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TRAINING IN MANAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In form

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Jargon, more jargon and gobbledeygook!

by Barry Warwick

What on earth is a 'persona humana'? And what about that mysterious 'sujeto pasivo' the *Ministerio de Hacienda* fires our way every year? Or the language our politicians use - in good humour or not. If you've never stopped to think about how we speak and particularly how we write, perhaps the time has come.

The Plain English Campaign started in the UK in 1976. As the name indicates, the Plain English Campaign's sole objective is to promote a style of writing that is simple and above all understandable. The definition of Plain English is something that can be understood after reading it once and once only! Over the years the influence of Plain English has grown to such an extent that it is now the standard style for official and business documents in English - both in the UK and the US. So, how do you do it? Easy! Using simple and everyday words and writing what you want to say in the clearest way possible. The truth is that it's not quite that easy, because there are still documents knocking around that are well-nigh impossible to understand. In fact, every year the Plain English Campaign awards a Golden Bull (short for bullshit!) to the worst piece of writing. As you can see at www.plainenglish.co.uk/goldenbulls.htm, large, well-known companies and organisations that should really know better frequently battle each other hard for the Golden Bull.

And why am I telling you all this? Well, I think the Plain Spanish Campaign's time has come. The other day I received a letter from a government organisation. I had to read it and re-read it several times to understand what it was trying to say. It was full of confusing and heavy language - and it was too long. Hey, it wasn't Plain Spanish! Statistics indicate that 30% of business correspondence is only to clarify previous correspondence and reply to requests for clarification. Others show that up to 25% of words in business documents are redundant - and I imagine that many of the remaining 75% are inflated or even wrong. Bad writing is bad for you and bad for business in general.

Writing all your documents in Plain Spanish will improve your communication skills and save time for both you and your readers. If you feel your writing is not as clear as it could be, we can give you a hand. We have a course that will teach you the secrets and tricks of Plain Spanish (more information at: www.readmatthews.com/courses/written.html).

Join the Plain Spanish Campaign today: Express yourself simply and clearly!

READ MATTHEWS Lope de Vega 36, 28014 Madrid, Spain
e-mail: rm@readmatthews.com - Voice: (+34) 914 292 115 - Fax: (+34) 913 691 965
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