

Why Plain Language and How to Sell It Internally

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Exercise

frame supported tension structure

extreme wind induced water action

customer conveyance mobile lounge



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What is plain language?

- words/language used to explain/communicate
- not always shortest or simplest words
- more than just appropriate words
 - ✓ organization
 - ✓ format



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What is plain language?

- Advanced technology gives the **illusion** of good communication...but shorthand, jargon, abbreviations, acronyms, academic and bureaucratic wording actually block it.
- If there's no understanding, there's no communication.



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Why should we care?

- public health issues
- private medical information
- safety instructions
- access to social services
- children's futures/careers
- financial security issues
- legal issues



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3 Reasons for Plain Language

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Clarity

You want the audience to understand what
you're saying:

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- make informed decisions
- take actions you want taken
- build ongoing relationships
- protect health and safety
- raise own efficiency and effectiveness

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Reputation

Clarity affects your reputation and a bad “rep”
is hard to reverse:

- Public resent being frustrated and intimidated.
- Resentful public talk to others loudly and critically.
- Looks like you're hiding things and public loses trust.
- You risk looking pretentious and annoying the public.
- Public go to other sources to interpret your information.



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Cost

Lack of clarity is expensive:

- Confusion sends customers to your competition for products, services and information.
- You can save enormous amounts of staff time and cash if people get your message clearly, **the first time.**

Australia

- The State of Victoria saved \$400,000 and the cost of 26 staff years annually.
- Capita Financial Corporation spent \$200,000 one time, to save \$400,000 a year.

United States

- Federal Communications Commission saved the cost of five staff years annually and changed its public persona.
- Citibank saved millions in staff training and stopped all company visits to small claims court.

Britain

- The Department of Health and Social Security spent \$50,000 one time, to save \$2,917,290 a year in staff time.
- The Department of Defence spent \$23,265 one time, to save \$778,000 a year.

Canada

- Alberta's provincial government introduced a training course that saves an estimated \$10 million a year.



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4 Steps to Selling Plain Language

1. Do your research and apply it to your company/agency/department.
2. Draft a plain language plan – internal and external.
3. Start small and get a seat at the decision-makers' table.
4. Start lobbying.



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