



Why Business People Speak Like Idiots: A Bullfighter's Guide

Brian Fugere , Chelsea Hardaway , Jon Warshawsky

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Ole!

If you think you smell something at work, there's probably good reason--"bull" has become the official language of business. Every day, we get bombarded by an endless stream of filtered, antiseptic, jargon-filled corporate speak, all of which makes it harder to get heard, harder to be authentic, and definitely harder to have fun.

But it doesn't have to be that way. The team that brought you the Clio Award-winning Bullfighter software is back with an entertaining, bare-knuckled guide to talking straight--for those who want to climb the corporate ladder, but refuse to check their personality at the door.

Why Business People Speak Like Idiots exposes four traps that transform us from funny, honest and engaging weekend people into boring business stiffs:

- **The Obscurity Trap:** *"After extensive analysis of the economic factors facing our industry, we have concluded that a restructuring is essential to maintaining competitive position. A task force has been assembled..."* These are the empty calories of business communication. And, unfortunately, they're the rule. The Obscurity Trap catches idiots desperate to sound smart or prove their purpose, and lures them with message-killers like jargon, long-windedness, acronyms, and evasiveness.
- **The Anonymity Trap:** Businesses love clones--easy to hire, easy to manage, easy to train, easy to replace--and almost everyone is all too happy to oblige. We outsource our voice through templates, speechwriters and email, and cave in to conventions that aren't really even rules.
- **The Hard-Sell Trap:** Legions of business people fall prey to the Hard-Sell Trap. We overpromise. We accentuate the positive and pretend the negative doesn't exist. This may work for those pushing Ginsu knives and miracle Abdominizers, but it's dead wrong for persuading business people to listen.
- **The Tedium Trap:** Everyone you work with thinks about sex, tells stories, gets caught up in life's amazing details, and judges everyone else by the way they look and act. We live to be entertained. We all learned that in Psychology 101, except for the business idiots who must have skipped that semester. They tattoo their long executive-sounding titles on their foreheads, dump pre-packaged numbers on their audience, and virtually guarantee that we want nothing to do with them.

This is your wake-up call. Personality, humanity and candor are being sucked out of the workplace. Let the wonks send their empty messages. Yours are going to connect.

Fast Company magazine named *Why Business People Speak Like Idiots* one of the ideas and trends that will change how we work and live in 2005.

So grab your cape and sharpen your sword. It's time to fight the bull!

Why Business People Speak Like Idiots: A Bullfighter's Guide Details

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From Reader Review Why Business People Speak Like Idiots: A Bullfighter's Guide for online ebook

Kim says

I got a copy of this book from the author, who was a Partner at my firm (god that sounds like a corporate slag thing to say). However, he is very bright, and what I read of this book was dead on and really funny.

Darnell says

Much more of a "how to business" than an in-depth consideration of jargon. I was hoping for the latter, but I guess this was fine for what it was.

Alberto Lopez says

I really enjoyed this book. It is fun and offers lots of great insights about improving the the message's transmission.

Kristen says

This is in the top 3 best business books I have ever read! If you work in a corporate business setting, and you care at all whether the emails, voice-messages, presentations, and memos you spend most of your work hours preparing get any attention AT ALL from the audiences you send them to, you need this book!

The book is brief, it's hilarious and it's useful. The main reason this book is all those things is because the authors do, throughout the book, EXACTLY what they spend 166 pages advising you to do - they talk like actual human beings about business stuff!

The reason most business books are on the list of books everyone SAYS they've read, but which in reality they just flipped through to get enough quotes to make it sound like they read it, and then it sits gathering dust on their office shelf, is because business books are written very much like business communications. That is, they are dense and dry and heavy and boring. The nuggets of brilliance that are certainly in many of those books is so painful to sift out, nobody can make themselves do it.

This book is 100 light years in the opposite direction from most business books. It is fun and funny to read. It is filled with real-life stories about the awful communications you see EVERY DAY in the corporate world, and then the authors go the next step further, and give you advice on how to do the same kind of communication better, i.e. like a human, so that you can actually connect with your audience - made up of, you know - other humans?!

I paid full price to buy this book, which I almost NEVER do when it comes to business books. Usually I get them from the library so I don't get mad when I realize it's just more of the same old, same old. Because this book IS so full of real-world advice and suggestions that can actually work, I decided it was worth plunking

down hard-earned money to have my own copy to highlight and refer to when the "business idiots" start to infect me with their disease. This book will be the antidote I pull off my shelf and use to remember to talk like a human instead of a "world-class, fully-leveraged, executive-style" business idiot.

