
GIVE IT LIFE

I recently stumbled across a taped lecture on the life and work of Charles Dickens. Not expecting much, I popped the tape into my car cassette player on the way home from work. And, surprisingly, I didn't want the drive to end

Literature professor Elliot Engel held my attention with an array of Dickens' anecdotes and stories, which painted the British author in fascinating strokes. I found myself wanting to know more about Dickens, wanting to dig out those dusty Dickens novels from college. Simply, Engel made me want to read. And he got me excited about good literature.

In our writing and editorial training, do we have a similar energizing effect on our listeners? Print media trainers don't have to be unusually eloquent speakers or rah-rah cheerleaders. But, we do need to bring our material to life - much like Engel did with Dickens.

This happens when we teach in concrete, not abstract, terms. It happens when we use the appropriate anecdote or illustration, and when we fan the imagination and open listeners' minds to new possibilities.

Unlike the pompous professor whose "vocabulary consists of \$500 words chasing 50-cent thoughts" (Engel's words), we package our material in accessible forms. And we work and pray so people will leave our seminars with fresh enthusiasm and renewed commitment to work. What happens after the workshop is what counts.

John Maust

(Information about Engel's tapes is available through: Writer's Ink,
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NC 27607 USA, or on internet: www.authorsink.com)