

The Lustberg Communicator

Volume 18, Number 4

“Communication should be an intellectual act of love.”

Winter 2009-10

Holiday Wishes

As we count our blessings this holiday season, we find you among the number!
Thank you for your support, your friendship, and your engagement
in our efforts to improve understanding within the family of man.
We hope the New Year brings you love, good health, fulfilling work, and joy!

Arch, Marguerite, Susan, Marlece & Karen

Lustberg on...Words, Words, Words



Photo by Mary Norman

Arch Lustberg

In October, frequent contributor Dave Wilson sent me a *Wall Street Journal* article, “Crusader for Syntactic Disambiguation Exprobates Banks’ Labored Locutions.” It’s about Chrissie Maher, a Brit who founded a group called “The Plain English Campaign.” Her goal is to stem “the ever-growing tide of confusion and pompous language.”

She’s my kind of gal! Our environment is littered with what I call “garbage words,” and I’m on a crusade to get them collected and dumped.



Anyone who’s read my books, commentaries, and newsletters – or seen my training – knows how close to apoplexy I get when I hear “uh,” “like,” “look,” “well,” “I mean,” “ya know.” These and other noises have usurped the digestive of the mind, the silent pause. Even “and,” “but,” and “so”

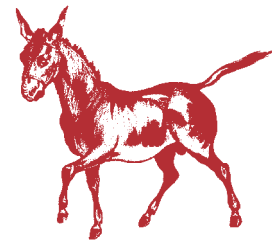
have conspired to replace the period in speechmaking and conversation. (Can you hear me, Mr. President?)

Often, entire phrases keep us from getting to the heart of the matter: “Let me begin by saying...” (But you’ve already begun!) “Let me ask you one question...” (I’ve recognized you, so ask.) “...if you will...” (What if I won’t?) “...as it were...” (It IS, so get to the point.) “I’m here to talk about a subject that I care deeply about...” (We know where you are, and we assume you wouldn’t be here if you didn’t care.) “At the end of the day...” (Please stop this verbal abuse before THEN!) “If I may...” (I wish I could stop you.) “In conclusion...” (HOORAY!)

It’s all part of the Pompous Ass Syndrome – a contagious ego virus that causes speakers to try to impress

us instead of just talking to us. They put us to sleep with words they believe have an intellectual ring.

If you *must* use “antediluvian” – not because it’s impressive, but because it’s the right word – you’ll need a vaccine against Pompous Ass Syndrome. These stories should help.



When I was about seven, I was taken to the dentist. After spraying water into my mouth the doctor commanded, “Expectorate.” Then he paused effectively and said “SPIT.” Aha! I

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Dear Arch



I thoroughly enjoyed your training session this last Friday at the Entrepreneurial Accelerator Program here in Birmingham, Alabama.

Comprehending the lessons you taught and putting them into practice is vastly different. I am pleased however to say that I will work diligently to improve my verbal communication skills thanks to you. I am also looking forward to reading your book.

Thomas Culpepper

I have to share an experience I had last week. For the 14th year, I participated in presenting Winning Presentations to the students entering the School of Accountancy at BYU. I partnered with Ernst & Young and we used the video we made with you back in 1998. Well it blew the participants away!



They got it!! They loved it!!! Even the attending faculty said this was the best session of all. They rave every year about how wonderful and important your message is and how much they enjoy it, so the comment about this year was especially meaningful.

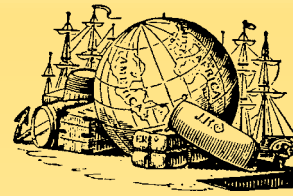
I just wanted you to know that you continue to change lives!! Thanks for all your help to me over the years. It is a thrill to teach your principles to students and professionals.

You're the best!

Jex T. Varner

Audit Watch, Thomson Reuters □

It's a Small World



I've told you that my co-trainer, Bill Graham, teaches a masters course in communications for Seton Hall University. He sent me a review of my book, *How to Sell Yourself*, written by a young woman in the program. I hope you'll enjoy her introduction as much as I did:

I first opened Arch Lustberg's book, How to Sell Yourself, sitting on a flight from Newark to Pittsburgh. As soon as I opened the book, I caught myself smiling in agreement with what he had to say. I couldn't put the book down.

