

Ben Afia

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, organisation, language, audience, customers, absolutely, communication, sentence, writing, bit, short sentences, ben, vodafone, tone, voice, marketing, marketers, tend, grammar, brilliant

SPEAKERS

Susan Heaton-Wright, Ben Afia

This is Susan Heaton-Wright. From Superstar Communicator. As you know, I am trying to reach out to you all and support you in this extraordinary time. Let's face it. We've never had anything like this before. And I am particularly interested in the chap who's on the other end of the internet now. He's a gentleman called Ben Afia. And he helps companies to create written content for them to find their voice. Now you're thinking, why on earth am I interviewing Ben? Well, it's because he focuses on written communication. And it's something that we can learn from him because certainly, I was on a workshop with him recently. And he was brilliant. So let me tell you a little bit more about him. He's the founder and head honcho of Afia, a UK based brand language consultancy, and you can explain to me what that means bit later. Ben's turning the world of corporate speak on its head by helping companies to be more human, never a bad thing. Over a decade, a decade ago, he was one of the first in the world to start managing tone of voice. Now we're going to have to ask him about tone of voice if it's written away. He was at Boots the chemists now part of Walgreen Alliance boots. That's a mouthful, and help them improve relationships internally and with customers. He then set up apphia. Over the last decade and a half he's helped companies like Alliance insurance, win more customers, BP to develop their employer brand, and Google to help marketers understand digital better. Ben's training helped Vodafone boost their customer satisfaction to its highest ever level. He helped Aeon, change their culture and save 860,000 letters a year. Now that is a result. And he helped Ron seal to work out what to say on the tin. Hey, so welcome, Ben. That's fantastic. I love the bit about the Ron seal. I just wish I was the actor having to say that without having to giggle.

Ben Afia 03:01

Absolutely. Thanks for having me, Susan. It's a pleasure to be on pleasure to be joining you.

Susan Heaton-Wright 03:05

Oh, you know, I know that the listeners are going to love hearing about you. So what made you get into this?

Ben Afia 03:15

Well, it's interesting, you know, somewhere along the line, you sort of forget what you're good at a school only sometimes. And English was always my strongest subjects. But somehow I forgot. And after a few sales and marketing jobs, I landed at Boots. And I got to build a team of copywriters, so marketer writers

for marketing, for annual reports ,for products and all that sort of thing. People in agencies and freelance and my job was to go out and find the best writers in the land and bring them back to work for Boots. And in that job as a copy editor, and then developing tone of voice, I was back in language and I suddenly realised that it was something that I had a skill for. I really enjoyed. And it really rekindled my joy of English and you know, the last 20 years is history now.

Susan Heaton-Wright 04:05

Oh, brilliant. What do you mean by tone of voice? Because certainly for me, it means about the spoken voice, but you're talking about written communication.

Ben Afia 04:18

Yes, I'm mostly focused on written I started writing but it does apply to speech as well. So what I'm thinking about and there are a few terms around this, so you could call it brand language, the language of the brand. Tone of voice is a common term. Some people call it verbal identity. And in organisations or design agencies, advertising agencies, you would have a visual identity. So the verbal identity goes side by side with that. And really, it's about expressing the mission, the values, the behaviours of the brand, the personality of the brand, through language, is how that comes across in language. And the kinds of organisations that I work with tend to be big companies that have large marketing team. So lots of people writing, marketing and working with creative agencies, huge customer service centres and lots of people talking to customers day in, day out. And they might be on web chat and on emails and all sorts of other ways of communicating. So if you're a big company, and you've got 1000s of people representing your brand day in day out with your customers, you need some way of controlling that so that you get a consistent sense of the brand that you want to communicate the values that you want to come across, you know, how do you want your customers to feel? So tone of voice is really the tool for helping you to manage that. And I use it as a way of changing the culture of an organisation so that they can deliver through service what they promised in marketing.

Susan Heaton-Wright 05:45

Brilliant, and can you can you give an example of how you were able to change the culture? Are you able to name names, of course.

