

# Business Culture

Developing the right skills

# In an ideal world ...

the policemen would be ...

English

the engineers would be ...

German

the cooks would be ...

French

the managers would be ...

Swiss

and the lovers would be ...

Italian

# In a living hell ...

the policemen would be

German

the engineers would be

French

the cooks would be

English

the managers would be

Italian

and the lovers would be

Swiss

# **In practice...**

In international business  
the visitor is expected  
to observe local customs

When in Rome...  
do as the Romans do

# Great Divide by R Gesteland

- I relationship-focused vs deal-focused
- II formal vs informal
- III polychronic vs monochronic
- IV reserved vs expressive

relationship-focused vs deal-focused

Contact is contract

Time is money

## **Deal-focused**

Nordic and Germanic  
Europe

North America

Australia New Zealand

## **Relationship- focused**

The Arab World

Most of Africa,  
Latin America and

Asia

# Polychronic vs monochronic

Time is not money

*Mañana*



## **Monochronic**

Nordic and Germanic  
Europe  
North America  
Japan

## **Polychronic**

The Arab World  
Most of Africa,  
Latin America,  
South and  
Southeast  
Asia

# Formal vs informal

Hierarchical

vs

egalitarian

## **Informal**

Australia  
USA  
Canada  
New Zealand  
Denmark  
Norway  
Iceland

## **Formal**

Most of Europe  
Most of Asia  
The Mediterranean  
Region  
The Arab World  
Latin America

# Reserved vs expressive

Greek and Roman cultures

Colonisation

Emigration

## **Very expressive cultures**

The Mediterranean  
Region

Latin Europe

Latin America

## **Reserved cultures**

East and Southeast  
Asia

Nordic and Germanic  
Europe

# Outline

1. Negotiations
2. Business correspondence

# The Life of Brian Haggling Scene

to haggle = to bargain = to negotiate

a bloke = a guy

to insult = to offend

a gourd = a calabash

# Lesson of haggling

Do it properly!

Are you trying to insult me?

Are you joking?

You want to ruin me?

10 for that? You must be mad!



# Negotiations

1. Based on conflict (of interests)
2. Conflict is a driving force
3. Bilateral communication to reach consensus
4. Verbal and non-verbal communication
5. Decision making proces
6. Win-win/lose-win/lose-lose solution

# Negotiations

- People from different cultures negotiate in different ways
- Deals gone wrong and money wasted
- Breakdown in negotiations

# Through ignorance you may:

- Fail to win respect of the people you are negotiating with
- Misinterpret their behaviour
- Cause unintentional offence

- Avoid stereotyping
- Don't expect everyone from one culture to behave in the same way
- Carefully research into the cultural background before negotiation
- Observe during the negotiation

# Areas to consider

1. Creating a good atmosphere
2. Decision-making
3. Body language
4. Formality
5. Attitudes to time
6. Information

# Creating a good atmosphere

1. Small talk → choice of topic
2. You may cause offence by trying to get down to business too quickly
3. Knowing where to stand

# Decision-making

Reach agreement  
and 'shake hands on a deal'?

VS

Lengthy decision making, avoiding  
confrontation and debate?

'Testing the water'

# Information

A large amount of information

VS

Less detailed information



# Attitudes to time

## Punctuality

1. Starting on time
2. Interruptions

# Formality

1. Forms of address
2. Clothes
3. Business cards
4. Socialising
5. Relationship between superiors and subordinates
6. Language

# Language

☹️ I don't agree.

😊 It is quite possible but I have a different opinion.

☹️ I have no time.

😊 Please wait till the afternoon.

☹️ We can't deliver it now.

😊 We haven't got it in stock right now but...

☹️ I can't accept this.

😊 It is difficult for us to accept it as it is but let me suggest...

