



**Put it in Writing** will help you get your newsletter done on time, every time. We offer crisp writing, eye-catching design and punctual delivery.

**510/724-9507**

**jeff@put-it-in-writing.com**



**Put it in Writing**  
**Newsletter Specialists**

- Interviewing
- Writing
- Editing
- Design
- Graphics
- Typesetting
- Photography
- Printing

1517 Buckeye Court  
 Pinole, CA 94564  
 510/724-9507; 741-8698 (fax)  
 jeff@put-it-in-writing.com  
 www.put-it-in-writing.com

**Jeff Rubin**

PRESORTED  
 STANDARD  
 US POSTAGE PAID  
 RICHMOND, CA  
 PERMIT NO. 336

## JEFF RUBIN SPEAKS!

**J**eff Rubin speaks on writing, marketing and business development.

His programs include:

### **STRATEGIC INTEGRITY**

Learn how integrity, reliability and humanity are great marketing strategies.

### **PUT IT IN WRITING**

Learn the writing and design techniques that get readers to respond to your printed marketing materials.

### **IF YOU MARKET IT, THEY WILL COME**

Convince people they cannot afford **NOT** to do business with you.

**www.JeffRubinSpeaks.com**

**877/588-1212**



# The Write Stuff

**A quarterly compendium of writing tips and other useful information**

## BLESSED WITH TALENTED FRIENDS

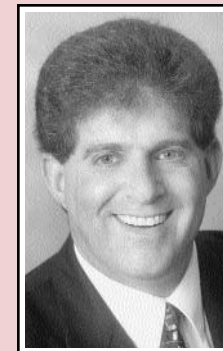
**O**ne of the benefits of being in business for 22 years is knowing a lot of intelligent, talented people.

Two of them have articles in this newsletter. Paul Wintroath, whom I've known since he was a student intern at The Mechanics Bank in the early 1980s, writes about cus-

tomerservice, one of my favorite topics.

And a new colleague of mine, Sandy Shepard, writes about protecting intellectual property, a concern of every small business person.

Having friends like these means less work for me, and more good information for you. I hope you find these articles beneficial to you and your business.



**JEFF RUBIN**

## CUSTOMER SERVICE A KEY TO SUCCESS

*Editor's note: Paul Wintroath is a Vice President in the Investment Department at The Mechanics Bank, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2005. Paul wrote this for the bank's newsletter, which Put It In Writing has published since 1982.*

**By Paul Wintroath**

**S**o much of the success of The Mechanics Bank has to do with the way we deal with and help our customers. We've learned over our almost 100

> *Inside*



## CUSTOMER SERVICE A KEY TO SUCCESS



PAUL WINTROATH

### > From front page

years that people want to be treated fairly and kindly. I'd hate for us to ever lose that.

Which reminds me of this quote from Howard Schultz, head of Starbucks: "We're not in the coffee business serving people. We're in the people business serving coffee." That thought probably speaks volumes as to why Starbucks has experienced such phenomenal growth.

We're in the people business too. We have to be at our best for every customer, or we've failed. If our mission is to win the loyalty of our customers, then we must be loyal to them as well.

Think about it from your personal experience as a customer. Does it seem you're one transaction in a line of customers? How often do you feel like you're a number, a credit

card or a PIN to the people serving you? Does the person "serving" you even see you?

So much of the retail experience in the U.S. is underwhelming. We can use that to our advantage. A good experience stands out these days. It might be a smile, or recognition of a customer by name. Maybe it's a quick in-and-out of the office or a "thank you for your business." People notice that because, sad to say, it has become uncommon.

### Put it in Writing Partners

**W**e recommend these businesses, which give discounts to our readers:

**ALPHAGRAPHICS**, Walnut Creek, 925/937-4700 (Greg or Kristin).

**CRAFTSMAN TRADE PRESS**, (printer), Concord, 925/521-0156 (Ric).

**PINOLE COPY CENTER**, Pinole, 510/223-8901 (Judy).

**SCAN ART GRAPHICS**, (pre-press), Richmond (Hilltop), 510/223-3248 (Fred or Ron). ■

Our values statement says: "Our customers always have a choice. We anticipate, listen and respond to their needs until they are pleased by our efforts."

In other words, our actions help them make that choice. On any given day each customer might decide to take his or her banking business elsewhere. We want to help them make this an easy decision.

It starts in the offices. Hearing about the new record on the Mystery Shops is exciting, and I know a lot of hard work has gone into those scores.

Our Call Center is the entryway into the bank for many customers, and some of the most helpful people in the entire bank reside there. I have received many comments from customers who appreciate having the phone answered by a cheerful person instead of a computer.

Finally, there are so many people behind the scenes in support departments. They never know when they'll be called upon for information and expertise, yet they are always ready to serve.

No doubt we're in the people business. We might never have the worldwide presence of Starbucks, but in our little corner of the world we can have a mighty presence.

## PROTECT YOUR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

By Sandy Shepard

**N**ow that you have a list of unique characteristics and have crafted them as benefits (as instructed in the last two issues of *The Write Stuff*), it's time to think about protecting your "intellectual property."

In general, IP protection comes in five flavors — copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, trade dress, and patents.

By signing your clients' contracts, you may sign over your rights to your IP — and be forbidden from ever using it again! You can also get into trouble by having others help you on a project, without having a contract assigning their rights to you.

It's important to have your own template contract spelling out exactly how you do business — and to have an attorney briefly review any contracts you consider signing.

But back to IP. **Copyright** protects the "expression" — the words, dance, or song — used to express an idea. If you put a copyright mark on your documents, use this format: © (date written) (owner). All rights reserved. See the end of this article for an example.

**Copyright** protects the "right" to "copy" the expression, and the "fair use" safe haven (a defense to an



SANDRA SHEPARD

infringement lawsuit) is quite restricted, stopping the second any profit is even indirectly made from the copying. So if you're copying, get permission.

While copyrights protect an idea's expression, a **patent** protects the idea itself. To be patentable, your product or process must be repeatable, novel, and it must not be an "obvious" extension of a current product or process.

Having a "patent pending" can add value to your business in your clients' eyes, or help you obtain funding.

By filing a patent, you explain in detail how to make your product or process. In exchange, you obtain a monopoly for a number of years. The opposite of a patent is a **trade secret**, where you keep the process secret. The recipe for Coke is an example. There is no expiration of the protection term as there is with a patent, but if a competitor

can reverse engineer your product or process, you lose it.

**Trade dress** protects the "look" of your product or establishment, while **trade-marks** and **servicemarks** are awarded for words (e.g., tag phrases or names) or pictures (logos) used on a product or service. Only unique marks can exist within a given channel of commerce, to avoid consumer confusion. General terms cannot be registered.

Even if you do not trademark your own terms (you should; if they are good, someone else will), it's always wise to check to be sure a tag line or potential new company name is not already trademarked. And with trade dress, don't try to entice your competitors' clientele to you by being "just like them." Receiving a cease and desist letter can ruin your day.

Taking time to understand and protect these rights can help secure a valuable asset as your company grows and succeeds.

— Attorney Sandy Shepard leads Good Solutions, which is dedicated to proving the value of having a lawyer on your team. She can be reached at 707/333.6191 or [sandy@goodsolutions.com](mailto:sandy@goodsolutions.com).

© 2002-2003 Sandy Shepard. All rights reserved.