Ben Afia 05:54

I can. So you mentioned in your intro, some work with Vodafone. And so I've worked with Vodafone, on and off for maybe 15 years. And around seven or eight years I helped them ago, I helped them with their brand strategy. And the particular bit that we looked at was the personality of the brand, and then translating that into tone of voice that we've talked about. We then trained hundreds and hundreds of people around the business, we wrote communications, we train people internally to write and we ran clinics to help them to write better and transform a lot of their marketing, communications. And then in customer service, and one chap was one of in one of our training days, and three or four later, years later, he popped up again, and he was managing the contact centres in India. So he got in touch because one of the problems that the Indian teams were having on web chats was that they were getting certain amounts of complaints from English from British customers is just for UK customers, and they have 1000 people on that team at the time. So they wanted to find a way of helping those Indian teams to have more empathy for British customers, so that they would make them happier. And so I use an approach called

appreciative inquiry, which is a way of looking at what an organisation and what individuals are like when they're really at their best is a very positive process, a way of starting from strength. So rather than going in like a classic consultant and trying to diagnose the problem, and then prescribe a solution, it turns that on its head. So appreciative inquiry starts from asking groups of people from across the business, what do you like when you're really performing? Well, when you're really alive, when you're really feeling connected. And there we identify the really great behaviour that's going on. And what I found in India was that there was an immense number of very talented, intelligent, motivated people who wanted to do the right thing and look after customers well. So we developed a programme with the training team there and a group of champions to capture that best experience that best behaviour and develop some training that would help the Indians to develop some awareness of how weird us Brits can be because we are quite odd, aren't we, we don't really like to say what we truly mean, when we complain, we're either ranting or we might say something. Yeah, I was a bit disappointed about that. And of course, when a Brit says I'm a bit disappointed, we mean, were absolutely furious. But other nations don't necessarily perceive this, because it's not what they've grown up with. So with some cultural training, with some tone of voice training, we help those teams to really understand British customers better. And the result was that they increased what they use at Vodafone, the net promoter score, which is like a customer satisfaction rating, they increased it by 15 to 20%, almost almost immediately following the training, it was incredibly powerful.

Susan Heaton-Wright 08:44

And I would imagine that because it was by phone or by chat, those fantastic Indian workers were not able to pick up on nonverbal communication.

Ben Afia 08:57

Now it's particularly difficult because resting tone of voice is quite hard to read, isn't it? I mean, you know, if you imagine, I don't know, you get into an angry exchange with somebody, but you didn't intend and it happens all the time, doesn't it on, especially on Facebook and Twitter, and that sort of, and I think it happens because you're not picking up other cues. So you're not picking up on body language, you're not picking up on spoken tone. You're and this is where emojis come from actually. So I mean, I use emojis a lot to show when I'm joking or when I'm you know, because you could you can't get quite the same body language and same signal through written communication. So we have to be extra careful there. And so especially if the Brits who aren't who hide how we really feel, and we're very, very polite quite a lot of the time. That's very difficult. For others. It's very difficult for Brits, I mean, I've worked in customer centres, customer service centres, and I've seen pieces of communication but you know, a colleague has sort of shown to me, and I'm struggling. I do this all day every day and I'm struggling to really read the emotional behind it. And so it's about equipping people to ask extra questions to delve beneath. And to get extra understanding before they try to solve the problem. It's getting to the true problem. Understanding that before you before you dive in.

Susan Heaton-Wright 10:14

Now, you've mentioned about emojis. A lot of people are saying that the use of punctuation is being reduced. And I don't know about you, but certainly when I was at school, I was being taught about how how different punctuation can actually help in aiding, understanding. And also the speed and the pauses within the communication?

