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December 6, 2013 5 min read opinions expressed by associates of entrepreneurs are their own. As a young engineer fresh out of high school, my first job involved writing a specification for a product I designed. The product worked fine. The specification, on the other hand, was unhearsable. After reviewing the draft, my boss threw it at my desk, called me illiterate and asked how the hell I graduated from college. Good question. Somehow I managed to get through the New York school system and two college degrees without being able to write for beans. I had no idea how it happened. All I knew was, if I didn't fix it, my dreams of wealth and world domination would be dead before my career even got off the ground. That was over 30 years ago. Somewhere along the way, I picked up enough writing skills to become chief marketing officer for some pretty big high-tech companies. It's far from being practically illiterate. Related: 7 things big entrepreneurs don't do The truth is you'll never get anywhere in life unless you can write. Today it is more important than ever before, thanks to personal computers, the Internet, social media and email. And the good news is you don't need a degree in English composition to master the art of the written word. Here's how I did it: Read ... a lot. I was a chronic reader from a young age. What did I read? Fiction. Novel. Sci-fi. Classic literature. I've read everything from Isaac Asimov to Neal Stephenson, from Stephen King to Mark Helprin, from J.D. Salinger to Philip Roth. After that episode at work, I started paying attention to my writing style. I guess it helped. Learn from your bosses. This is one of the better arguments for getting a real job in a real company from school instead of jumping into the perceived panacea of entrepreneurship. I read everything my bosses wrote and mimicked methods that were effective to me. To this day, I'm in the business because of the phrases and tricks I can use. Organize your thoughts. I'm not really a well-organized thinker. On the contrary, my brain is constantly cycling and my thoughts are all over the map. It takes a lot of work to organize this random stream of consciousness into a coherent, supportive point of view. How can I do that? Exercise and discipline. Related: How managing your time is a waste of time be honest, direct, clear and concise. Say what you think and mean what you say. Less is more. Keep it simple. Every sentence needs to communicate a thought and have a reason to be there. Do not be superfluous except to emphasize the key point. It's hard to keep your writing short and difficult. It takes a lot of work. It's worth it. Long-bent, floral writing is boring, exhausting and has no place in the business. Connect with your audience. Before you speak or present, you should figure out how to connect with your audience. Writing is no different. Everyone does a great thing from storytelling these days, but it's means of the end – a way to connect with people. When you truly connect with people, they remember what you said... or written. Think of the old axiom. This is ancient, but it also applies in business writing as with presentations: Tell them what you're going to tell them, then tell them, and then tell them what you told them. Each piece should have a beginning, a middle and an end. Grammar and composition still matter. There is a growing trend towards informal writing, thanks to email, social media and smartphones. That's all right; My style actually tends to talk. But that doesn't mean you can just ignore grammar and composition, especially if a potential buyer or employer can see it. Related: Need inspiration? Here are 9 ways to find it to write for media. In the old days there were letters, papers, speeches and books. That was more or less it. Today we have everything from blogs and presentations to emails and tweets. Phrases and bullets are fine for some media, but they're not acceptable to others. Do what's appropriate for the medium. Get the writer's Bible. Do yourself a favor and get a copy of Strunka and White's style elements. Read it a few times and look at it all the time. It's the writer's Bible. You may not win a Pulitzer Prize, but if you decide to do so, you can become an effective writer. And make no mistake: no matter what you do for a living these days, if you want your career to flourish, you have to learn to write. Period. Writer's Block is a condition in which a skilled writer with a desire to write cannot write. The writer's block of expression was coined and popularized by american psychoanalist Edmund Bergler in the 1940s. At other ages and cultures, says Alice Flaherty in midnight sickness, writers were not thought to be blocked, but simply withered. One literary critic points out that the concept of the writer's block is peculiarly American in its optimism that we all have creativity just waiting to be unlocked. See examples and observations below. Also look: You don't know what it's like to stay all day with your head in your hands trying to squeeze your unfortunate brain to find the word. (Gustave Flaubert, 1866) Why does he suffer the main criteria for the writer's block? Because someone who doesn't write but doesn't suffer doesn't have writer's blocks; he or she just doesn't write. Such times may instead be shoveling periods for the development of new ideas, periods of keats famously described as 'delicious diligent indolence.' (Alice W. Flaherty, Midnight Sickness: The Urge to Write, The Writer's Block and creative brains. Houghton Mifflin, 2004)Although it can be triggered by any number of internal or external stimuli, the vital function the writer's block performs during the creative process remains constant: the inability to write means that unknowingly I veto a program that requires conscious ego. (Victoria Nelson, on Writer's Houghton Mifflin I think the writer's block is just afraid you're going to write something terrible. (Roy Blount, Jr.) William Stafford's Remedy for Writer's Block I believe is a so-called 'writing block' product of some sort of discrepancy between your standards and your performance. . . . Well, I have a formula for this that can only be a deceptive way of explaining. Anyway, it goes like this: he needs to lower his standards until he senses the threshold to go over in writing. It's easy to write. You simply shouldn't have standards that prevent you from writing. (William Stafford, Writing the Australian Creep. University of Michigan Press, 1978) Eminem on Writer's Block Fallin' asleep with writer's block in the parking of McDonalds,But instead of pitying do something about it. Admit you have a problem, your brain is blurred, you've lashed out long enough. (Eminem, Talkin' 2 yourself. Recovery, 2010) Stephen King on Writer's Block- There may be far-fetched weeks or months when it doesn't come at all; This is called the writer's block. Some writers in the whistles of the writer's block think their ordeal has died, but I don't think that happens very often; I think it happens that the writers themselves sown the edges of their clearing with poisoned bait to keep their muses away, often not knowing they were doing it. This may explain the extremely long pause between Joseph Heller's classic novel Catch-22 and the follow-up, years later. It was called Something Happened. I always thought that what happened was that Mr. Heller finally cleaned the muse repellent around his special clearing in the woods. (Stephen King, The Writing Life. The Washington Post, October 1, 2006)- [M]y son, fed up with hearing me complain and moan about my 'illness', gave me a Christmas present, Stephen King's On Writing... The simple theme of this remarkable book is if you really want to write, then close yourself in a room, close the door and PEE. If you don't want to write, do something else. (Mary Garden, Writer's Block. Absolute Write, 2007) Trick[Y]ou you don't want to face a blank page. You'll do anything to avoid writing. You'll go clean the toilet before you write. I finally got it. I wrote the most this year because of a trick I realized... The trick is you have to find something worse than writing. [Laughs] That's it. That's the trick. (Robert Rodriguez, quoted by Charles Ramirez Berg in The Mariachi Aesthetic Goes to Hollywood. Robert Rodriguez: Interviews, ed. Zachary Ingle. University Press of Mississippi, 2012) The bright side of the writer's block [Writing is] a brutal, slogging work, comparable to coal mining, but harder. You never hear miners complaining about Coal Miner's Block, where, no matter how hard they try, they just can't bring themselves to mine another piece of coal. While tragedy like this befalls novelists all the time, which is why there are so many forced to stop working completely and become university professors. (Dave Barry, I'll mature when I die. Berkley, 2010)