from the original building and enter the side door.

4. Rewrite the sentence.

■ *With* the selection *of* health plans *for* next year *on* the intranet *for* the next month, you should have no trouble finding the information.

With the 2007 health plans posted *on* the intranet *through* 2006, you should have no trouble finding the information.

Go *to* the intranet this month to select your 2007 health plan.

■ *In* most instances *of* run-on sentences *in* the work *of* contributors *to* the columns *in* the newsletter, the editor can expect to find other errors.

Most contributors who submit work *with* run-on sentences make other errors.

When newsletter contributors write columns *with* run-on sentences, the editor probably will find other errors.

Use real examples in your workshop, or rewrite them to protect the guilty. Write a few ridiculous examples to get a laugh and relax the participants.

Note that prepositional phrases can be powerful. Abraham Lincoln used a three-phrase string at Gettysburg to produce one of the most memorable statements in American history: "... government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Carolyn Mulford, senior writer and editor, *Writing That Works*.

■ Avocados by the Each

The front page of the supermarket ad featured fruit.
■ Red Delicious apples "(Sold by the lb.)"
■ Bartlett pears "(Sold by the lb.)"
■ Avocados "(Sold by the Each.)" Typo or (shudder) trend?

Managing Publications

Creating an in-house writing group

Well-structured quarterly meetings of a goal-oriented group can educate and rejuvenate your writers.

Many writers belong to critique groups that meet regularly to read and comment on each other's works in progress. Such groups also can serve corporate writers, but corporate groups require more structure, according to Debra Levine, who conducts in-house writing workshops.

Organize the group's sessions around skills that your writers need to improve.

"In a corporate setting, people need to get on with it," she says. "They're hungry for education."

They're also hungry for company, relieved to learn that their colleagues need support and further education. Internal writing groups don't have to meet frequently. Levine recommends meeting two and a half to three hours about once a quarter. To give everyone a chance to participate, the group shouldn't exceed 15 people.

Organize the group's sessions around skills that your writers need to improve. That could be anything from sentence structure to selecting strong verbs. Using a black board, a whiteboard or PowerPoint slides, display examples of poorly written sentences and ask each participant to suggest ways to rewrite these.

Levine provides worksheets divided into two columns. One

shows the writing that needs to be fixed and the other gives space to fix it. Group members then share their rewrites.

To make this exercise more relevant, take the "before" sentences from participants' work. The writers can remain anonymous, but get their permission to use their work.

Expect disagreement over how to edit the sentences. If your corporate culture discourages frank discussions, your writers may hesitate to make honest comments. The group leader can encourage more openness. Levine lets the writers know that she too needs feedback on her writing.

She says, "If the leader sets an air of humility and self-deprecation, that really takes the sting out of it. Avoid the schoolmarm role. For example, when I use the work sheets, I present my fix as just one of several possible fixes."

Heated exchanges aren't the norm even in organizations that encourage employees to let the fur fly, Levine reports. "People who are often argumentative and shout each other down, or interrupt each other in company meetings, tend to revert to very proper behavior when they come into a writing group."

The leader should give everyone a turn to speak and encourage the group to listen carefully to each person's feedback.

Writers feel more comfortable if the group leader is neutral. If a colleague, department head or manager leads the group, the emphasis can stray from learning and growing toward political agendas, personal relationships or scoring brownie points, Levine warns. Communications managers should think twice before joining

the group, she says. "No one wants to critique the manager."

WTW West Coast correspondent Judy Artunian interviewed Debra Levine, Levine & Associates, Debra@levineonline.com; 323/662-0261; www.levineonline.com/debra/index.asp.

Editor's note: Another way to stimulate writers is to establish a critique group for writing not related to work. It could be freelance articles, poetry, short stories, essays or any other form that interests at least three people. It could be anything not work related.

Groups of four to six usually work well. If your editorial staff is small, open the group to anyone interested, such as people who contribute news to your newsletter or intranet. One member should coordinate (e.g., finding a meeting place and time), but members of the group should function as peers.

Agree on meeting times and frequencies (say, twice a month) and lay out the ground rules. One basic rule: Point out what the writer has done well before discussing areas needing improvement.

Whatever the group chooses to critique, what writers learn from the feedback will help them in all their writing.

■ Using fiction as surreptitious teacher

Give your writers a boost by asking them to read fiction that illustrates some of the functional skills they're reviewing, Debra Levine suggests. Poetic prose can be a surreptitious way to teach a technique. "It pulls them into good writing against their will," she says. For example, Levine reads several sentences from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* to illustrate how he used two adjectives to modify nouns, as in "hard, flickering light."

She says the novelist's beautiful writing hooks the writers.

Career Opportunities in Writing

By Allan Taylor and James Robert Parish, *Checkmark Books, 2006, 352 pp., $18.95 (plus s&h; www.factsonfile.com).*

This book targets those considering writing as a career and those with up to five years of experience, but experienced writers may find the job descriptions and salary estimates useful.

According to the foreword, the United States had 319,000 writers and editors in 2002 (more than a third of them self-employed) and will probably have 385,000 by 2010. The growth comes despite unpromising general trends: less generous benefit packages, less secure jobs and more freelancers as employers cut costs.

The rapidly developing technology means writers need diverse skills. It's a given that everyone must be computer and Internet savvy.

The pay, which varies considerably from job to job, is mediocre; experienced people tend to make between $35,000 and $60,000. Freelancers face buying expensive equipment.

Readers can choose from 90 writing and writing-related jobs in eight fields, including advertising, commercial arts, business communications and public relations, government, freelance services and media.

Each entry begins with an easily skimmed chart showing duties, alternate titles, salary range, employment prospects, advancement prospects, prerequisites and career ladder. Approximately a page of text covers the same areas in more detail plus unions and associations.

■ Unusual office supplies dress up a desk

Want something other than what your company provides to grace your or a colleague's desk? Check out www.seejanework.com.

Among the products are
■ A 6x6-inch Memo Mouse Pad for the crowded desk—just lift your mouse to write a note ($8.50);
■ An 8-Days-A-Week Planner for those who can't get everything done during the seven-day week ($16);
■ A Staple Free Stapler for the environmentally conscious ($7.50).

The catalog features many other products in such categories as binders and portfolios, journals and notebooks, bulletin and magnet boards, and cases and totes.

Online Publishing

Most follow F-shaped pattern in reading the Web

Usability guru Jakob Nielsen has announced that the dominant reading pattern on the Web follows an F configuration.

A study tracked the eye movements of 232 people looking at thousands of Web pages. In his April 17, 2006, Alertbox (www.useit.com/alertbox/reading_pattern.html), Nielsen said the pattern has three components.

■ "Users first read in a **horizontal movement**, usually across the upper part of the content area." Think top of the F.

■ "Next, users move down the page a bit and then read across in a **second horizontal movement** that typically covers a shorter area than the previous movement."