Ben Afia 10:45

Yeah, yeah. It's something I talk about a lot in my writing workshops. Because, you know, punctuation is crucial. And one of the things that I tend to try and encourage people to do is to actually to reduce their amount of the amount of punctuation they use, right, okay. And what I mean by that is that if you, let's say, for example, if you if you're prone to long sentences, I try to encourage people to have sort of one concrete idea per sentence, right? Okay. But what people tend to do is that they can ramble on and they can have very long sentences punctuated with commas, or colons, or semi colons. And those sentences get can get longer and longer. But if you think about having one idea per sentence, you then end up with a shorter sentence, finish with a full stop, and you don't need commas, an extra punctuation to break up the rhythm. Now you have to be a little bit careful, you need to not go too short and too many short sentences can be a bit jumpy. And I did a project a few years ago, actually, for Oxford University Press. And they are marketing to academics. And so that particular audience has a particular rate way of writing there is a certain language around academia. My writing tends to be very short sentences, quite upbeat and quite energetic. And I can remember my client, the marketing director saying to me, Ben, can you make it a little bit more eloquent? And so I got one of my my freelance team, chap, he used to be an expert, who was an ex telegraph reporter to come and join up the sentences and give it a little bit more breathing room. Because that was that was the style that was most appropriate.

Susan Heaton-Wright 12:22

Isn't that interesting? Because I think that we've mentioned before that at university, I studied geography. So there were lots of essays. And we were expected to do these long sentences with different clauses. And that was the style that was the norm. Certainly in in the department I was in.

Ben Afia 12:43

it's very tricky in particular professions. And you know, I mean, I'm having this problem with school at the moment. So I was a school governor at my children's junior school. So I got a bit of an understanding about how they're teaching English. And the thing is that the English that I teach, which is for business and for clear communication is not necessarily the English that my children are being taught in school, they're actually being taught to put more colour into their language. But in business, we're trying to take that out, because it can start to confuse things. I find it really interesting that they're actually learning more about the nuts and bolts of grammar than I ever learned at school. Because if you grew up in the 70s, and 80s, in Britain, grammar wasn't taught was it. So I have then worked with people who have done English degrees and their streets add me on understanding the grammatical terminology. But in some ways, I think that's been an advantage to my advantage, because it means that it's forced me to come up with very clear explanations. And so if I'm in a room of people, most of whom are unlikely to have English degrees, you know, most people don't understand the grammatical language, the jargon. And so, one of the things that I'm trying to promote all the time is to reduce the technical and the jargon language, the sort of language that is a part of a particular profession. And every organisation has it so universities have the language of academia and disciplines within academia have different language? Yes, they don't make some particular for example, for what was that economics in particular, or legal language for example? And different professions of course, have it so you will have within organisations you will tend to have an organisational culture and that's driven by I suppose the the organisational, you know, the heart of the organisation. So for an energy company, it might be the language of the engineer.

In a financial services company, it might be the actuary, or, or the risk specialist. So you get this kind of length specialist language creeping through, but of course, it's not relevant to customers. No.

Susan Heaton-Wright 14:45

And you've hit a really interesting point because, certainly with spoken communication, I talk about trying to avoid jargon and trying to be brief and concise as possible in spoken Communication, particularly when we are in a virtual setting, because people's minds wander. And in order to make that impact, we've got to be very, very clear and concise. Are you having to do that more and more, as you have developed in your profession? Have you seen?

Ben Afia 15:21

Definitely, I think, I mean tone of voice is an idea really emerged nearly 20 years ago, perhaps in sort of UK and in British businesses and creative agencies. And it was very new when I started doing it. But now it's been talked about much, much more. And I think that most marketing people, within organisations and customer experience, people will be at least aware of tone of voice, and may well have had a go at developing guidelines and trying to change how their organisation communicates. But there's still a huge amount of work to do. And I think the reason for that is that when we are trying to help people to write and to speak in a different way, where we're talking about their professional persona, their professional personality. So it's a bit like putting your suit on to go to work, although we're not doing that at the moment, of course. But if you're used to putting a suit on to go to work, it's almost like your your professional persona, it's part of your character. And the language that you use is a part of that as well. So what's really interesting, I often find that very senior people can be very confident and very quick to change their language. But sometimes they can have a lot of the jargon in spite of the fact that it might not be clear. So it can be sometimes that you are using the language, and you feel that it's part of what made you successful. And in fact, it can be in spite of

Susan Heaton-Wright 16:42

I think that's a really interesting observation that I mean, certainly I found and people backed me up on this, that sometimes perhaps lawyers use specific and compliance terms or terminology almost to outdo the the opposition.

