

- ▶ “I wrote that to prove a point” becomes “I wrote the grammar lesson to prove a point.”
- ▶ “Sally gave me this to say thanks” becomes “Sally gave me the present to say thanks.”
- ▶ “The Millers need these for the vacation” becomes “The Millers need the house keys for the vacation.”
- ▶ “John handed me those to be helpful” becomes “John handed me the hammer and nails to be helpful.”

3. Check your edits for clarity and comprehension.

4. Voila! You made your edits like a pro.

Here are more pronouns to look for and remove if the pronouns make your writing too vague:

I	they
you	who
he	them
she	me
it	him
we	her
you	us

## My Journey: Part 1

### That time I decided to start a personal blog

I believe a successful career is the combination of thousands and thousands of small decisions that add up over time.

But every now and then, a single decision becomes one of the biggest moments of your life.

For me, the pivotal moment was when I started a personal blog.

At the time (July 2012), I wanted a place to stoke my passion (writing), share advice with my peers and, frankly, fill time in the day. I worked from home and had a pretty quiet lunch break.

To learn how to begin, I asked to meet with a blogger friend (template on page 71).

I called my blog News To Live By, and with each column I highlighted the career advice “hidden” in the headlines. What can the news teach us — good or bad — so we can be better at our jobs and in life?

I opened up a new blog post screen in Wordpress, began to type and from that day my career was never the same.

Over the past five years (I’m writing you now in 2017), the blog has been the catalyst for every important career decision. It helped to define my purpose (teach business communication skills), write books, hone my speaking/presentation style, build online courses and develop a business model that’s uniquely mine.

Today, I have a more robust website (RubinEducation.com), and my blog (now called THE TEMPLATE) is one piece of the pie. But the journey began as a simple, personal website for about \$135 in year one.

My website is my home base, my foundation, my sacred space on the internet. I have poured my heart into that custom URL, and it’s given me so much in return.

If you’re searching for your purpose and how to “make your mark,” my advice is simple.

Start a blog. Share what you love. Let the audience tell you what it values most. Then **refine refine refine** your approach until you deliver the greatest value possible to someone else’s life.

Yes, the journey of a million little steps starts with a single action.

Little did I know my first step would lead to a life-changing project: my book.

## **My Journey: Part 2**

### **That time I checked my website traffic and it led to a book idea**

I wasn't looking to write a book. The thought never crossed my mind, really.

In the early days with my blog, my idea was to create a news column that offered career advice based on the actions of people in the headlines. I called it News To Live By.

Then, about 18 months into my blogging journey, I noticed an interesting trend in my site traffic (thank you, Google Analytics).

And I knew, from that moment on, I needed to be an author.

What happened?

I wrote a blog post in November 2013 called "Five Ready-to-Use Templates for Tricky Job Situations." I thought a series of email guides was a cool idea and useful reference.

I published the post, put the content on Facebook, Twitter yadda yadda and moved on to the next piece.

Six weeks later I poked around Google Analytics, and I noticed something interesting.

The "Templates" blog post had about 300 views a day — every day. Most of my other posts (career advice based on the news) had little web traffic so I didn't understand the spike in the "Template" one.

Then it dawned on me. People had been searching the web for help with job-related templates and started to find my post.

I thought, "Wait a second. Maybe writing step-by-step guides has traction."

From that day forward, I decided to pivot and devote my blogging to practical writing guides. I wrote over 75 posts on resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn, networking and job interviews.

Over another 18-month period, I had built up a solid base of content and the web traffic grew along with it (over one million views to my content). All organic traffic, no ads.

That's when I knew I had a book idea on my hands.

The book, *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?*, helped to establish me as a go-to expert on business communication skills. I made a name for myself within several career service-related organizations (see page 32 about joining associations) and began to develop an audience around my niche topic (see page 178 about e-newsletter copy strategies).

I believe my “big” idea (book on writing guides) materialized because I was (and still am) 100% committed to my craft. I pursued my 10,000 hours and in turn was shown my “a-ha” moment.

If you want to “change the game” in your industry, work on your own skills — in obscurity — for **at least** three years (and maybe more).

When you step back into the light with your innovative idea, the world will be ready. It always is.

In the next part of “My Journey,” the book begins to take shape.

You can overcome the barrier — and make the exchange less awkward — through a simple solution.

**Be up front about your English writing ability.**

Here's an example:

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Hi Mr. Williams,

My name is [first and last name], and I am a/an [job title] at [name of company]. I'm writing to discuss a possible partnership between our two businesses. Please excuse my English as it's not my first language.

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The “please excuse” line allows you to be honest and transparent. And then it will make the email recipient focus less on your words and more on your overall message.

HOWEVER, you should still do your best to make the email read well. And that also means avoid typos and misspellings as much as possible. When in doubt on a grammar rule or spelling, look it up.

I also recommend you print out your email and read it aloud to yourself. You will catch more mistakes that way rather than looking at it over and over on the screen.

## **My Journey: Part 3**

### **That time I wrote my first book**

Let's continue with my story from page 69. If you recall, I arrived at the idea to do a big book of email templates because my web traffic had proven the concept had potential.