Mid-flight, the older gentleman in the seat next to me said, "Sweetheart, you don't need to learn how to sell yourself." I looked at him, and smiled awkwardly. I thought, "What the hell kind of comment is that!" I said, "Excuse me?" He responded, "You don't need to learn how to sell yourself; you already are a competent and likeable person. The

way you carry yourself says it all."

I looked at him in shock. The first page in Chapter 1 of the book says there are three things we all need in order to sell ourselves: Competence, Likability and Luck.

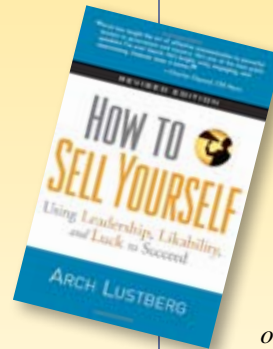
As "luck" would have it, the gentleman had happened to glance at the book I was reading, and happened to work for a large

corporation where he had happened to sit in on one of Arch's workshops.

It just so happened that we were on the same flight, at the same time, sitting right next to each other. It's funny how the world works!

He told me that Arch was one of the most influential people he had ever met in his life. He said that I was really lucky to have been given the opportunity to read this book for my master's class, and that the book would change my life.

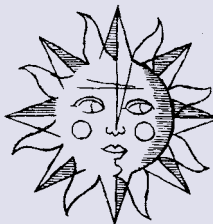
After talking to this gentleman, I was dying to finish the book! □



Wisdom of the Ages

"To be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved."

*George MacDonald (1824-1905)
Scottish Novelist, Poet, Minister*



"Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate."

*Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965)
German-French Physician, Philosopher, Theologian*

"Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things."

*Peter F. Drucker (1909-2005)
Austrian-American Management Consultant*

Nits & Picks

Closed Ears

Without listening, there can be no communication. Without respect, there can be no goodwill. In my November Commentary, I noted that too many of us have stopped listening, opting instead for shouting matches. Dana Milbank wrote an illustrative story for *The Washington Post*, describing the night the House of Representatives passed its version of healthcare legislation. It didn't get off to a good start:

The debate was only a few minutes old when Representative Lois Capps of California rose to speak, and

was interrupted by Representative Tom Price of Georgia...

CAPPS: I ask unanimous consent—

PRICE: I object!

CAPPS: – to revise and extend—

PRICE: I object! I object!

CAPPS: I ask unanimous consent to revise my –

PRICE: I object!

CAPPS: – remarks.

PRICE: I object! I object! I object!

I object!

[The presiding officer notes that Capps had not yet said anything that could be objected to.]

CAPPS: I ask unanimous consent to revise my remarks.

PRICE: I object! I object! I object!

I object! I object!

CAPPS: Care denied because of a preexisting condition-

PRICE: I object! I object! I object!

How much are we paying these people? I object!

The Next Generation

Bob Dean, with whom I've worked for more than 25 years, reports that his son Rob, 24, made a successful presentation at this year's Digital Avionics Systems Conference in Orlando. I'm pleased

that Rob credits my website training clips with contributing to his success.

He's quoted by Dad, "The open face reminded me about how I need to be likable."



Garbage Acronyms

I was delighted with this message from Mike McCabe, of the Council of State Governments, and almost as delighted with my own response! We're having fun, but the issue of acronym over-dose is serious:

Hi Arch – I received an e-mail today from a coalition supporting legislation called the Humane and Optimal Restoration and Sustainability of Equines Act.

That string of words – not short, nor old, nor "user friendly" – made me think of you. The supporters of this bill explain that we're free to use its acronym and refer to it as the H.O.R.S.E. Act.

My question – and it occurs to me whenever I discover a title or phrase that was clearly manufactured to fit a desired acronym – is why not just use the more memorable and actual word? What's wrong with the "Horse Act"? Why does it have to be the H.O.R.S.E. Act, or – God forbid – the "Humane and Optimal Restoration and Sustainability (zzzzzzzzzzzz) of Equines Act"? – Mike

Mike – I'm inspired! You started me tinkering and I'm drafting a new piece of legislation that I'm calling "Broad Utilization of Linguistic Logic Sustainability & Heterosexual Infrastructure Temporization." You do the math on the acronym.

– Arch



Doublespeak Watch

How about Nancy Pelosi's changing the Healthcare's "Public Option" to "Consumer Option"?

The Action, The Color, The Stories!

