ca.



shout-out*

EMMA AND THE WRITERS



Ever wonder how your project goes from initial request to a full-fledged piece of content in your inbox? We aim to make it seem effortless, but in truth it's the result of a lot of hard work and smart process orchestrated by our ever-watchful Production Manager, Emma Deobald.

Emma applies Ascribe's well-honed decisionmaking principles to schedule production resources, adapting to dynamic conditions in real time. That kind of agility demands tight, constant communication with the writing team and Ascribe's project managers to keep planning up to date and properly prioritized.

While on-time, on-target delivery is its own reward, every writer on the team is quick to admit that earning a sticker from Emma for work well done is a highly sought-after perk.

pop*

CANADA'S UNOFFICIAL POET LAUREATE TURNS MULTIMEDIA STORYTELLER



Gord Downie has been telling stories of Canada for more than 30 years. Following The Tragically Hip's farewell tour this summer, he decided there's one more story Canadians need to hear: that of 12-year-old Chanie Wenjack, who died from exposure after running away from a residential school in 1966.

Like many storytellers today, Downie and his collaborators are using a whole range of media to tell their tale. Downie adapted his collection of poems about Chanie Wenjack into an album called *Secret Path* in 2013, then worked with artist Jeff Lemire on a graphic novel that has since been made

into an animated film slated to premiere on CBC on October 23rd.

Stretching a story across multiple media allows it to take on greater depth and dimension. This isn't just true in the arts but also in marketing, where organizations are rolling out their messages on the web, in video, print or digital book formats and live events.

Given the draw of Downie's last live event -- the final Tragically Hip concert, watched by 11 million Canadians -- *Secret Path* in all its incarnations has the potential to significantly raise awareness of the tragedy of residential schools for all Canadians.

practice point*

HOW TO GIVE GOOD EMAIL (AND GET IT, TOO)

Most of us have received an email at some point that made us pause with puzzlement or hurl cursewords at our screens because the tone struck us as brusque, insensitive or condescending. And it's a safe bet other people have felt the same way about emails we've sent.

Email is like any other form of writing: certain principles apply to make it effective. Here are a few email tips -- for sending *and* receiving:

Getting:

- **Don't read into things.** The tone you perceive may not be what the sender intended, especially if they're not a trained writer, are communicating quickly, or English isn't their first language.
- **Know your sender.** Some people are detail junkies who just have to transmit all the facts. Others can't help but share their streams of consciousness. Accept that's who they are and try not to react if their mode of communication doesn't quite fit your own.

Giving:

- **Be professional *and* friendly.** Remember, there's a real person on the other end. With every send, you're not just offloading information, you're building relationships.

- **Remember your recipients are busy, too.** Odds are their heads are wrapped up in other things, so giving context can be useful. At the same time, don't overload with extraneous detail or leave in reams of message-chain quote levels that would put a Russian nesting doll to shame.

moments in storytelling*

1583

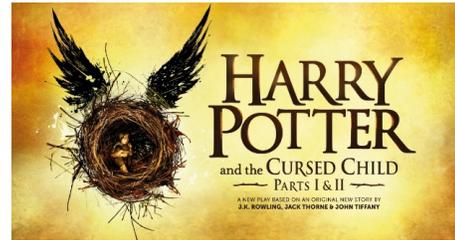
Cambridge University Press receives Letters Patent to operate from Henry VIII, making it (today) the oldest printing and publishing house in the world.

1949

Spanish teacher and inventor Ángela Ruiz Robles patents the first prototypical electronic reader, the Mechanical Encyclopedia, so her students won't have to lug so many heavy books to school.

2016

The magical draw of Harry Potter causes 175,000 *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* tickets to vanish in just eight hours -- and makes Scholastic sales jump by 48% with the publication of the companion script book.



Questions? Suggestions? Send us an [email](#). To find out more about us, visit www.ascribeinc.ca

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