

BUSINESS ENGLISH?

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"Business English" was once a term for simple, no-frills communication, English with its sleeves rolled up for action. Now it means obfuscatory circumlocutions pussyfooting periphrasis, "and etc.," to use a phrase I keep encountering in the writing of MBAs. Let's see if you are executive timber, middle-management material. Can you create business jargon to substitute for each of these simple phrases? Some suggestions appear in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

1. trying out a product in supermarkets
2. to place an advertisement
3. time of day
4. a new product stealing business from one you already sell
5. similar products
6. quick reaction
7. how long it will take to get something done
8. office worker
9. assistant to an office worker
10. explanation
11. one idea
12. people who won't buy your product
13. anyone could do it
14. I'm working on it
15. planner
16. producing statistics or numbers
17. profit motive
18. send me what in writing
19. personnel skills
20. overall plan
21. bogged down in details
22. work with what you have
23. planning
24. situation or state
25. wasteful
26. surround with supporting data
27. lies discovered
28. list
29. put your finger on it
30. red tape
31. see it all clearly

32. accident in a nuclear power plant
33. smart, educable
34. bombing
35. we haven't finished it but to hell with it
36. overthrowing foreign governments
37. someone speaking to you
38. cocktail party
39. segregation
40. guess

NEVER RUB BOTTOMS WITH A PORCUPINE!

Mary Ann Madden's three collections of New York Magazine competitions are three of the funniest books in English, with a lot of good logology, too. In the introduction to her first book, she acknowledges her debt to the New Statesman for the idea. Four New Statesman collections have been published; the latest, with the intriguing title given above, was published in London by George Allan & Unwin in 1979, covering competitions from 1968 to 1978.

NS entries tend to be longer than NYM ones, more literary, with many sonnets and poetic parodies, and many lengthy pastiches; I particularly liked those of Wodehouse. They are far bawdier but distinctly less funny, even making allowance for different tastes.

More than a dozen competitions are of logological interest. Four asked for anagrams of names, with a few good results (WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE / a weakish speller, am I?; GORE VIDAL / I love drag). Another repeated topic was mynorcas (inverse acronyms). The familiar (to Britons) sign-off NORWICH (Nickers Off Ready When I Come Home) inspired other randy ones like WINDSOR (When I'm Near, Darling, Strip Off Regalia). Later, corporations were unmasked, such as ALITALIA (Always Late In Take-off, Always Late In Arriving). A-Z stories such as 'A bachelor called Dickie encountered frighteningly gleeful harlots in Jaipur ...' were generally uninspired. Other topics included name riddles (What sort of noise does an old French war-horse make? Marshal Ney), punctured poems (The grave's a fine and private place / But ashes take up far less space), triplets of titles (On The Beach/Jaws/A Farewell To Arms, Lord Jim/Girl, 20/Lucky Jim), and apropos names (Anastasia Mostyn-Winter, the regular guest; Mordecai Ford-Rilling, the dentist). Last but not least, I note poems of four-letter words: Shun love, wise maid, lest love turn into hate; / When joys leap high, what long dark fall must wait! ... (PMC)