



Empowering professionals to write with skill and confidence

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### Using the Real Verb

This month we're discussing a third point of Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/orwell46.htm>, what he terms "operators or verbal false limbs," and what we at Hurley Write call "not using the real verb." What happens in this case is that writers **take a perfectly good verb and change it into a noun**. Doing this not only adds unnecessary words to the sentence, but it lessens the impact of the writing.

Some of our **favorite examples** are "dependent upon" instead of "depends on"; "take into consideration" rather than "consider"; and "have an effect on" rather than "affect." Unlike pretentious diction, which we discussed in our February newsletter (for copies of past newsletters, [click here](#)), **not using the real verb is problematic** because it **increases the number of words in a sentence**, thereby making the reader work harder to understand the text; **makes writing less emphatic** because the verb, which indicates the action of the sentence, is de-emphasized; and finally, **creates imprecision in the document**. One way to figure out if you're guilty of changing verbs into nouns is to see if the sentence contains two verbs; if it does, you've probably changed the verb into a noun (the underlined below show the verbs).

**Original:** The rate of return is dependent upon the number of sales.

**Rewrite:** The rate of return depends on the number of sales.

**Original:** The rate of return has an effect upon the number of sales.

**Rewrite:** The rate of return affects the number of sales.

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### New Puzzler

This month's grammar contest is about using buzzwords or pretentious diction! Rewrite the following to remove the pretentious diction

- 1: To make this happen, we'll need to think outside the box.
- 2: We reached out to Mary in accounting.
- 3: 3. We'll need to drill down to figure out how to grow our revenues.
- 4: You're advised to push back on that deadline.
- 5: We hope that we can get buy in from all departments.

Submit your answers (and a short explanation of how you arrived at the answer) to [pam@hurleywrite.com](mailto:pam@hurleywrite.com). You could win the opportunity to take our six-week online technical writing course (a \$499 value).

The deadline is May 1, 2010. Winners will be notified by May 31, 2010.

**Please note:** winners must sign up within 30 days of winning and must complete the course within six weeks of signing up. Hurley Write reserves the right to use the winner's name as the winner in our newsletter.

### Pompous Diction Contest

We received some great entries for our contest, but **we're looking for more! To enter, submit your best example or examples of pretentious diction to [pam@hurleywrite.com](mailto:pam@hurleywrite.com)**. We'll post them on our website, and the person who submitted the entry with the most votes will win the opportunity to take one of our stand-alone online modules: "Proposal Writing," "Writing Effective Emails," or "Effective Editing and Proofreading Strategies" (a \$99 value!).

All entries are due by April 30, 2010 and will be posted by May 15, 2010. The contest winner will be notified by June 30, 2010.

### Overused Buzzwords Contest

**What words or phrases do you hear in your workplace that you find especially irritating or useless?** Some common ones we've heard lately are "leverage," "reach out," "drill down," and "low-hanging fruit." Send your best entries to [pam@hurleywrite.com](mailto:pam@hurleywrite.com). We'll post them on our website, and the person

who submitted the entry with the most votes **will win the opportunity to take our online module, "Using Language Effectively."**

All entries are due by April 30, 2010 and will be posted by May 15, 2010. The contest winner will be notified by June 30, 2010.

### **We need your input!**

As we plan for our Lunch and Learn series for the upcoming year, we need your input. Please [click here](#) to vote and/or to submit your own ideas. Thanks!

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