

HAYES  
COLLINS / **MEDIA**

# **Effective Language**

## Fighting talk

Winston Churchill once said 'Short words are better'.

OK, it didn't have quite the world-changing impact of 'We will fight them on the beaches' but every time I listen to some self-important, ego-fuelled windbag on TV or radio, I wish the nation had taken just as much heed.

It got me thinking about why we upsize our language when we're trying to be impressive. Chuck in some jargon, throw in some unnecessary extra syllables and before we know it we get sentences that are so long that our audience has forgotten the start before we've got to the end.

My take is that, as with so many basic errors in interviews, fear is the reason. Technical language and important sounding words are like armour against the possibility of Saying the Wrong Thing. We won't run risks, we think, if we stick to our tribal language, whether that's public sector speak, scientific mumbo jumbo or just the good old bulls\*\*t bingo of business talk.

Yes, you'll be safe all right. *Because no-one will be listening to a word you say.*

So I'm laying out my manifesto for some courageous communication.

Not because I don't take joy from our rich and varied language - I just can't stomach it being used as a shield to hide behind. Let us 'find out' instead of 'ascertain', let us talk about people instead of individuals, and let us never again refer to stakeholders unless we're talking about Game of Thrones.

That is a cause for which I will indeed fight you on the beaches.