Ben Afia 17:01

Absolutely. I one of the examples, I always think about, you know, if you if you see an economics professor from LSE, say, interviewed on news night, are they there? Because they've got big words. Almost certainly not that they're almost certainly there. Because, yes, they're an economics professor. They're highly qualified and experts in their field, but they know their field so well, that they're able to translate it and to make it simple for people before a news night audience. So when people are being you know, good people who are interviewed and are good at speaking, on TV, or in interviews on podcasts or radio, they usually they're because they're good at explaining. And that comes from their skill and depth of experience. And I find that people really struggle to get their head around this concept, the idea that as you become more expert, you can speak more plainly. But I do think that true expertise speaks clearly. And that takes that comes from confidence.

Susan Heaton-Wright 17:58

Yeah, you're absolutely right. Now, listeners, you will have heard a really, really good podcast interview with Jeff Heasman, who talks about making the language simpler in within the insurance and legal industries, where there's a lot of compliance. And he suggests, if you have to say that particular sentence that then you back it up with a case study, if that's something that you would recommend as well,

Ben Afia 18:31

it is absolutely. So this is about being more concrete with your language. So the idea is to explain rather than to use language, and just so one example that I came across many years ago, so I was working with legal in general, the pensions insurance company. And they had two definitions for the word maturity. So when a pension policy matures, it has a particular meaning when a life insurance policy matures, it has a slightly different meaning. And we were looking at this document, we're looking at policy documents, actually, I can get quite geeky about stuff like that. bizarrely, all kinds of all kinds of communications Terms and Conditions I quite like as well. One of these are opportunities to speak more clearly. And to engage customers and make them feel happier about the product. They're buying and more comfort, more comfortable and that they trust you better. So we were looking at maturity. And when we realised that that had two definitions within the company, we thought, Well, how on earth is a customer going to understand if we have two ways of defining it? So sometimes you have to say more for the word maturity. Actually, it's better to explain what it means yes. And there you might have a sentence or even a paragraph. I was working with a colleague, there's a friend of mine who I've worked with for many, many years, my first ever kind of keynote speech, if you like, which was maybe about 12 years ago, I was speaking to air BP, the aviation fuel division of BP and they're the leadership conference in Barcelona. The guy who was organising during that conference I became friendly with and we've, we've worked together ever since. And we were talking about a new product area just the other day. And in this area, it's very, it's a slippery slope towards using some of the jargon that you think your customers or your clients are going to expect. And I find that all people have trouble getting away from the language that conveys gravitas because we all want to sound like an expert. Yes. And this is the nub of the problem. So every profession every kind of organisation struggles with, how do we convey our expertise? How do we give a sense of gravitas without dumbing down and yet be simple and connect with that audience without it sounding dumbed down? And that's an art.

Susan Heaton-Wright 20:44

I think you've hit the nail on the head. There. Suddenly, recently, I had a testimonial on LinkedIn. And the lady was it speaks English as a second language. And she said, Susan is very simple. And Great, thanks. Thanks for that. We packed it up by saying no, you explain it. So it's very straightforward. And I can go away, I just get it straight away. So I was really pleased she could say this?

Ben Afia 21:15

Absolutely, I think it takes true expertise and confidence to be able to speak and write simply, and it takes a lot It can take, it can take a lot of work. So

Susan Heaton-Wright 21:27

do you think that language has evolved? Say, from when when you're I mean, you're a little bit younger than me, but do you think it has evolved since we were at school and we were at university?

