Plain Talk Writing Tip #3
Plain Talk is a Three-Legged Stool

Have you ever tried to balance a three-legged stool on one or two legs? It just doesn't work very well.

Plain Talk is much the same way. There are three components to Plain Talk, and if all three don't get the appropriate amount of attention, then the document won't stand up.

The three components of Plain Talk are:

Writing style:
Writing style refers to the words you use and how you string them together. Good plain talk involves using:
- Common words
- Short sentences
- Short paragraphs
- Active voice
- Personal pronouns

When you write, do it as though you were sharing the information with a friend.

Good design:
- If a document is solid text without breaks or highlighted areas, all the clear writing in the world won't make it easy to read. When you create a document/brochure/web page, organize the content in a logical flow. Then, to direct your reader to the most important information, be sure your design includes:
- Headers
- Lots of "white" space
- Bold type
- Bullets

Information flow:
There are two things to remember in this section:
- **Get right to the point**.
  Regardless of how well written and beautifully designed a document is, if you've buried the most important information at the end, the reader may not get to it. Our customers are busy, just like we are. It is a service to them to put the most important information right up front.
- **After you've made your point, stop.**
  Don't clutter the document with niceties or extra information. If extra information would be helpful and is available, tell your reader where they can find it.

The state's Plain Talk web site is an excellent resource for more tips on these areas. You'll also find a large number of Plain Talk before and after examples. Use these as inspiration and guidance for your own projects.

Watch for another Plain Talk tip in a couple weeks. And work on those contest entries.

Happy Plain Talking!