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The latest word is . . . the green weenie of corporate-speak

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"The most beautiful words in the English language are ... 'it's benign.'"

- Woody Allen

"The most beautiful words in the English language are 'not guilty.'"

- Maxim Gorky

"The most beautiful words in the English language are 'cheque enclosed.'"

- Dorothy Parker

What are the most beautiful words in the Corporate language? I'd welcome your suggestions, but I'm thinking they've got to be "meeting canceled."

The point is that there is a Corporate language. Indeed, I have three books on business jargon here on my desk, all received from publishers this year. And it's a topic worthy of many books, as there is much to be learned from the nature of evolving language; after all, language is the greatest accomplishment of our species, and it is the ultimate example of relentless creativity.

What got me thinking about speaking Corporate was a comment from a colleague, the delightful Paula Wigboldy, who mentioned that one of her son's professors at Calvin College, James Vanden Bosch, had come up with a new word that he was determined to see listed in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Paula wrote to him about my curiosity concerning his word and his quest, and he remarked about the inquiry, "I keep thinking that students aren't listening - I plan on them not listening, even - and then new evidence turns up that they are listening after all."

Don't you love that "I plan on them not listening, even?" That's the mark of someone who isn't just lecturing, but educating. But back to his word, which is - "presticogitation." By calling up the related "prestdigitation," the new word calls up a smile of recognition.

Bosch says of his creation, "I wanted a word that would refer, playfully, to a phenomenon that had not yet been named, namely, the fast and powerful thinking that so dazzles the listener that the sheer speed and brightness of the performance brings the listener into quick, even grateful, compliance or agreement."

Bosch has traveled so far in his quest as to have spoken with the editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, who did an online search for the word and found that half of the published instances were from Calvin College and its graduates.

Heartening, isn't it? It's a tidy miniature of the process by which an idea calls forth help, taking on a life of its own, generating its own energy, of which you and I are now a part. A word is an idea, and an idea carries the energy of its originator. In the beginning. ...

If you're with me on the energy of words, let's return to those three recent books on business jargon. One is a smarmy, self-indulgent, pseudo-self-help humor book, "Officespeak." Here's one sentence that will allow us to not further waste words on it: "Give your co-workers nicknames like 'Rock Star,' 'Superstar,' or 'Dawg.'"

A better book is "A Devil's Dictionary of Business." Shame on the title - the book has little kinship with Ambrose Bierce's classic Devil's Dictionary - but still, it is entertaining and informative.

The best of the three, however, is "Green Weenies and Due Diligence," just out in a second edition. The book doesn't take itself seriously, even having illustrations by Gahan Wilson, the master of the creepy image.

The author, Ron Sturgeon, tells us that it was "green weenie" that started him collecting interesting expressions. (A "green weenie" is to a business deal what a wiener gone bad is to someone rooting in the refrigerator for lunch - an unpleasant surprise.)

The book not only teaches us about words, but in the humor we see wisdom. For instance, there is much to contemplate from two terms to describe people in meetings: "Chipmunking" (someone in a meeting who is furiously typing on a handheld device with the thumbs) and "Chair plug" (someone who fills a seat in a meeting, but contributes nothing). Yes, a clever new phrase is packaging for truth, letting you see what's inside but making you work a bit to get at it, wisdom with some assembly required.

So: Meeting canceled. And it won't be rescheduled'til somebody is ready to stand up and offer us some presticogitation.

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