

The plain language movement

New movements seem to be in the air and I'm thinking of starting one myself - but this one has nothing to do with politics and everything to do with language.

 By [Marion Scher](#) 8 Oct 2008

“ Given the within year and budget time flexibility accorded to the science agencies in the determination of resource allocation from within their global budget, a multi-parameter approach to maintaining the agencies budgets in real terms is not appropriate. ”

As early as 1945, people started to realise that in order to write effectively and get their message across, they needed to write in language that EVERYONE could understand. One of the earliest Plain Language Movements was founded by the US Government in order to “make government documents clear”, a cause our own government could certainly take up.

In fact, there are Plain Language Awards given in the US - with Al Gore adding to his tally of awards here. The irony is since this movement started, instead of language becoming easier to read, it's become increasingly more complex, often resulting in gobbledegook as in:

- *Forward-looking companies invest in synchronised third-generation flexibility*
- *Only geeks stuck in the 90s still go for holistic incremental mobility.*
- *Our upgraded model now offers regenerated management programming.*
- *The consultants recommend quality administrative capability.*
- *The solution can only be integrated incremental mobility.*

What these are in fact are meaningless, empty phrases that just make it look like you know what you're talking about - when in fact you don't. You just want to sound impressive, but what's the point if no one's going to bother to read it?

After you've finished reading this, pull up your latest report, letter, email and see if there are any words in there that you wouldn't use in normal conversation. If there are, rethink the document and next time try writing in plain English...

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