# Body language

1. Making first contact
2. Measuring reception
  - Face
  - Arms and hands
  - Legs and feet
  - Torso
3. Seeing the change of heart

# Accepting

- Cocking the head
- Squinting the eyes slightly
- Taking off or playing with eyeglasses
- Pinching the bridge of the nose
- Leaning forward, uncrossing legs, and scooting to the edge of the chair
- Increasing eye contact
- Putting hands to chest
- Touching the forehead or chin
- Touching you (if the movement is to reassure, and not to interrupt)

# Resisting

- Clutching the back of the neck
- Fidgeting nervously
- Reducing eye contact
- Placing hands behind one's back
- Placing a hand over one's mouth
- Locking ankles
- Gripping one's arm or wrist
- Crossing arms in front of chest
- Squinting eyes dramatically
- Making fistlike gestures
- Twisting the feet so that they point to the door

# 1. Spotting the signs of boredom

- Looking out of the window
- Doodling
- Drumming fingers

# 2. Nervousness

# 3. Don't believe everything you see

# Business Correspondence

*It's getting more like spring here. I hope you are doing well. In what season are you now? The spring in Japan is known for cherry blossoms. But nowadays cherry blossoms in Washington DC are rather unknown. Are you getting along well?*

*In this time, thank you very much for the order 'The Divine Renewal of ISE Shrine'. I am sorry from the heart that the videocasette has to be late...*



And in the outset we may as well be frank enough to confess, and, indeed, in view of the seriousness of the consequences which upon fuller reflection we find would inevitably result to municipalities in the matter of street improvements from the conclusion reached and announced in the former opinion, we are pleased to declare that the arguments upon rehearing have convinced us that the decision upon the ultimate question involved here formerly rendered by this court, even if not faulty in its reasoning from the premises announced or wholly erroneous in conclusions as to some of the questions incidentally arising and necessarily legitimate subjects of discussion in the decision of the main proposition, is, at any rate, one which may, under the peculiar circumstances of this case, the more justly and at the same time, upon reasons of equal cogency, be superseded by a conclusion whose effect cannot be to disturb the integrity of the long and well-established system for the improvement of streets in the incorporated cities and towns of California not governed by freeholders' charters.

**We have made a mistake last  
time.**

***If you can't explain it simply,  
you don't understand it well  
enough.***

A. Einstein

We lawyers do not write plain English. **We use eight words to say what could be said in two.** We use arcane phrases to express commonplace ideas. Seeking to be precise, we become **redundant**. Seeking to be cautious, we become **verbose**. Our sentences twist on, phrase within clause within clause, glazing the eyes and numbing the minds of our readers. The result is a writing style that has, according to one critic, four outstanding characteristics. **It is “(1) wordy, (2) unclear, (3) pompous, and (4) dull.”**

Richard C. Wydick, Plain English for Lawyers (4th ed.). Durham: North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press. 1998:3

# Legalese

PASSIVES abtrusive

lengthy misunderstandings arcane  
wordiness confusion

pompous NOMINALISATIONS

dull NEGATIVES MULTIPLE  
redundancy complex unusual

# Plain English

*The writing and setting out of essential information in a way that gives a cooperative, motivated person a good chance of understanding the document **at the first reading in the same sense that the writer meant it to be understood.***

Cutts, M. 1998. "Unspeakable acts revisited."  
*Information design journal* 9, no. 1:39-43.

(Martin Cutts is a research director  
of the Plain Language Commission in the United Kingdom)

# The Origins of PL

1953 Stuart Chase complained about "gobbledygook" in texts

1972 U.S. President Richard Nixon created PL momentum when he decreed that **the *Federal Register* be written in 'layman's terms'**

1973 Citibank converted a promissory note to PL

1978 U.S. President Jimmy Carter issued Executive Orders intended to make government regulations **cost-effective and easy to understand** (rescinded by R. Reagan)

By 1991 eight states had passed statutes related to PL

# Government Regulations

President Obama signed the **Plain Writing Act of 2010 on October 13, 2010**. The law requires that federal agencies use ***clear Government communication that the public can understand and use***. On January 18, 2011, he issued a new Executive Order, "E.O. 13563 - Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review." It states that ***[our regulatory system] must ensure that regulations are accessible, consistent written in plain language and***





