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Creating content that counts

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By my estimate, I recently used my 400,000th adjective while carrying out my work in the world's second oldest profession - public relations. (estimating about 1,000 adjectives per month x 408 months).

Publicity is in my blood. When my ancestors followed Moses through the wilderness for 40 years, an old family tale suggests that it was Samuel Ben Hur the Levite, Moses' scribe, who said as the tribes of Israel found themselves between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's armor-clad chariots, "I'll get you two pages in the bible if you can save us from this one."

No adjectives in that sentence. Good writing isn't all about adjectives. You need some verbs and nouns, too, and I like to sprinkle in a few gerunds and participles, although most people wouldn't know these or a dangling modifier if they tripped on one. But using parts of speech, exciting words and varied sentence structure holds the reader's attention longer so you can get your message across, whether it's content for a newsletter, blog, web site, news release, brochure, speech - you name it..

A great way to add interest to a news release is to include quotes. The right quote gives an extra opportunity to add authenticity and gain relevance. So just ask the company owner for a quote, right? Just slapping quotation marks on either side of a canned message is boring and readers' eyes will glaze over. It's better to create a quote that ties the announcement to external context -- something happening outside the company that's on your audience's mind. The comment can be opinionated or interpretive. This quotation helps answer the questions "why him" and "why now."

Rather than a bland announcement that XYZ Co. has added five new employees, the quote might say how business is good despite the economy, traced to new products with widespread appeal. If a broker leased a million square feet in a lousy market, the quote might brag, "This is the largest lease south of Boston in 6 months," and include something about the broker's "25 years of contacts that brought the plan together." Of course, after your PR pro makes up a great quote, the person being quoted must have the final OK.

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