Are you telling them what they already know?

Are you wasting precious time in ads, direct mail, and brochures telling prospects what they already know? **Instead, tell them what matters.** Talk about benefits, not features. Don't say your product uses a three-handled veeblefetzer unless you can explain what that will do for them. "The three-handled veeblefetzer lets you core twice as many radishes in the same time." Benefits are meaningful.

Tell them how it works. "The three-handled veeblefetzer cradles the radish, allowing the blades to operate faster with greater accuracy, and reducing waste caused by improper coring."

Tell them that it works. Give them examples of how your veeblefetzer helped other companies, so they can see what it could do for them.

Tell them how to learn more. Make it easy for them to find more information, whether it's in brochures, white papers, or your website.

Most of all, tell them what to do. After all, if you don't tell them to do something, they'll do nothing. That wastes time for both of you.

Want to be loud and clear? Write for the ear

People accustomed to writing for the eye often don't realize that writing for the ear demands an entirely different approach.

By remembering and using a few simple guidelines, you'll make on-hold messages, sales presentations, and other spoken communication significantly more compelling and effective:

- Write with a single listener in mind to make copy more personal.
- Don't sweat grammar. Conversational copy is easier to understand.
- Stick to short words. They're more well-known and communicative.
- Use short sentences, because the listener can't go back to re-hear the first part of a sentence.
- Since listeners can't see numbers, keep them simple.
- Suppress sibilance's pesky hiss by shunning "s" and "sh" sounds.
- Read it aloud. If you stumble or gasp for breath, rewrite it.

See work we've done for others at sfwriting.com