OK, great. So now I'm going to write a book.

Sooo, how do I write a book?

My first move was to seek the counsel of an author I met through Twitter (reason #256 why I love Twitter). I used aspects of the template on page 71 and set up a phone call.

That conversation started me in the right direction on how to assemble the manuscript. I began to flesh out the table of contents and thought, “Wow, I have so much to write!”

I had about 40 percent of the book's contents already contained on my blog so I needed to fill in the rest with brand-new email templates and other writing guides.

I found any spare minute of the day (weekends too) to chip away at the remaining 60 percent of content. It was a grind but also the most meaningful writing I had done to that point so it never felt like work. Ya know?

After about six months of writing, I had a rough draft. It was 264 pages and over 50,000 words. Whew.

The next six months began the task of laying out the pages with a designer's help. I did not want the book to feel amateur on any level. I never, ever cut corners here.

By the end of the design phase, guess how many versions I went through before I came to the final one?

Twenty three. Twenty freaking three. I'm exhausted thinking about all the iterations. But each time, the product became a little sharper, a little clearer. I made sure to use my own writing guides like the technique to edit my content in three minutes from page 9.

Then the next six months? Editing and refining. I thought the first six months (writing) were the toughest. Then I was sure it couldn't be worse than the middle six months (designing).

Oh no. Editing, revisions and looking for typos (particularly for a book on writing skills) nearly brought me to my knees.

I read the book seven times and had trusted friends and family go through it too.

I remember the day a proof of the book arrived in the mail. I couldn't wait to hold the finished product in my hands. What a cool moment — to see and feel the end result of so much hard work. I know other authors, creators and entrepreneurs understand that emotion too.

With the book created, I now turned to people who could guide me through the marketing process. In the next part of "My Journey," my mentorship "dream team" takes shape.

[Then provide brief background info on the new hire; for instance, “Mark graduated last fall from Big State University with a degree in political science. He spent a semester as an intern for Senator John Doe so he has experience on Capitol Hill.”]

[Then, include when the person will start in the office; for instance, “Mark will begin on Monday, May 2 in our downtown DC office.”] Please make sure to welcome him/her to the team.

Thanks,

– Your first name

Email signature

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### Deeper Insight

First and foremost, give your employees a heads up someone new has joined the company/organization. Then, shed light on the person’s background and start date so your team knows more than his/her name and job title.

#### **My Journey: Part 4**

#### **That time I built my mentorship dream team**

We often look at the concept of a “mentor” the wrong way. It’s unlikely you’ll find one person who can address every career challenge or obstacle. No one is an expert at *everything*. Plus, if you rely on one mentor all the time, you will wear the person out.

The better approach is to assemble your mentorship “dream team” or perhaps a personal “board of advisers.” Each mentor has expertise on a given topic, and you can ask for his/her specific guidance when necessary.

To write/edit/publish my first book and continue to develop my brand as a communications specialist, I looked to my mentorship “dream team” for advice and direction.

When I ran into a wall (still run into walls) with book publishing, I reached out to two people who understand the process — one who edits book manuscripts and another who designs books covers/interiors. I often used elements from my email template on page 71 (how to ask for advice) to start the conversation.

As I explored (still explore) ways to deliver in-person workshops and presentations, I booked time with more seasoned professionals and learned their methods.

And as I tried (still try) to understand the nuances of digital marketing and audience building, I asked (still ask...OK, you get the picture) blogger friends to review my efforts and share what works best for them.

In short, I built a dream team and gathered powerful insights from all sides.

My dream team grows to this day, and I plan to keep everyone “on my board” as long as they’ll have me. There’s always another challenge up ahead and, fortunately, someone with the knowledge to help me through it.

Speaking of which, my dream team came together at the right time. I had big plans for my shiny, new book but needed clear instruction on how to promote it. I sought the counsel of my mentors, received solid advice and then rolled up my sleeves as a one-man PR machine.

In the next section of “My Journey,” the book launch begins.



## My Journey: Part 5

### That time I became a one-man PR machine

I thought writing *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?* would be the toughest act of my career. It took nearly everything I had to make those 250+ pages a reality.

Once I decided to publish on my own and rely on myself for all the marketing, I faced another uphill climb.

Wait, how do I sell a book?

I read some blogs on book marketing and learned what I could. But I recognized there were no shortcuts. I needed to hit the phones and jump on email to spread the word.

In short, I became a one-man PR machine. I sent countless emails to schools and organizations about my book (they often took the shape of a press release as described on page 34).

I used elements of the email to introduce myself to a company for the first time (page 71). And I sent *plenty* of messages to ask if I could be interviewed on a podcast (page 57) or submit a guest post that, in subtle ways, would promote my book (page 61).

Oh, and lest I fail to mention the dozens of trips to the post office to send physical copies to key people. Did you find my books in a retail location? That only happened because I mailed one of those physical copies to a potential distributor which (somehow) agreed to take me on. Total shot in the dark, trust me.

When I say one-man PR machine, I mean it. Every day. No breaks.

