Rich Zeoli: BANISHING THE BLANK PAGE WITH DRAGON DICTATE

The blank page has caused more terror in writers than editors, sales figures, and reviews combined. It has the power to bring creativity to a standstill.

Rich Zeoli had wrestled with the blank page many times when he landed a contract for his first book, The 7 Principles of Public Speaking. In addition to being a writer, Zeoli is a talk show host and communications expert who has trained many clients for appearances on national TV, but even he found himself staring at his MacBook, struggling to find the inspiration he needed.

“I had so much trouble getting started,” he recalls. And then he remembered Dragon NaturallySpeaking, which he had previously used to write op-eds and other pieces. He had switched to Mac since then, but he decided to stop by an Apple store in search of similar software. He found something identical: Dragon Dictate, which uses the same speech recognition engine as NaturallySpeaking.

“Dictate made it so much easier to start writing,” Zeoli explains. “I just started talking. It made the first step in the journey so much easier. Getting over that hurdle was like getting over a mountain.”

The mountain conquered, Zeoli settled in for the long trek that was writing the book. Dictate was his companion the entire way, freeing him to think and speak without worrying about the mechanical activity of fingers on the keyboard. “I don’t type as fast as I think,” he says, “but with Dictate I can get my thoughts down without worrying about punctuation or spelling. I would have a few pages done before I knew it, and I could go back and edit later.”

His trick for creating a breezy, conversational style is to avoid looking at the screen while talking. “I pretend I’m having a conversation with someone and I’m telling a story,” he says. “Then it’s not work anymore.” He finds that he thinks better while moving, so he wears a wireless microphone and walks around the room while writing.

The wireless microphone also comes in handy when he’s out with his laptop and needs to write. “I can use Dictate in a coffee shop and it looks like I’m talking on the phone,” he says.

Speeches Too
Zeoli recommends Dictate to his clients who are writing speeches. He explains: “I tell them: ‘Don’t write the speech. Stand up and talk the speech into Dictate, and then edit it afterward. A good speech should be organic and not sound scripted; Dictate helps them accomplish that.’

While juggling the demands of his growing business, RZC Impact, Zeoli is hard at work on his next book, which he’s also writing with Dictate. It focuses on political conversations at the dinner table with his in-laws. It’s about my observations, where I’m telling stories and reenacting those conversations,” he says. With The 7 Principles of Public Speaking continuing to sell well, he expects this book to be successful too.

Zeoli concludes: “Writers say ‘How will I do this?’ I recommend Dictate to anyone who wants to write a book. It eliminates the worry about sitting there staring at a blank page.”