FOREWORD

Lawyers, like salesmen, exist to communicate. The product lawyers sell is explaining, recording, and persuading about important matters in the lives of their clients. All good lawyers are communications experts.

In the ten years that Terri LeClerc has written about communication in the *Texas Bar Journal*, she has persuaded many of us that attention to prose style is just as important as attention to legal doctrine. Through these essays she explains and justifies the concrete rules of language and then takes us into the arena beyond rules: to the options for creating persuasive and memorable prose.

Dr. LeClerc reminds us that most lawyers, Perry Mason and Court TV notwithstanding, do their most important communication through the written word. The heart of most lawyers' work comes not in a rousing jury summation, but in the daily preparation of a ground lease, or an SEC S-3, or a routine request for production of documents. It is during this day-to-day writing that all of us can sharpen our writing skills by focusing on technique and the impact of our words.

As we all know, daily writing can all too easily become formulaic, boring, and careless. Our clients don't usually take the time to explain where we have failed them in this, but Dr. LeClerc does—she examines a variety of legal documents produced in law firms, state agencies, and, yes, our courts. She responds not as a rule-bound English teacher hunting for the passive voice, but rather as an interested advisor who will take the time to point out confusion and ambiguity. Attorneys

who read this book will benefit from both her conclusions and her suggestions.

Dr. LeClercq has studied about and taught writing skills for twenty-five years, including ten years at The University of Texas School of Law. She has learned that legal writing is a skill that needs attention and work, including work by those of us who are out of law school. We all have something to learn.

This collection of essays has practical advice for every practicing attorney. From grammar and punctuation rules to sentence and organization suggestions, Dr. LeClercq demands practice, practice, practice—not just to improve the document at hand, but to make the lawyer a better communicator throughout his or her career. A poorly phrased clause in a will or contract may seem innocuous when it is drafted, but it can become critical later if the matter ends up in court, where even the most brilliant legal insights can be totally negated by bad writing.

The good advice in *Expert Legal Writing* is parceled out in short and concise chapters full of analogies and examples from a wide spectrum of legal fields. Whether it is read cover to cover or kept at hand for reference, every legal writer can benefit from this practical advice.

Better writing makes better lawyering, which improves the administration of justice for all of us.

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