

YES! AND... CREATIVE GORILLA # 72

Having creative ideas is only useful if you can communicate them well...

Make Communication Simple...

“At some later date, in perhaps some less guarded moment, we will really get to know what the master of Old Trafford thinks of promotion to one of the key jobs in world football by friendship with the owner, by bartering the post of director of football, the most redundant job in any corner of the game where a degree of success has been achieved under a strong manager, for the top position so recently occupied by a man whose record of achievement, relative to his successor was so far in to another league it was almost beyond measurement.” Sports Columnist – UK Newspaper



“No way Jose”

Do you have creative ideas but struggle to communicate them?

Did you read the quotation above? Did you understand it? Did you give up after a few lines?

Recently, I developed a course on “Powerful Communications” which is a key part of innovation. As part of the course, I ran a five minute exercise on the Solutions Focus principle “Language – Simply Said” or, “Use \$5 words not \$5000 words” (In the course I swapped pounds for dollars to make it simpler still for my British audience).

As seems to happen regularly (Jung called it “synchronicity” or the coincidence of events that seem related, but are not obviously caused one by the other), just as I was looking for an example of difficult language, I opened the newspaper

whilst on the train to find the example I quote above.

I read that passage at least five times and struggled to understand it. I looked round the rest of the page to see if I had missed a sentence, but no, that was it.

The paragraph has 99 words and one full stop. It has ten words with three or more syllables (not including those ending in “ed” or “ing”) and I calculate its Fogg Index to be 43. [Fogg Index = average number of words per sentence PLUS number of three syllable words, TIMES 0.4] The recommended average is between 6 and 11 for newspapers!?

SO

Whilst a newspaper columnist is trying to entertain with words, they cannot entertain if the reader doesn’t understand the message. The same holds true for innovation. How are you going to sell an idea or proposal if you cannot communicate it clearly?

Recently I was asked to peer review an academic paper. I spent twenty minutes trying to understand what the article was about from the introduction on Page 1. It was full of jargon and quotes copied from other writers, seemingly without understanding what they meant.

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I would not have persevered if I had not been asked to review it. By the end of the 12-page paper I realised there was a very useful message hidden amongst the \$5000 words. Not much use though if the reader gave up at Page 1.

Are you stating your message clearly, or are you “obfuscating your communication” with long sentences, tortured structure and \$5000 words (and “obfuscating” is definitely a \$5000 word).

Using \$5000 words is often simpler than writing \$5 words. It can also make the writer seem well educated, but it is useless if the reader or listener doesn’t understand them. Be admired for your ease of communicating, not how well read you are or because you are a Scrabble champion .

ACTION

- Today, review one communication you write and check it for simplicity. Even better, have someone else check it
- Have a fun competition with your staff to spot the best \$5000 words in company communications such as marketing materials, annual reports or your web site. Then eradicate (sorry, remove) them

TO CLOSE

Here’s my rewrite of that newspaper column: “Perhaps in the future, we will understand what the Manchester United manager Sir Alex Ferguson, thinks of Chelsea’s owner, Roman Abramovich, promoting a friend, Avram Grant, to one of the key jobs in football. A friend who, as Chelsea’s Director of Football, was effectively redundant because of the strength of Jose Mourinho, the successful manager he replaced. A friend with a record of achievement almost too small to measure when compared with the achievements of Mourinho.”

You may not care about football, but at least now you, if I understood it, should understand the message!

Have a \$5000 week with \$5 words....

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