



Grant Pearson
Brown
Consulting Ltd.

The Presentation &
Business Development
Specialists

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the



*Happy Christmas, Hogmanay and
New Year from everyone at
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd*



The GPB Team

An Audience of Listeners. An Excess of Christmas Puddings...

How useful are collective nouns?

At GPB, we like to learn. We also like to have fun, so we have taken time out from our busy schedules to work up new words, phrases and documents that we can share, post, email, post, tweet, #, and @.

Prize competition:
A bottle of Champagne
(or your chosen equivalent)

What we thought we would do for the holiday season is to offer a prize to the person who sends in the best NEW collective noun paired with its group. There is a sample list on the next page, both for you to enjoy and to stimulate you into action. We will publish the shortlist and winner in our next edition. To make it at least worthy of a challenge, you must stick to the following rules, or no bubbly:

1. You must provide both the group and its collective noun
2. The pair must not be listed on the internet in this manner
3. The format must be 'A/An [X] of [Y]'
4. It cannot be one of the pairs shown below in this article
5. Avoid cheesy things like 'A Sick of Patients', however much it makes you chortle
6. The judge's decision is final.

The advent of Christmas plus a recent

piece of client work has stimulated us to revisit the communication challenges of Collective Nouns. The client asked us in a rare idle moment for the collective noun for a group of accountants. For context, we don't think they were very enamoured with the work that had been done by said accountants, which is a shame because we work with a lot of them, and they are generally a very good bunch of hard-working professionals.

There isn't an 'official' collective noun for accountants, whatever 'official' means, so there's a candidate for the quiz. We've already found account, audit, balance, fudge, journal, return and sum, so you can't have those.

Indeed there seems to be no 'official' repository for any collective nouns, and that's perhaps no surprise given the global nature of our language. Instead, their adoption into the popular vernacular seems to come more from the wit or observations of the creator, subsequent publicity, and shared use resulting from the simple enjoyment of the pairing.

One early finding is that animals, particularly birds, come in for a lot of collective nouns. There are possibly over 100 for birds alone. This is consistent with their habit of being or

In this edition:

Collective noun quiz By GPB team

We provide some festive fun, and some fizz, in return for some help.

Jingle Jangle Jargon By Desmond Harney

Desmond reviews some business-speak and asks you to make its avoidance your Winterval wish.

The How and the What By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

Lynda brings Aristotle and Churchill together in an analysis of the delivery of a presentation.

How shall I address thee? By Ewan Pearson

Ewan tackles the tricky subject of diversity and how we might address other people

An Audience of Listeners. An excess of Christmas Puddings... (Cont'd)

flying together in significant numbers. There are far too many to list here, so we've set up a web page with them in¹.

Some of these nouns have been around for a very long time; many originate from *The Boke of Saint Albans*², first published in 1486, which included a list of 'company terms'. There are many nouns that relate to humans and their chosen careers. We've added a few ourselves.

Second, there can be one collective noun for a whole host of groups, and vice versa. See 'Starlings' and 'Herd' in the tables as examples of these. There is even one for collective nouns: A Peculiar of Collective Nouns. In many cases they seem to make no sense, in others they are funny and/or obvious.

Third, it seems that all humans are categorised, particularly in the military: A single person could be a member of several collectives such as Parents, Engineers, Generals and Aunties, whilst fewer inanimate objects seem to merit aggregation by collection nouns, perhaps because they serve little purpose, e.g. a collective noun for train stations. Finally, it's odd that there are not more that use alliteration, although it's fun when they do.

Collective nouns can help us to communicate more or less effectively. Knowing that you have an *Audience of Listeners* is good to know in advance, but are we really helped by knowing about a *Deceit of Lapwings*?