Ben Afia 21:47

It absolutely has and it is evolving, and it's continuing to evolve, and actually that that pace of evolution is accelerating. So the the research that, that kicked off the the work that I did for legal in general, which was about 15-16 years ago, they had done a piece of research called discourse analysis, which is looking at the sort of sum of all the conversations going on within the organisation and outside the organisation. So with stakeholders, with the city, with customers, and all the departments internally and with partners, so that picture was telling legal and general at the time, that, you know, one of the things that that it was picking up on was that language is evolving, the internet has made language less formal forms of writing, like email, and text have actually brought spoken forms into written language. And so that is changing the general public, certainly in the UK, America, Australia, is changing our perceptions of what we expect to see from organisations. And so that is changing what people expect to see. And what legal in general found from this research was that some of their language, which was quite sort of typical of the financial services industry, at the time, was actually putting a bit of a barrier up between them and their customers. And they, that's when they decided to do something about it, because they didn't want that barrier to be there. They wanted to, they wanted to feel it to feel like they were in tune with their customers and responding to their needs. And because, you know, pensions and life insurance are really about trust, aren't they, they're about, they're about a promise for the future. And you need to know that you can trust the organisation you're buying from. And so that's when they set about doing something about it. And the tone of voice projects, you know, the work that I did for quite a number of years with them, you know, came out of that.

Susan Heaton-Wright 23:33

That's interesting. Now I, I'm now in my 50s. And I for some reason, Google, the ads that I get are all about seniors, seniors and insurance, and they have somebody there quite often there's somebody with, a Zimmer frame!

Ben Afia 23:54

there's a reason for this, I'm gonna I'm gonna throw please just, I'm just gonna take so and and the marketers in your audience will will not will not like me for this. But the problem with marketing is that it's done by young people, most most marketers, so I am 49. Now, and I am quite often the oldest person in the room, you get these emails soon, I'm going to be starting to get them soon. Because for the marketing community, which is in their 20s 30s, maybe getting into 40s. But 40s is old for kind of creative agencies and marketers. So they, you know, I think, when you're young, over 50 years old, isn't it? Because we know that it's only the second beginning. I'm looking forward to it.

Susan Heaton-Wright 24:42

Like my Grannies, both died at 97. I've got a long way to go yet.

Ben Afia 24:46

depressive. Yeah. My mind was similar 98 and 100 and a half. So I'm thinking I'm going to do 105 that's my target.

Susan Heaton-Wright 24:54

You've got a long way to go. You're not senior yet.

Ben Afia 24:57

Absolutely not. And actually that's the interesting thing. About how language is evolving. So I'm fascinated by how social media is influencing language when I look at my kids who are 14 and 16. Now, my teenagers, how they're using language. And one of the things that came up in the press just recently was some a report that apparently, teenagers for teenagers and millennials, if you use full stops in WhatsApp, it's seen as aggressive. And I thought, well, this is unusual why are full stop seeing as aggressive? And apparently what happens is it when you're in messaging apps, like Apple messages, or iPhone message, or WhatsApp, or text, you put a single idea in a sentence and you send the text, and you put a single idea in it, and you send the text. So you have these chains of text. And of course, they are standalone sentences effectively, so you don't need a full stop. So when I looked back at how I use WhatsApp, and messaging, I don't put full stops in I hadn't really occurred. And so what some younger people are now saying is that when you put a full stop, it feels aggressive, it feels abrupt. So Isn't that interesting? How a full stop, which was something that we just take for granted at the end of a sentence, actually, for different age groups can feel different.

Susan Heaton-Wright 26:20

And it's a different platform.

Ben Afia 26:22

Absolutely. And credit and these things are platform dependent. Yeah. So I would never not use you know, full stops on my website or in customer letters, absolutely not. And you do have to be aware of the grammar that people learn. So when I was at Boots, where I really immersed myself in language, as we said in the introduction, we were doing some work for Boots opticians, and Boots opticians at the time their market, so this is quite a while ago, but they're the main market for Boots, opticians is 50 plus. And at that time, at that time, we figured that that audience would have probably learned grammar properly at school. Like what I didn't (sic). So I'm sort of because because those people may have more traditional ideas about how to use grammar, we thought that we shouldn't do things like use very short sentences for impact or use contractions like I'll and we'll and you'll. And those are things like those are kind of sort of conversational style that I would tend to use, but not with a particular audience, if they would feel that it's incorrect. And there are some people that get very het up about grammar, so we don't want to annoy those people doing. But for the rest of the audience, which was perhaps a younger market, especially, you know, beauty or, you know, there are other ranges where they wanted to be attracting younger, younger people, then a more casual, more conversational style of language would be absolutely appropriate. So it's about thinking about your audience.

