Social Change Entrepreneurs Need Skills to Write for Maximum Impact

- The truth is that successful social change entrepreneurship rarely happens without the contribution of social change texts that help the entrepreneur achieve her or his ends.

Obstacles to Writing for Social Change (Student Panel)

Successful Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles (Student Panel)
**SIX TOOLS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE WRITING**

Adapted from *Undoing the Silence: Six Tools for Social Change Writing*, by Louise Dunlap

Using the following six tools will help you to write more frequently, more freely, and for maximum impact.

1. **The Freewriting Tool**—The Freewriting Tool undoes silence and helps you explore your experiences, ideas, and beliefs. It is a way to write quickly and freely, without judging yourself or evaluating what you write.

2. **The Process Tool**—The Process Tool helps you work step by step, instead of trying to write a polished draft in one sitting. These steps follow the following general pattern:
   - **Planning**—Generating ideas, gathering information, organizing ideas
   - **Drafting**—Writing a rough draft. (Getting it down!)
   - **Revising**—Fixing it up! (Improving paragraphs, transitioning for cohesiveness, clarifying ideas, and correcting errors)

3. **The Thinking Tool**—The Thinking Tool helps you think critically about ideas and organize them for maximum effectiveness. When you use this tool you use lists, conversations, grouping, the “funnel,” diagrams, metaphors, storyboards, storytelling, and more to think and communicate powerfully.

4. **The Audience Tool**—The Audience Tool helps you consider your writing from the view of your readers. Using this tool, you will ask questions such as:
   - Who are my audiences? My immediate, intended audience? My actual (often larger) audience?
   - What is the most basic community to which my audience and I both belong?
   - What are my audiences’ values, beliefs, and interests? How can I appeal to them? How can seeing my audience as part of a community to which we both belong help me to appeal to my audience’s concerns? What do we actually have in common (knowledge, attitudes, behavior, and skills)?
   - What does my audience already know about my topic? What do they still need to know?
   - What reader expectations shape how I should write a particular genre (categories or recurring types of writing) for a particular public forum (a place where people communicate)?

5. **The Feedback Tool**—The Feedback Tool helps a writer listen and respond to others in ways that stimulate the writer’s power to improve his or her own writing. This non-judgmental feedback helps us see if our message is coming across clearly and if our text is achieving its ends.

6. **The Word-Power Tool**—The Word-Power Tool helps you look at your writing through your reader’s eyes, cutting words where possible, connecting ideas so readers can follow your logic, and using high energy language. Examples of high energy language:
   - Avoiding gobbledygook, clichés, and vague terms
   - Using short sentences when you want to make a forceful point.
   - Using active voice
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: WRITING A LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Using the Freewriting Tool

Using the Process, Thinking, and Audience Tools
(What reader expectations govern the way you should write this text?)

• Keep it short (usually around 150 words)
• Make a clear connection to an article from the previous seven days, a recent event, or to an ongoing issue that is of current interest.
• Address a contradiction (hint: put the word “but” in front of a key line that points out such a contradiction).
• Contribute a new idea (personal experience, statistic, observation).
• Offer a succinct sound bite
• Use a respectful, generous spirited tone
Write your draft letter here.

Using the Feedback and Word-Power Tools