Group	Collective noun
<i>Careers</i>	
Barbers	Babble
Butchers	Goring
Police	Posse, Squad
Economists	Surplus
Experts	Panel, Excess, Discord
Listeners	Audience
Actors	Cast, Queue, Company...
Comedians	Gaggle, Riot
Grammarians	Conjunction
Jurors	Damning
Dermatologists	Rash
Impressionists	Blur
Witches	Coven
Heroin addicts	Smack
Animal lovers	Hypocrisy (not hypocrisy)
TV critics	Irrelevance

<i>Humans</i>	
People	Community, Choir, Group, Board, Family, Crowd, Team
Girls	Bevy, Gaggle, Giggle
Boys	Plush, Rascal
Parents	Embarrassment, Persistence
Mothers	Consternation, Gaggle
Fathers	Protection, Garage
Grand parents	Nag, Wisdom
Children	Cost Centre
Heirs	Expectation
Wives	Impatience (!)
Husbands	Multiply, Unhappiness (!)
<i>Birds</i> ³	
Chicken, Geese	Flock
Crows	Murder, Mob, Horde
Finches	Charm*
Geese	Gaggle
Lapwings	Deceit
Owls	Parliament
Peacocks	Ostentation
Pheasant, Grouse,	Brace (two)
Partridge	
Ravens	Conspiracy*, Unkindness*
Starlings	Murmuration, Constellation, Scourge, Affliction
<i>Other animals</i>	
Bacteria	Colony, Culture
Bats	Colony
Bees, Wasps	Colony, Swarm
Cats	Clowder, Litter, Pounce, Kindle, Colony (wild)
Hippopotami	Bloat
Lions	Pride
Jellyfish	Smack
Baboons	Flange
Gorillas	Whoop
Tigers	Ambush*
Cows, Antelopes,	Herd
Bisons, Elephants	
Ants, Bees, Eels,	Swarm
Flies, Gnats, Rats	
<i>Inanimate objects</i>	
Aeroplanes	Squadron
Buildings	Set, Cluster, Town, City, Village
Cars	Fleet, Pool
Christmas Puddings	Excess
Ships, Boats	Fleet, Armada, Flotilla

Please do send in any you would like added to the list on our website.

By GPB Team

- <https://www.gpb.eu/2019/12/dictionary-of-collective-nouns.html>
- The Boke of Saint Albans*, by William Blades, Juliana Berners, 2015
- Country Life*, September 13, 2017 Paula Lester <https://www.countrylife.co.uk/nature/collective-nouns-for-birds-68344>

* indicates there is a book with this name.

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



Jingle Jangle Jargon

Don't let business-speak weaken your communication effectiveness

When a school buddy tells Homer Simpson that smoking will make them late for class, the future Springfield Sage retorts: "Pff! English? Who needs that? I'm never going to England!"

After we've finally stopped laughing at Homer, we might usefully reflect on arguably Britain's greatest export, English. The BBC says it's '*spoken by 450 million people globally, with one billion more using it as a second language*'. Understanding its nuances varies, so we must handle it with care to avoid its misuse becoming the source of light-hearted Xmas articles and rebukes.



Source: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Homer-Simpson-Christmas-Sound-Card/dp/B001M13TO0>

If you've ever sat through an excess of unhelpful business-speak, tuning out to play buzzword bingo to kill boredom, you are not alone.

Some translations

Here are some terms that are derided by many outside the business world^{3,4} – and even by some within it; you may recognise a few. The squeamish should look away now!

We start with the space race. *It's not rocket science*: patronisingly implies "it's really very easy". It came into business use first during the Cold War,

triggered by the shock launch of the Russian Sputnik satellite in 1957.

Pushing the needle: means "taking to the extreme, or next level", visually referencing a rev. counter or speedometer. Related to *pushing the envelope*, which first emerged in Tom Wolfe's 1979 bestseller about test pilots and the US space programme, *The Right Stuff*.

Shoot the puppy (an extreme version of *bite the bullet* or *grasp the nettle*). When you need to take decisions or actions that will be truly shocking. Thought to derive from a satirical advert for a fictitious US gameshow, where audience members are offered prizemoney to shoot a pet being held by a small child.

You might get away with an occasional animal reference, like an *elephant in the room*, meaning a major topic that nobody wants to talk about. Or how about "*You screwed the pooch all day?*". Now it apparently denotes the avoidance of productivity, as used by Charlton Heston in the 1994 film *True Lies*, but it had an earlier derivation (from *The Right Stuff*) and rather different meaning - that a pilot had died in the wreck of their plane.

Author Steven Poole believes the use of the term *annual leave* (rather than 'holiday') is a clue: '*we have entered a hellishly self-parodic downward spiral*'. Perhaps that's extreme, but using plain English carries fewer risks.