Susan Heaton-Wright 27:54

Which is what these 25 year old marketers aren't doing with my Zimmer frame.

Ben Afia 28:02

And that's unfortunate, because really, they should know better because the segmentation targeting on things like Facebook is so precise. Now you really can pick out your audience. So that's that they're wasting their advertising spend. They're on there. You don't need to be seeing that sort of thing. Yeah, there's a there's a problem.

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:19

A 53 year old and a 75 year old with respect. Isn't there? You know?

Ben Afia 28:25

Absolutely. Oh, and even you know, I mean, my dad who's 77 and fit as a fiddle. He's playing three or four rounds of golf. You know, since he retired, he's become a championship golfer. He does not need a Zimmer frame.

Susan Heaton-Wright 28:40

Now, I know when I listened to your or saw your fantastic presentation for PSA, you talked about active and passive voice. Now, is there any way you could explain that in a straightforward way so that people like me can understand that bit better?

Ben Afia 29:01

Yeah. And I think it relates to the story about Vodafone, I think because one thing that us Brits do, we use the active in the passive, we use the passive in a particular way to be passive aggressive, actually. So if I give you a sentence, a letter will be sent. A letter will be sent, you don't know who's going to send that letter. Whereas if I say to you, I'll write to you, you know, that I'm writing to you. It does three things. It makes the relationship between the person writing and the person reading clearer. It has more energy, and it has much more of a sense of ownership. So if I use the active voice, I'll write to you. It has all sorts of benefits. But what we tend to do, especially in Britain, we use the passive to avoid responsibility. And it's rife throughout organisations, and if I'm working with an organisation and if I could do one thing, For most people, it would be to help them to use the active rather than the passive voice, because what will tend to do is we will, will use it to hide and to shirk responsibility or to not point the finger to say, you know, to say, that was a bit disappointing, rather than I'm really disappointed in you.

Susan Heaton-Wright 30:17

Right? Okay.

Ben Afia 30:19

So it's a really crucial technique. And it's one that I think all people need to learn. And the key to it is that it because it forces you to say that I'm doing something for you. So the person has the big at the beginning of the sentence, the person become the actor becomes what comes before the verb, it forces you to know exactly what you are doing. Now, in some organisations that have quite that maybe have older processes, sometimes you don't know who's going to do something. And so they'll use the passive because they don't know specifically who it's going to do. But what that encourages me to say to them, is to say, well, could you change the process so that you can say, who's going to get back in touch. So I have had to send a microphone back to Curry's just recently, and for various reason, I didn't get the new one sent out. And so I spoke to one of the managers. And what she did was, she said, This is what I'm going to do, I'm going to speak to so and so I'm going to speak to so and so. But to find out this information, and then I'm going to give you a call back and let you know exactly what I've done. I'm going to do that by the end of the day. And when and I'm going to follow up on Saturday and Sunday when I go off shift, and then I'm going to pass it on to my colleague, and his name is Adrian. Brilliant, and he's going to follow

it through the rest of the week. So what she was doing was using passive active language to say specifically what she was doing. And she went and did it. And she made the call. And she came back to me. And she told me specifically what she'd done, and what the next action was going to be. And I don't have my microphone back, which is frustrating. But I do feel confident that is going to happen because she's taken ownership. So what the active voice that has done there is to give me evidence that she's taking ownership, because we don't like gaps. When we when we're creating a picture of a story in our minds of information of incomplete information, we fill the gaps, and we try to make assumptions about what's happening, because we've had this need as human beings to complete the story. So if we don't want people to fill in the gaps for themselves, and we want them to trust what they're saying, we need to use the actively active voice. Be specific, and and give detail.