I believed in the potential of *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?* but also understood the book's success depended (still depends) on my promotional efforts.

And soon enough, I would learn the true meaning of the words "follow up."

The hard way.

OK, great. Prior to the survey, I included one to two productivity links. Armed with the survey knowledge, I beefed it up to four to five links, and I made the section more prominent within the e-newsletter.

A month later, I received this note from a reader:

*Hi Danny,*

*Just thought I'd send some feedback on your TEMPLATE newsletter, since you've been using the new format for a few weeks. I like it! :-)...Overall, your new format has made THE TEMPLATE more useful & efficient.*

When in doubt, ASK. The marketplace will always tell you what it wants.

## **My Journey: Part 6**

### **That time I contacted the same organization 30 times**

There's a saying in advertising that consumers need to see your message seven times before they act on it.

When it comes to promoting a book, make it closer to thirty.

I called a lot of people at schools and organizations about *Wait, How Do I Write This Email?* I always made sure to introduce myself properly (page 211) and plan out my talking points.

I had a strong pitch, and people were generally receptive.

Then I would send a couple of books in the mail and plan to follow up a couple of weeks later to gain their feedback.

And that's when the "fun" began.

Email check-ins. Trying the person's office line to catch him/her at the office. More email check-ins. More phone calls.

Not all in the same day, mind you. Over a period of several days or weeks.

And that's how, with at least one organization, the follow-up efforts reached thirty times — until, at long last, the organization decided to make my book a priority and move forward with an agreement.

Nothing comes easy as an entrepreneur. But I believe in my book and its purpose — to help people write better so they can open doors in their careers.

That's why I wasn't dejected each time someone brushed me off or ignored my follow-up requests.

No, I was emboldened. Inspired, even.

I thought, "If I only check back one more time, *then* it will happen."

What did I learn through the process? That persistence pays off.

What else did I uncover? That I wasn't even close to "figuring it all out."

The journey continued, and the next step was a big trip to The Windy City.

on our progress. Have a great summer down in sunny San Diego — it’s on my list of places I need to visit!

Thanks again,

– Your first name

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### Deeper Insight

Did you catch the personalized section? The part about visiting “sunny San Diego” shows I didn’t write the exact same thank-you note 50 times.

Above all, a handwritten thank-you note is a classy move. Again, if you have hundreds of backers at lower levels, a standard email thank-you note is enough. But for those who went above and beyond, you need to respond accordingly.

### My Journey: Part 7

#### That time I realized I have so much left to learn

I walked into McCormick Place in Chicago with wide eyes and my mouth agape.

I knew BookExpoAmerica (BEA) was *the* event for the publishing world, but I was blown away by the scene in front of me.

Every major publisher had a massive “booth” with book shelves, couches, tables and checkout counters. It felt like a giant mall of bookstores one after the next spread across a room the size of three football fields.

I wandered through a big row of “booths” for ten minutes and realized right away I had a lot to learn about the book biz.

My day at BEA kickstarted an education into not only book publishing but also what it takes to run a business (traditional sales and online).

I understood it’s not enough to “write a book.” There’s *so much more* to the process, especially if I want to operate as an independent publisher.

Writing, publishing, selling — the onus is on me to make everything hum. And that means the learning never stops. If I don’t “figure it out,” who will?

So the education goes on even today. And like anyone else determined to pursue their passion, the knowledge allows me to move from one stage to the next.

And with each new step, the story — *my* story — becomes more interesting.

### 3. Give contact info S-L-O-W-L-Y

It's annoying when someone says a phone number or email address quickly — and only one time — and then hangs up. Then I need to play the message a second time to write down the number.

Say your number slowly, digit by digit, and then do it a second time. Same goes for an email address. Letter by letter.

### 4. Repeat your name at the end

You know when you meet someone and never catch the name the first time around? You shake hands, say hello but then think, “Wait, what was her name again?” Same for the voice mail. Repeat your name and company at the end so the person is 100% clear about who left the message.

If you follow steps 1–4, you will leave perfect voice mails every time.

## My Journey: Part 8

### Conclusion: That time I understood the power of storytelling

You can TELL people your company solves a problem and hope the audience believes you.

Or you can SHOW your value through a compelling story of success.

In *Wait, How Do I Promote My Business?*, I've taken you on a journey (AKA story) through my early experience as an author, publisher and entrepreneur. In each chapter of the story, I also demonstrated how I used templates from my book to overcome obstacles and create new opportunities.

Why? To prove that my writing guides work. And to underscore the raw power of a memorable story.

When you need to convince skeptical outsiders that your company/organization delivers value, share a customer or client success.

The anecdote adds a human element to an otherwise abstract product or service. It also allows other people to imagine themselves benefiting from your offer.

And no matter the writing challenge — website content, press release, email outreach and the list goes on — remember to speak from the heart with a blend of authenticity, curiosity and storytelling. The three qualities are the hallmarks of any effective communicator.

May this book — combined with your hard work — help your business reach new heights.

Then *you* can write a book of your own with a fitting first chapter:

**That time my writing skills helped me open new doors.**