The holiday sector received scrutiny and mockery just recently for having its very own jarring jargon: a '*bization*', '*gramping*', or '*jobby-moon*', anyone?⁵

If it's so risky, why is business jargon used so much, or at all? Some people believe it wins them kudos and makes their messages 'stickier', even though memorability more often relies on originality, rather than derivativeness. Some think these phrases make them sound knowledgeable, or on the inside



Des Harney

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts



Jingle Jangle Jargon... (Cont'd)

track. While others think they just give the hard-of-thinking something to say, when nothing sensible occurs to them.

At GPB, we generally advise against using jargon, with good reason. Word choices should build connections with an audience, not break them. If you're memorable for all the *wrong* reasons, you risk reducing your persuasiveness. Jargon can be confusing and/or distracting; potentially reducing the clarity of your communication, obscuring your key messages and eroding rapport. You cannot assume others will easily grasp the same meaning and message you intend from your affected word use.

Inappropriate phrases may even convey unintended negative messages about you, personally. A potential downside is bafflement of the uninitiated, keeping them outside of your persuasive influence. Whether intentionally or not. So if you routinely communicate by sprinkling around terms like those shared above, then it may be high time for reflection and greater caution.

The Foreign Office explains that English has many antecedents: "*its flexibility to absorb new words [means] we speak a melange of mongrel origin... the Angles and Saxons... the Normans... English adopted words from Spanish, (e.g. guerrilla); from India (pyjamas); ... from Arabic (coffee, cotton, sugar and algebra). It is this absorption capacity that makes English so rich and fascinating, capable of great poetry and elegance, open to puns, nuance.*"⁶

It just doesn't need any potentially distracting jargon added.

Those railing against business-speak have a valid point. By definition, clichés are recycled, tired expressions. Jargon is a kind of slang, a language sub-set used to demonstrate membership of a gang, club or sect. It rarely helps to positively differentiate your message, but does run the risk of sounding derivative, boorish or exclusive. It's also very easily and painfully lampooned.

Think of examples from TV shows like *The Office*, or in workplace cartoons like *Alex and Dilbert*. Using jargon

opens us up to the risk of appearing like comic characters; of sounding like David Brent clones, and we wouldn't want THAT, now, would we? Really?



Toe-curling: Slough's premier Jargonaut
Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Brent

Such easy ridicule should instinctively put us on our guard. The use of jargon is not necessarily always wrong. But we should make absolutely certain that it adds value, rather than eroding it, whenever used. GPB's Jargon Kit should help you make a sound evaluation⁷.

Let me end by running this seasonal wish up the flagpole: that leveraging the yuletide consumables on your impending festive journey, by knife-and-forking them without boiling the ocean, will be a no-brainer resulting in a paradigm shift. Don't turn into an 800-pound gorilla, though. Get your ducks in a row and revert to me offline for some face time on this, circling back to touch base and take a deeper dive.

Or maybe don't do ANY of that. D'oh!

By Des Harney

1. 'The Simpsons', Season 2 Episode 12: "The Way We Was" - Homer to Barney Gumble
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m000b8ny>
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/analysis-and-features/push-the-needle-you-desk-jockey-a-guide-to-office-speak-760164.html>
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2013/oct/22/a-z-modern-office-jargon>
5. Metro, 9th Dec, 2019 — 'Escape' (pg 33)
6. <https://blogs.fco.gov.uk/petermillett/2016/10/28/the-power-of-english/>
7. The GPB Jargon Kit: <https://www.gpb.eu/2019/12/gpb-jargon-kit-with-acknowledgement-to-honeywell.html>

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts





Lynda Russell-Whitaker

The 'How' is as Important as the 'What'

The delivery of a presentation should optimise all vocal and visual aspects

Earlier this year, I attended an entertaining and informative lecture at Gresham College London, delivered by an illustrious musical accompanist. His talk was wonderfully engaging, peppered with pieces of piano playing, accompanying a soprano soloist, and contrasting the differences between highly-skilled and average accompanists.

In addition to his skills as a pianist, he spoke confidently at the front of the room; his voice was well-modulated with a rich timbre (tone quality) and good volume, when reading from a script, there were hardly any disfluencies. All vocal aspects were pleasing to the ear; I enjoyed listening to him. Furthermore, he was hugely knowledgeable on his topic and was compelling when explaining and illustrating his arguments.