Susan Heaton-Wright 32:30

Brilliant. Now, before we finish, I always ask my guests for three top tips. So for you, it would be three top tips about written communication, if you'd like to share those with with the audience.

Ben Afia 32:45

Sure. I suppose I would go back to the process that I talked about at the PSA session that you came to me several weeks ago, which I call a fear tone. So A is for audience. And so that would be my first tip, the first tip of any communication is to really think deeply about your audience, and what's going on for them at the time they're receiving your communication, because we all have limited attention, don't we, we are busier than we've ever been. We all feel constantly inundated with different messages on social media, from companies, from our friends, our families, we're dealing with so much that we have filters, the brain has a filter, and it's rejecting things that it doesn't see as immediately relevant. So as a communicator, it's your responsibility to think what's going on for your audience, the person that you're writing to the person that you're speaking to, so that you can make sure that your message connects.

The second of those steps is focus. So be very clear about what you want your audience to think or to feel or to do, as a result of the thing that you're communicating to them. Quite often people will communicate all of the things that are in their head, and they'll write far too much, or they'll say far too much, much better to understand what state of mind your audience is going to be in and then try and deliver one message that is like most likely to connect with them. So that's the second tip. And the third is the third step in that process is to think about what will inspire. So a FIFA audience focus and inspire what is in there in your audience's interest, what's most going to hook them in what's in their interest, and going to excite them about your message. So it's not thinking from your own perspective, it's thinking from their perspective. So if you think about your audience, think about what you want them to focus, what you want them to think, feel and do. And then what you what's going to inspire them, you've got much more chance of your message hitting home.

Susan Heaton-Wright 34:47

Oh, that's absolutely brilliant. And listeners, remember that I create a script of this afterwards if you want to read through this again. So before you go back, how can people get in contact with you? Is there a course that you can offer? Is that ebook? Do let me know, there is.

Ben Afia 35:08

So the best place is probably my website, which www.benafia.com . And on there, you'll find right at the top, a link to get my ebook, which is called "Cut the crap out of writing, so people trust you". And in the E book, it's a fairly quick read 15 minutes or so. And it gives you the five steps in the Afia home process. So it'll talk you through how to understand your audience to think about your focus, how to inspire. And it'll get down eventually to some tone of voice techniques where we start to talk about things like shorter sentences and using the active rather than the passive voice. So that gives a good summary of really what is the foundation of the training that I've been delivering to the companies I've worked with for the last 15 or 16 years?

Susan Heaton-Wright 35:56

Oh, fantastic. Is there anything else you'd like to add to the, to the podcast message to the audience?

Ben Afia 36:05

I think if I could do one thing, it would be to inspire people to think more carefully about their communications and think about their audience and how it's how it's going to connect with them. Because we're so wrapped up in our own minds, aren't we, and this is normal human tendency. But if we think about what's going on for other people, we're much more likely to connect with them to show empathy, to feel empathy. And that means that our communication is much richer, and much more fruitful.

Susan Heaton-Wright 36:32

Aww brilliant. Thank you so much, Ben, this has been an absolutely fantastic interview. And the sound was great, wasn't it? It was, after all that, absolutely. And I'd like to thank you so much. Remember, you can get in contact with Ben yourselves, grab that he bought, because I know from reading it myself. It's full of content, and getting contact with Ben, if you need some help for your company. So thank you very much, Ben.

Ben Afia 37:04

You're welcome. It's been a lot of fun.

Susan Heaton-Wright 37:07

So until next time, this is Susan Heaton-Wright. From www.superstarcommunicator.com . Thanks for listening. You have been listening to the superstar communicator podcast. Don't forget to subscribe and review the podcast on iTunes and on apps. Please contact us if you want to discuss any topic would suggest a topic for us to include or a guest who could come on to the podcast, go to www.superstarcommunicator.com