1. UK Plain Language Act  
[petitions.direct.gov.uk](http://petitions.direct.gov.uk) closing 23 Sept  
2012
2. Civil Procedures Rules 1998 (for England  
& Wales)
3. Since 1979 Plain English Campaign  
*campaigning against gobbledegook,  
jargon and misleading public information*



# Plain English

clearness  
lucidity simplicity  
correctness  
intelligibility accuracy

# Don't write like Shakespeare

- too many unnecessary words
- empty words
- too verbose
- educated

**Write like George Orwell**

A Party member lives from birth to death under the eye of the Thought Police. Even when he is alone he can never be sure that he is alone. Wherever he may be, asleep or awake, working or resting, in his bath or in bed, he can be inspected without warning and without knowing that he is being inspected. Nothing that he does is indifferent. His friendships, his relaxations, his behaviour towards his wife and children, the expression of his face when he is alone, the words he mutters in sleep, even the characteristic movements of his body, are all jealously scrutinized. Not only any actual misdemeanour, but any eccentricity, however small, any change of habits, any nervous mannerism that could possibly be the symptom of an inner struggle, is certain to be detected. He has no freedom of choice in any direction whatever. On the other hand his actions are not regulated by law or by any clearly formulated code of behaviour.

# PL Resources

1. Drafting manuals and PL courses on [www.plainlanguagenetwork.org](http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org)
2. Free guides on [www.plainenglish.co.uk](http://www.plainenglish.co.uk) (design, layout, cv's, reports, e-mails, etc.)
3. Garner, B. A. (2001). Legal Writing in Plain English. A Text with Exercises. The University of Chicago Press.  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/garner/>

# Principles for Writing Planning

1. Plan your writing projects (non linear, [whirlybird](#) approach).
2. Order your material in a logical sequence.
3. Use chronology when presenting facts.
4. Divide your documents into sections, and sections into smaller parts.
5. Use informative headings for the sections and subsections.

# **Principles for Writing Phrasing sentences**

- 1. Omit needless words.**
- 2. Keep the average length to 20 sentences.**
- 3. Keep SVO word order.**
- 4. Prefer active voice.**
- 5. Use parallel phrasing for parallel ideas.**
- 6. Avoid multiple negatives.**
- 7. End sentences emphatically.**

# New perspective

## You-perspective

 *We are processing your application...*

 *Your application is being processed...*

 *We are pleased that you have chosen...*

 *Thank you for choosing...*



# Positive perspective

- 👉 During winter our branch will close at...
- 👍 During winter our branch will stay open until...
  
- 👉 No discount can be granted if your order is under \$500.
- 👍 If your order is \$500 or more you can receive a discount.

# Avoid uncertainty

👉 We hope/trust/doubt...

👉 We think...

👉 We are sure/certain/convinced...

👉 I hope this answers all your questions.

👉 I am sure this answers all your questions.

# Stay clear

- 👉 Absenteeism has been **worse** this year than last year.
- 👉 The rate of absenteeism is **5.5% higher** this year than last year.
- 👉 **Almost everyone** agreed that we must do **something** about absenteeism.
- 👉 **9 of the 11 people** present agreed that we must **reduce** the rate of absenteeism...

# Be accurate

- 👎 good, bad, better, worse, improved
- 👎 something, somebody, somewhere, anywhere
- 👎 slightly, a little, bit
  
- 👎 Sales are up.
- 👍 Sales are 14% higher this month.

# Keep it short

👉 It is interesting to note that KGY company's earnings...

👉 Note that...

👉 It is necessary that a written confirmation is made asap.

👉 Please confirm in writing asap.

# Get rid off...

All expressions beginning with

 **IT and THERE**

It is important...

It is necessary...

It is possible...

There exist(s)...

There is a possibility...

# Write naturally

👎 We **employed** a new technique...

👍 We **used** a new technique...

👎 We **shall endeavor** to address a reply to...

👍 We **will try** to answer...

# Old fashioned

- 👎 Please find enclosed...
- 👎 We acknowledge the receipt...
- 👎 Thank you in advance for your attention...
  
- 👍 Write as you speak.
- 👍 Avoid jargon.



Write  
to **express** yourself  
not  
to **impress**