All the same, there was one aspect of his delivery that I found odd, and rather off-putting. When returning to the lectern and speaking to the audience after playing a piece, he kept his eyes closed most of the time. For me, this marred an otherwise near-perfect combination of content, structure and delivery.

This had me pondering further on the importance of delivery - or performance - in public speaking. Of course there are plenty of speakers on the circuit today who feel delivery is as important as content, and who perform well. Indeed, some might even be called 'showmen'. But there are far more for whom mediocrity and blandness seem entirely acceptable. For this reason, I am often disappointed when attending UK conferences, small and large; the standard of delivery here seems so often to fall short.

The lack of importance placed on delivery, resulting in a lack of skills, is not a modern phenomenon. As Professor Edith Hall asserts in her 1995¹ paper 'Lawcourt Dramas: The

Power of Performance in Greek Forensic Oratory': *'This neglect of the importance of performance in the Greek courtroom may partly be Aristotle's responsibility'*.

In his influential work 'Rhetoric'², Aristotle placed far greater importance on 'what to speak' (*ha dei legein*) rather than 'how to speak' (*hōs dei eipein*). He even went so far as to call delivery 'vulgar'.

Interesting, then, that Hall says: *'He rather grudgingly concedes, however, that the study of delivery is indispensable'*.

Thankfully, his was not the only perspective at that time. Again in this same paper, Hall writes: *'Some ancient theorists were well aware that the spontaneous performance and delivery of all species of oratory played a big part in the effectiveness of the persuasion and the contents of the speeches themselves'*.



Demosthenes: one of the great orators. Source: <http://daily.kellogg.edu/2018/08/14/heres-a-list-of-philosophy-classes-offered-at-kcc-this-fall/>

In support, Hall quotes 4th Century BC rhetorician and sophist, Alcidas³, from his treatise 'On the Sophists': *'For who does not know that to speak on the spot is a necessary thing for those who speak in the public assembly, for those who go to law, and for those who make private transactions?'*

Alcidas believed that the highest aim of any orator should be the ability to speak 'ex tempore' on any topic.

Advice squeezed straight from the experts



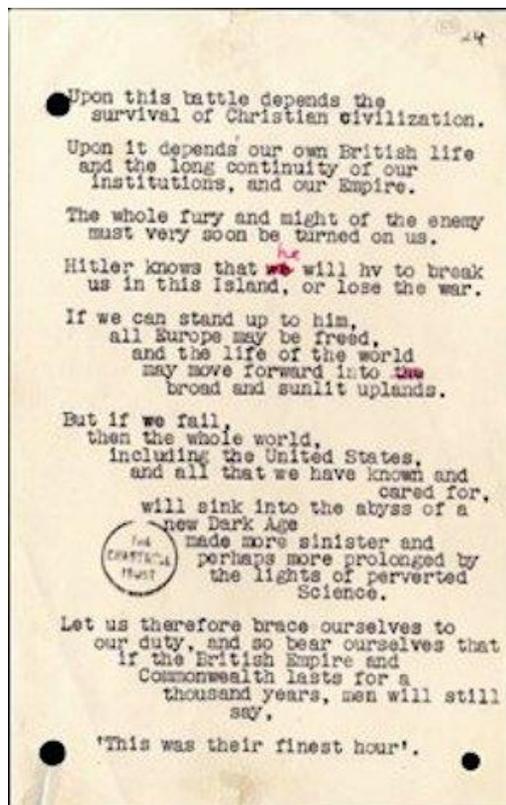
The 'How' is as Important as the 'What'... (Cont'd)

We'd agree, the highest aim, like the ascent of Everest, is also the greatest challenge.

One of the greatest orators of the 20th Century, Sir Winston Churchill, certainly placed as much importance on the performance of his speeches as in their content, style and structure.

Of particular note is the time he devoted to their preparation. In his biography of Churchill, 'Never Despair³', Martin Gilbert offers some fascinating insights into just how painstaking Churchill was in this preparation, through one of Churchill's Private Secretaries, (Sir) David Hunt.

Hunt describes the process as being 'semi-public': *'A Private Secretary would sit beside him. This was partly so that he could be used to check any points on which Churchill felt doubtful, partly to be able to intervene if the speech appeared to be departing too far from the departmental brief and partly because Churchill liked having an audience.'*



Hunt goes on to say that Churchill would: *'take a sip of his weak whisky and soda, and perhaps draw on his*

cigar, and mutter a sentence to himself; he would repeat it, sometimes more than once, varying the choice of words and rolling them round his tongue until he had them just right, and then dictate them to be taken down.'

