

# Get real: Avoiding corporate gobbledygook

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## Editorial

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One spring morning, I was wandering ‘lonely as a cloud’ with a ‘host of golden daffodils’ before me. Then someone stopped me in my tracks:

*What do you think of the changes in Big Pharma?*

The illusion was shattered. There was an ominous silence. The clouds gathered. With a flash of lightning, the tension was unleashed, and thoughts came flooding in ready to be verbalised but hopefully never completely tamed.

In my opinion, Big Pharma has been through a mind-numbing decade or so of changes in an effort to generate a super-efficient machine. There needed to be some shake-ups because all the best expertise wasn’t in one institution or place. Efficiency is good if it frees up time, but sometimes, even aspirations such as innovation and creativity have been over-processed. Associated with this move towards increasing efficiency has been an increase in corporate gobbledygook (also known as ‘bullshit’ in the US) and competency jargon. Speaking this way seemed to work if you wanted to progress. As writers, we use a range of styles and language. A bit of flowery language and even gobbledygook works well in some communications to create a particular feel or ambience.

I can sense a change for the better. Maybe there is awareness that some efficiency measures have been killing the human spirit and are in danger of creating a culture of human drones.

Phenomenal advances in technology and life science research are a massive stimulus for this change, which is about to revolutionise medicine

and healthcare. After initial excitement some years ago, we reached a point when it seemed to be all theory. There was a lull, a dearth of practical breakthroughs – but research can be like that.

A phase of increased collaboration has taken off with more cross-industry partnerships and collaboration between companies, academia, government, and non-profit organisations. This should work because scientists usually love their work, and some successes are in sight. People want to make this work.

Most people loved their subjects when they embarked on their careers. They genuinely want to be part of the technology and life sciences revolution. Let them tap into these feelings. Beyond their company role, they have different lives and perspectives. Let’s not lose this opportunity to engage people. Keep an eye on the negative forces of ambition and corporate gobbledygook. From time to time ask people what they really think – to be ‘real’ and not to speak in gobbledygook – so that they can flourish and reach their targets. Then they can say, ‘Yes actually I am happy to be part of this’.

Plain language is essential in many circumstances, especially for ensuring that science, instructions, or methodology are understood, although to ensure accuracy of meaning, over-simplification should be avoided. It is so easy to slip from plain language into the gobbledygook mode. In business, when you need to hear the truth from others, beware the pitfalls of encouraging corporate gobbledygook. Why make business decisions in a fog of pretension? Get heartfelt, truthful input.