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**The Times** reviewed her website as a **'site offering services to help improve business word power skills. The consultancy trains your staff on how to get the most from clients and managers through clever use of language. Food for thought.'**

## THE IMPORTANCE OF WORD POWER
## IN GETTING YOUR MESSAGE ACROSS

### Article in *In*Business Magazine: 'What's new on The Net?'

**WORD Power Skills are essential in e-commerce. Are you tapping into this free but under-used resource? Website visuals attract but it's content that's likely to sell,** according to Fiona Talbot

**You can have the best product or the best service in the world but still fail …**
if you don't know how to communicate to make your customers more likely to respond the way you want.

A very interesting fact is fast is fast emerging from the growing use of e-commerce. It's that the written word is actually becoming more crucial than it has been in quite a while.

Largely because of the emphasis placed both on excellent spoken communication skills (reflected in the highly visible rise of customer call centres in recent years) and an initial belief that websites and other e-commerce were purely IT and visuals driven, business writing has largely been allowed to become the busy executive's untapped resource.

Coupled also with noticeably deteriorating standards of literacy in schools and institutes of higher education, this tends to mean that people are entering the workforce deficient in good writing skills, not even necessarily aware of this fact and unlikely to be coached in these skills, once employed.

**What you see is what you think you get**

But it's an absolute fact that you can't afford to get your words wrong, whatever your business.

The written word is unforgiving. What you write is judged for what it is: how you expressed yourself at that point in time. What you see is what you think you get.

Yet research indicates that up to half our written messages may lead to confusion, even downright misunderstanding. This is really bad news in a commercial sense. Misunderstandings lose us time, goodwill and often custom too.

It's quite obvious that if, as customers, we do not understand or like what supplier A is writing, it can be our preferred option to buy from supplier B, who cares enough about our time and our needs to get the message right – in shorter time.

E-Commerce should not be about stressful information overload.  It should be about getting to new business fast.  Hitting the commercial target faster is good news for seller and buyer alike.

**Clear business writing should be paramount in website content.**

E-Commerce is, theoretically at least, about leading to new business fast. We need to design our communication so that browsers respond to the business ideas presented online and have the mindset, as well as the necessary know how, to do business.

It makes a great change from the days when deals were more time-consuming and labour-intensive.  The ritual involved in initial telephone enquiries and preliminary or follow up meetings could also mask the true point of why two or more parties were sounding each other out!  In true British fashion, the words 'Can we do business?' were very often left till very late in the proceedings, if at all.

It was really while working abroad, helping multinationals seize the competitive edge in their use of English as a global business language, that I realised how confusing foreigners often find our language, especially when we insist on using colloquialisms. Interestingly, they often think that we hide behind language because we are ourselves confused.  There can be some truth in this!

It's since my return to the UK that companies here have called me in as a trouble-shooter. I'm asked to look at whether the words these companies use, really say to their internal and external customers what they want them to say.  Sounds common sense doesn't it?

**The Emperor's New Clothes!**

Yet, I don't know why, you never find Directors of Common Sense, per se. It means you are likely to have come across literal nonsense in a lot of websites you've visited.  It can be a question of poor grammar, punctuation but also, more worryingly, unclear meanings, poor logic or impossible claims.

In all cases, it can undermine a company's professional credibility in terms of quality and indeed ability to deliver. It shows a culture of customer disservice.  Make mistakes on this level and you may as well be spelling out: w-e d-o-n't c-a-r-e.

(I'm giving the benefit of the doubt about the correct use of the apostrophe here!)

How many of you, like me, find yourselves increasingly affronted by slipshod communication? When the going gets really silly I sometimes feel like shouting out 'But the Emperor isn't wearing any clothes!'  By this I mean: somebody take accountability for the fact that these words are giving the wrong impression.  What you see is **not** what you get.

**Words can please too**

There is an upside.  We have a great language.  If we apply ourselves, we are sure to find the right word to say what we mean (i.e. what we can deliver) and what we want (to enable an informed and commercially desirable response).

Beyond this, we can actually design our communication to work for us and even to please our internal and external customers where possible.

Success or failure can depend on a company's choice of words.  It's absolutely a science and not an art to get it right.