This was done with every single sentence! Not surprisingly, the final version often differed vastly from the original. This was then typed and arranged in page order by Churchill himself (leaving this to someone else in the past had resulted in disaster, with two entire pages being misplaced). Due to its appearance being similar to a song sheet, this was known in his Private Office as the 'psalm form'.

This is yet more evidence of the similarly high importance Churchill placed on the performance aspect of his speeches as the content and structure. These speeches took two or three weeks to prepare, not just of his time, but of the many interested ministries and other advisers who contributed facts and figures that Churchill would then put in to his own words, in addition to the work of the stenographers and private secretaries.

The importance of an audience's perspective and their responses to how you deliver what you have prepared is not to be underestimated. Whilst most people don't have the resources to devote weeks of labour to their presentations, you can make that extra effort to rehearse what you've written at least once or twice. Perhaps record yourself and listen back, editing constructively so that you elevate your performances, and thus hopefully engage, persuade and delight your audiences all the more for doing so!

By Lynda Russell-Whitaker

1. Lawcourt Dramas: The power of performance in Greek Forensic Oratory * Professor Edith Hall, 1995
2. Rhetoric, by Aristotle
3. Alcidas 'On the Sophists'.
4. 'Never Despair' Winston S. Churchill 1945 to 1965 by Martin Gilbert (Heinemann 1988)
5. Recording of Sir Winston Churchill's 'Finest Hour' speech: <https://youtu.be/G4BVzYGeF0M>

Advice *squeezed*
straight from the
experts



How shall I address thee?

The rapid change to society, and the avoidance of offence at this time of good cheer among men

I was at a DIAL meeting recently. DIAL stands for 'Diverse, Inclusive, Aspirational Leaders', and is a newish business providing workshops and supporting online services on Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) for such leaders. DIAL asked me to join their steering committee, and at the meeting we started talking about the correct ways to describe people these days, and the talking briefly became an awkward silence as some of us (probably all of us) suddenly felt embarrassed to speak in case we used an out-of-date or even offensive term. The conversation quickly moved on to another topic.

It is no mistake that I added 'among men' in the subtitle, and yes that is possibly offensive to a number of women; it's certainly not inclusive! I hope that helps me make my point.

Over the past two years we at GPB have increasingly got involved in client discussions around this delicate area, where everyone feels they need to walk on eggshells, or not walk (i.e. talk) at all. How should we describe each other correctly now that we are super sensitive to our differences? Our input has been to advise on how to communicate, when, who to, where and how often. It's an exciting project.

For context, I do hope that one day this is no longer an issue, and instead we do as Martin Luther King said on 28th August 1963 and apply it across the board: *'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the colour of their skin but by the content of their character.'*

I am going to try to get to the other side of the eggshell minefield here, although with the pace of change, I

suspect this will be out-of-date advice by 2021 and forgive me if this attempt fails and instead offends. Boris Johnson saying it was '*absolutely ridiculous*' women chose to '*go around looking like letterboxes*' when wearing the Burkha, and the accusation of Jeremy Corbyn's anti-Semitism make this a very public and delicate space.

We have one major consulting firm client who are really moving forwards in D&I, which they now call I&D to show that Inclusion is a choice (Diversity is a fact). They have set off well with great intentions. They have created groups of employees to represent different people, such as working mothers, LGBTIQ+, and ex-forces personnel; anyone can join these groups. They are also measuring their progress on the important metrics. Support has been incredible from the top, the whole senior leadership team (huge in a consulting firm), have all had training with specific actions to carry out, and they have done several staff surveys showing they are making good progress.

The goal is simple, perpetuation. This derives from a talented workforce that stays working for you, hiring the best from outside, and having clients who think the same way. Failure results in oblivion.

The challenges our client faced and still faces are on a number of fronts: Getting the culture to change, changing the recruitment metrics that were biased in favour of the stereotypical white male consultant, accurate measurement of the many key metrics, and changing the day-to-day behaviour of everyone.