The suggestions for improving corporate-world communications offered run the gamut from just mildly colouring outside the lines, to full out business-anarchy, so yes, not every reader will be able to implement every suggestion in their company. But if you really want to find ways to connect with your audience, and get them to listen to what you say, and do what you're asking them to do, this book is full of ideas on how to get there.

Michelle Tran says

The first few chapters were funny and what I was expecting of this book (ie. examples of bad business writings). The latter half of the book became a "*how to improve your sales pitch*" book, which didn't resonate with me at all.

Wolfie says

Interesting & amusing read - really geared toward get-ahead business execs

Paulo says

Segue divertido e necessário

Sipaul says

This is a funny book. I enjoyed his glossary of phrases with "translations" (e.g. Reach out - sounds like some sort of spiritual bond to be created instead of just saying 'contact'). My only problem with this type of book is that it assumes that there is a critical mass of 'business people' who want to get through the idiot-speak and actually get things done.

Definitely a good read and amusing look on the business world.

Jerry Smith says

Entertaining, amusing and spot on in terms of advice. I particularly like the section about Powerpoint and how it kills the messages you are trying to send. It is a well trodden path - it is clear that business speak is largely BS but it is so easy to slip into it and think you are sounding clever when in reality, you sound stupid.

Nice touches such as the messages we can draw from Hollywood plus tips and advice on ways to improve.

Everyone in corporate should read this - overall message: safe communication in corporate speak is guarantee of anonymity. True in life as well I think.

Trang says

Received the book from one of the authors. While I agree with the concept, I'm not entirely sure that those who should be applying it would find overarching compelling reasons to do so. Some interesting examples were cited throughout the book.

Troy Swinehart says

Recommended by one of my employees.

Grab your cape and sharpen your sword. It's time to fight the bull!

YES! Finally someone gets it. Say what you mean, mean what you say, and stop all of the meaningless tripe. My friends have all reminded me year upon year that I should watch what I say and when I say it. My mother has given me grief about the tone of my voice for as long as I can remember. My partner gives the look of embarrassment when I deliver an unpopular message. Yet all of the folks in my life will tell you they appreciate the honesty of what I say. And yeah sometimes I look really good in a cape as I deliver my rapier like messages. Stylish and to the point.

Now, I have managed to refine my style over the years. Some would argue to a lesser degree than I perhaps should have, but none the less I am better now more so than in my past. However, I have found that as my style points went up I ended up using a Nerf bat instead of a conversational rapier to deliver the message payload. I now refer to this as a carpet bombing conversations....blanket the enemy with a wide enough path of destructive double speak and you might hit the target. But talk more to be sure.

This book is a refreshing look at the double speak that the business community thrives on. I'll give you a real and true story that happened to me just today. Sitting in a conference room with the senior leadership of my organization we were discussing a particularly significant project that has a lot of tendrils and opportunity to positively affect us. A single question was leveled at 10 people on our side of the table and an equivalent number on the other: "What deadlines should we put down for our next meeting?" 15 minutes later the discussion had turned into long term action planning to minimize the risk while channeling the synergies of our companies in a forward thinking manner such thatUGH! So when are we getting together again?

Pilot to bombardier. Pilot to bombardier. Commence your bombing run...we're over the right country so close enough. But use enough bombs to make sure.

Time to sharpen our blunt instruments of conversation and get back to the point. Stop wasting everyone's time because there is never enough to go around.

Cut the bull!

Dave says

Get rid of all the MBA claptrap and if you read just one business book, read this one. Anyone who has lived life in Corporateville will find wry wisdom on every page. Stop speaking in tongues. Rise up, get genuine, speak like a human being. You'll be better able to look at yourself in the mirror and respect what you see.

Rebecca says

Cathartic and a good challenge to rethink why and how you communicate in a business setting. Don't agree with all their points, but it's definitely a good book if you're interested in changing up your approach at work, or need examples to encourage your client to approach their comms differently.

Greg says

I found this book pretty entertaining -- mostly because I recognized some of the b.s. business speak that was discussed in the book from emails and presentations I had seen at work or from things I have sent to other people.

The book encourages one to be themselves and this seems like good advice to a point. The book was a quick read and I would recommend it to anyone who feels like they need to break out of acting and being just another worker drone at the company they work.

