



Turning complex information into impactful research reports at CFE

Sector

Public sector and government

Area of training

Report writing

Delivery

In-person training and one-to-one follow-up coaching

Delegates

45

The challenge

To set the team's reports apart by abandoning a passive style and expressing complex issues in a straightforward, impactful and engaging way.

The solution

Bespoke in-person training courses and follow-up one-to-one coaching, plus help in developing a house style.

The results

A consistent style and a more confident team writing accessible reports that bolster CFE's reputation and set them apart from competitors.

Non-profit research organisation CFE reports on social and economic policy in the UK, acting as a link between policy-makers and those the policy affects.

The complex issues CFE works with demand first-class communication skills. 'We deal with subjects that can be a little dry, so we need to capture the imagination and attention of the reader,' says James Kewin, Joint Managing Director.

The need for compelling reports

The company's high-achieving graduate staff tended to write in an academic style that relied heavily on the passive voice. The reports were too long and didn't have a clear message – which meant senior managers spent too much time editing them.

'Research is an unforgiving area. You can have the best research that asks all the right questions and feel that the work is fantastic, but if your reports don't work, then it's all been for nothing,' explains James.

Honing reader focus

Emphasis designed a report-writing course to help all 45 members of staff develop a lucid style.

It presented tools for achieving reader-focused, impactful writing, including effective structure and using the active voice. One-to-one coaching sessions ensured the teams applied their new knowledge and the trainer helped CFE develop a house style.

'One thing that sets us apart from our competitors is that now we articulate complex issues in a straightforward way.'

James Kewin, Joint Managing Director, CFE



A consistent way of doing things

CFE now has a consistent voice. The coaching showed that the quality of reports had improved and – crucially – that staff now feel confident they are writing effectively. By taking a consultative approach rather than prescribing hard-and-fast rules, the training helped CFE settle on their own style. ‘The course ... wasn’t prescriptive,’ says James. ‘But everyone is now aware of what we regard as the right way to write and the right way to do things.’

It’s helped managers too, as they can pinpoint what’s right or wrong with a report. ‘If a head of team receives a report that’s not of the required quality, they say, “Go back and do this the Emphasis way,” which has now become the CFE way,’ says James.

Ahead of the competition

Having good writing skills has put CFE head and shoulders above other research companies.

‘One thing that sets us apart from our competitors is that we articulate complex issues in a straightforward way. Instead of using an academic style, our reports are accessible,’ says James.

Indeed, the improvement in writing has become integral to the whole research process. ‘If you get into a pickle with a research project, a good report can help to pull things out of the fire,’ explains James. ‘We would be nowhere if we didn’t have high-quality written output, because our reputation is based on quality.’

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