

## *My Two Bites*

What name would you assign to construction professionals (especially project managers) who did no better to double-check their calculations? Would it be bitter or worse than the name you'd use to characterize those who simply didn't know how to double-check their calculations? Be careful choosing your epithet: It may be you were talking about!

As professionals, every word you write is the same as a number. Why? Because that's exactly how a trier of fact – a judge or jury – would regard them after a project is complete, when disputes must be resolved in court and the best evidence is what's in writing.

Relevantly few construction professionals I've met are good writers; fewer still like to write. And most of those who are and do not know how to proofread. Must think that proofreading means reading something from top-to-bottom slowly and carefully – maybe using one's forefinger as a cursor – to catch missing words, slipshod synonyms (e.g., “infer” for “imply”), accidental words (like “hat” instead of “that”), hazardous homophones (like “effect” where “affect's” correct), and faulty grammar. But reading from top-to-bottom slowly and carefully doesn't work. You'll still miss errors, albeit ‘slowly and carefully’.

Have you been reading this column slowly and carefully? Do you realize that, by the end of this sentence, I will have made 28 errors that a competent proofreader – but not a Microsoft spell- or grammar-checker – wouldn't catch?

Assuming you stated over, welcome back, possibly with the suspicion that the prior sentence “28” itself was a typo. (It wasn't.) So, how should one proofread?

First, you may need to do is refresh your English skills, by remastering what you originally mastered by sixth grade. That's when you knew that your purpose to give

people complements if you want to flatten them, like, “Those shoes compliment what your wearing”.

Let's face it: english is not that easy, especially when it's the kind that goes on a pool ball. (Doesn't that have be a capitol E?) Face it: Ours is a difficult language, and, because it is, those who posses superior communications sills gain more leadership opportunities.

While its dubious that you'd be able to recall all you use to know, chance's are a bit of reading and practicing are just what you need to hone in on some of the most common mistakes your likely to make.

Once you go back to school, so to speak, step to would be effecting the specific techniques of effective proofreading. You could start by using he simple expedience of double-spacing you're document, if its not double-space all ready. Tried of making all those cut-and-paste and header/footer errors. No problem: Set *every thing* you reuse in a larger font, and/or bold-face it, and/or use a different color, so you'll be sure to check it before accepting it. (This is just a mater of being discrete.) You may also find it's easier to proofread when you pint out the document on a peace of stationary.)

The next step in identifying errors. You can do this by performing the typical document canvas. Use cereal review in stead. Otherwise, you'll be wont to over come the strategies your eyes and brain have developed to make sense of even the most grotesquely misspelled words. Stated another way, if you read as you ordinarily do – back too font and top to bottom – it's a forgone conclusion you're eyes and brain will make effective proofreading almost impossible.

To affect a cereal review, determine what you will look at discreetly; i.e., you may want to look at major headings (like chapter titles) first, possibly reading them back to font *and* front to back. (Few things are moiré embarrassing than having a typo in the tittle of you're document; i.e., *Quality Control: Alive and Well at Dipstick Associate*). The, you'd

take the same approach with secondary and tertiary headings. And in doing this, you'd look *only* at the specific type of heading involved, so the combination of your eyes and brains do not wonder.

Next? That's up to you, of course, but you'd might want to check capitalization, as for proper nouns (e.g., names, titles when their part of a name, place names) and proper-noun-biased modifiers, like American. You'd also check acronyms, to make sure there correct, that their used more then once, and hat their used the same way. And – once more time – you'd check for capitols independent of everything else.

What's next? Again, that's a mute point. For me, its numbers, weather their in the from of numeral's or word's. And one I do numbers, I look for occidental words; i.e., writing “immoderate evaluation” when I rally mean “immediate evacuation.” To do that I have to overcome the partnership between my eyes and my brain. That's why I read what I've written from back-to-front, so my eyes do not skip ahead looking for context.

If I waned, I could also check for subject-verb agreement; e.g., singular subject/singular verb, so I get ‘they are’ instead of ‘they is’. I could also check my pronouns, so I say something like “A project manger needs to know they're stuff in order to be affective”, given that the mix of pronoun (they're) and its antecedent (“project manager) do not match, because “project manager’ is singular and “they're” is plural.

The next-to-last step – for me, bare in mind, not necessary you – is reading the document slowly and carefully, front to back, top to bottom, to make sure what it says makes sense; i.e., because I've left word's out. Then I check my cut-and-pasted copy and reused headers and footers, and call it a day. A long one at that: This column alone contains all most 150 mistakes Bill Gats didn't see. If you fond less than, say, 80, your skating on thin ice, especially if you proof formal contacts. Contract me at [john@asfe.org](mailto:john@asfe.org) to see where the mistakes are hear, and or information about ASFE's *Write Right* and *The Written Word*. After all, your need help!