For most firms, diversity starts with the easiest one to see, increasing the proportion of women to 50/50 whilst staying optimal, meaning to have the most qualified people in the relevant



Ewan Pearson



Diversity and inclusion (Informa PLC, 2019)⁴

Advice *squeezed* straight from the experts





How shall I address thee?... (Cont'd)

jobs. The stats are well-known, so I will just say that one problem is the lexicon. Words like 'he' (without 'she'), 'guys' and 'girls' 'man/men' (often as a suffix) have been hard to remove. In part it's cultural or hard-wired into language, so it's no surprise that we have had to re-emphasise and repeat a lot of coaching.

Inclusion has been about race, sexual orientation (which you can't see), physical (dis)ability, culture and gender. There is a keen desire to optimise here, but measurement is hard as many employees are reluctant, e.g. to fill in sexual orientation on a staff form, as there is a concern over security of data. It has been hard to find the best people in the different talent pools, perhaps because they are fishing the wrong way.

The pace of change here is also rapid: think back to when not so long ago we all used the term 'LGB'. That has evolved quickly by addition into many variants². The longest that I found is in the Urban Dictionary, (not always a good source *r e f e r e n c e*). They have LGBTQIADPCNO+^{2,3,5}, meaning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Demisexual, Pansexual, Closeted, Non-binary, Omnisexual +. The + is there to cover other alternative sexualities (although as far as I know, not Heterosexuals).

Add in wellbeing/mental illness, subconscious exclusion, different ways of working across generations, Greta Thunberg/global warming, bad plastics, fossil fuels, Brexit and a General Election here in the UK and you wonder how anyone would cope!

Here are some ideas on what we think any client could do to communicate in a more Inclusive way:

1. Treat everyone with respect, as an individual and a person
2. Put everyone in your 'ingroup' so that there is no 'outgroup'
3. Coach each other lots, politely
4. Reverse habits. E.g. if you would



It is important to treat one another as equals (pink news, 2019).

normally say 'he' for a CEO, say 'she'; put 'she' first when with 'he'

5. At Monday morning team meetings, avoid questions such as 'what did you guys do this weekend?', or 'what did you do on Saturday evening with your girlfriends/wives?'
6. Stop using words like 'old', 'young', 'guys' (even if you meant to include women), 'girls', and 'lads' and 'attractive' in the workplace. 'Team' and 'group' are better as they avoid the risk of offence
7. Try to use words that talk to who people are and what they do, not to their gender, sexuality, age, skin colour, religion and so on
8. If you don't know how to say someone's gender or ethnicity, ask them, they will appreciate the effort. I did this, and was surprised to get the reply 'Black'. Maybe others would be being offended by that, so ask. The main term currently is 'BAME', for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

Even if we don't get this right the whole time, the good news is that we are all trying to be a bit more aware and friendly to each other. No bad thing.

By Ewan Pearson

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnnklfYs> 13.38 into the video
2. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=LGBTQIADPCNO%2B>
3. <https://acronyms.thefreedictionary.com/LGBTQIAPD> and others.
4. <https://www.nojitter.com/organization-management/eyeing-diversity-inclusion-ec19>
5. <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2018/04/16/what-does-lgbtqia-stand-for-the-inclusive-term-which-includes-questioning-intersex-and-asexual-and-allied-people/>

Our Services

Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd is a respected adviser based in London. We enhance the performance of businesses, helping clients to excel in the use of the spoken and written word, improving the performance of individuals and teams. Over the long term our work improves the way a firm does business.

We coach and advise individuals to perform at their best in the toughest situations including: Presentations, New Business Pitches, Business Development, Negotiating, Media Interviews, Telephone Calls and Document Writing.

We also produce scientific voice, visual and content analysis reports, which are unique to GPB. We then provide voice and visual coaching, and content advice.

Our clients' needs are the only focus of our work; we listen to them and closely tailor our response to deliver first class coaching and advice. In support of this we selectively pursue new ideas and approaches, continually hone our advice and create tools such as:

- Voice, Visual and Content Analyses,
- Prospect Relationship Management (PRM),
- the Information Iceberg,
- Client s' Rights Act,
- Feature, Benefit Impact (FBI),
- Buyers' Criteria Analysis, (BCA), and
- our Q&A Methodology.



London Office:
Grant Pearson Brown Consulting Ltd
4 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2RP

Tel: +44 (0)20 7831 1000
Website: www.gpb.eu
Email: journal@gpb.eu