In October, Hall-of-Fame Sportscaster Vin Scully was interviewed on Public TV's *The News Hour*. Scully's interviewer, Jeffrey Brown, set up the piece describing how Scully prefers to work alone in the booth, "providing the color, the stories and details that entertain and enlighten his audience."

How has Vin Scully, 81, remained so popular for 60 years? These excerpts tell the tale:

Brown: Who are you talking to when you're doing the game? I mean, you're one of the few who still does it alone for the most part. So who are you talking to?

Scully: Well, first of all... it's not an ego thing. It's not that I just want to be on all by myself... What I'm doing, I'm talking to the listener. And I will talk. I'll say, "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you..."

Brown: "I forgot to tell you."

Scully: Exactly. Talking. Because I don't want the microphone to be in the way. I want them to know I'm sitting next to them in the ballpark...

Brown: ...Baseball more than other sports is about the small details and, of course, the stories...

Scully: You have to talk about each player... If I can get a story about a player, I would give you a ship load of numbers, batting averages and all, just for that one precious story. That's the kind of thing I love to do.

Make Vin Scully your role model.



See "NITS & PICKS" on page 4

Nits & Picks

Continued from page 3

Don't let the microphone get in the way. Talk to your audience as if you were sitting right next to them. And remember, one good story is worth more than a ship load of numbers.

The Mandate

I never thought much of Don Hewitt, producer of CBS TV's *60 Minutes*.

He was the midwife of "gotcha" journalism, more interested in destroying people for ratings than doing the real work of investigative journalism: uncovering the truth in all its complexities.



Of course, without Hewitt my own career wouldn't have been as successful. I've spent untold hours preparing clients for *60 Minutes* and its copycats.

But what made the show so popular? Did viewers just enjoy seeing people implode? No, the attraction went beyond the Roman Colosseum, and it's summed up by Hewitt's four-word mandate to his staff – as revealed in a self-serving profile of Hewitt by *60 Minutes* earlier this year. Ironically, Hewitt's mandate is the same mandate I've always given my clients as I prepped them for a *60 Minutes* interview: "Tell me a story!"

The Editor's Pencil & the Speaker's Pause

Last month Peter Kaplan, until recently the editor of the *New York Observer*, was a guest on *The Charlie Rose Show*. It was stunning to see a guy who'd built a successful career on his outstanding written-language skills be so inept with the *spoken* word. He said "ya know" so many times I couldn't keep count. And time after time, he'd begin a sentence then



stop and begin again. No one ever told him that the silent pause is the speaker's equivalent of the editor's pencil. It's the tool we use to modify and organize our initial thoughts so that when the words start flowing, they're coherent and effective. □

Words

Continued from page 1

learned the lesson well. If you use a term that may not be understood, paraphrase it or define it immediately following a pause.

This lesson was reinforced over a decade later in a university drama class. Walter Kerr – a brilliant teacher who left academia and became the drama critic for the *New York Herald Tribune*, then the *New York Times* – was teaching a group of us World War II vets and said, "The Greek Theatre was indigenous... (slightly longer than usual pause)... it grew out of the religion, the folklore, the popular stories of the time. Nothing was foreign, strange or unbelievable." Each one of us was flattered into believing we knew all along what "indigenous" meant.



I have a special dislike for words that end in "-ize." You almost never hear "use" any more. Everyone's "utilizing." "Use your imagination" communicates instantly – but "utilize your creative thought capabilities" doesn't. Of course, "maximize," "prioritize," and all the other "-izes" are just as bad.

A final thought (Hooray!): Throw out the garbage language: DON'T RECYCLE! □



Bringing Arch to Town

A common note you'll hear from Arch's trainees is what a positive influence he's been on their lives. Could there be a nicer gift to give your staff, your members, your clients, your associates? Explore the possibilities by calling Marguerite Stone at (703) 979-4150. Or email her at lustberg@erols.com. Below is Arch's road schedule so far. Visit www.lustberg.net for updates.

December

3 Orlando, FL

January

30 Salt Lake City, UT

March

19 Tallahassee, FL

April

17 Salt Lake City, UT

May

22 Birmingham, AL

June

5 Salt Lake City, UT

11 Frankfort, KY

July

13 Madison, WI

October

23 Salt Lake City, UT

The Lustberg Communicator

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Web Management: Karen Thompson, Shadyvale Press

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