Bookish Jen says

Not too long a headhunter sent me this job ad. I'm paraphrasing and shortening a bit of it so your brain doesn't explode (and to protect the not so innocent). My comments and translation of the ad copy are in italics.

Job Title: On-line Newsletter Operations Professional (On-line Newsletter Writer)

Principal Accountabilities (Principal accountabilities? Oh, I think you mean job tasks or position's duties)

- Manages the daily activities necessary to produce the monthly and quarterly newsletters with a focus on the execution of the on-line newsletters (Write and edit monthly and quarterly on-line newsletters)
- Coordinates creation of each newsletter between internal content creators and an external partner (Work on newsletters with both internal and external parties)
- Manages external partner's efforts to send each newsletter on-time (Make deadlines)
- Acts as primary resource for discussion on the capabilities of the newsletters (Collaborate with staff on how to produce effective newsletters)
- Assists with continuous testing efforts to improve the results of the newsletter program (Monitor newsletter

results and create improvements if necessary)

Okay, my comments and translation took just a couple of minutes to write. It really wasn't that difficult. Sure, my copy isn't as "fancy" as the original but it does get to the point, right?

Well, getting to the point doesn't seem to very common in business writing and speaking these days. If you're a citizen of cubicle land you've probably also noticed this when reading internal or external business communications. And if you think reading and listening today's business communication is a pain try writing it. I have and it's one of the quickest ways to gaslight yourself.

I'm not only the one who is frustrated by the current state of business communications. Brian Fugere, Chelsea Hardaway and Jon Warshawsky are also frustrated and they tell you why in their informative, smart and very funny book Why Business People Speak Like Idiots: A Bullfighter's Guide.

Fugere, Hardaway and Warshawsky have spent plenty of time in the trenches writing professional copy so they know bad business communications when they see and hear it. They break business communications down into four key sections:

1. The Obscurity Trap
2. The Anonymity Trap
3. The Hard-Sell Trap
4. The Tedium Trap

You're probably familiar with the obscurity trap. This is when businesses use pretentious phrasing and cryptic wording, much like the job ad earlier in my review. Business often use the obscurity trap because they believe it makes them come across as important and impressive but it is ultimately meaningless and confusing. Sadly, those proposing this type of writing come across as insufferable twits.

Sometimes businesses are afraid to show personality or a unique voice. This is the anonymity trap. Businesses use customized templates or try to fit into a boring standards because they think that's what they should do instead of trying something different and making themselves stand out from the crowd. This writing makes it difficult for the reader to distinguish one company from another.

Most of us hate the hard-sell businesses often practice. Sure, we love to buy, but we don't appreciate being sold to. The hard-sell trap is when businesses use their communications to bludgeon you into buying something just to make some money rather than asking you about your needs, your wants and your opinion on their services and/or products. The hard-sell trap is about seeing clients as dollar signs not individuals. This makes us feel used, not appreciated and understood.

Lastly, we come to the tedium trap. This is when businesses use tiresome and boring communication styles that are completely devoid of a compelling story or an innovative panache and nearly puts us to sleep. You've probably come across this during a meeting featuring dull Power Point presentations and even duller speeches. In other words, let's stop using boring clip art and when giving a speech have a little fun. Fun is good!

Why Business People Speak Like Idiots not only examines these traps it also offers suggestions on how to avoid them using clear language, real-life examples, and lots of wit. This book not only offers great ideas on how to avoid banal corporate speak in written communications but also in visuals, slogans, speeches, presentations and meetings. Yes, business communications can be enjoyable and at the same time inform, educate and persuade.

And as an added bonus, I really liked the glossary of terms that should be banished from business speak like

“action item,” “best practice,” “deliverable,” “client-focused” and “value-added.” Client-focused and value-added? Well, that should go without saying.

Now, I know I’m not the only one who picked up this book and claimed, “Yes, I’m not going nuts. Business people do speak like idiots!” However, I also fear this book might only resonate with the already converted. How do we get the non-converted to step away from the dark side other than force them to read their business communications “A Clockwork Orange” style? Well, I don’t have the answer to that but I do think Why Business People Speak Like Idiots is an important book that will hopefully enter the consciousness of everyone in corporate America.

Why Business People Speak Like Idiots. Read it. Learn it. Know it. Live it...before it’s too late.

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