



**Citation for Business Communicator of the Year 2010**

**Winner: Martin Broughton, Chairman of British Airways and  
former President of the CBI**

Martin Broughton is a British business leader capable of making an engaging and entertaining speech. When he stands up at a podium, you can be sure you're in for a treat. For this reason he has been awarded the Business Communicator of the Year 2010 by the UK Speechwriters' Guild.

Mr Broughton's style is not flamboyant, he's extremely English; his cerebral, witty and understated manner is one we wish to hold up as a model. Significantly, he shows a mastery of the basic techniques of corporate speechwriting.

Take his aside at the CBI Annual Dinner in 2009:

***I have always taken the view that if you're not at the table you're likely to be on the menu.***

***That is very much the essence of the CBI perspective.***

How many Presidents could sum up their mission statement with a quip?

Too many British boardroom leaders adopt a tone of colourless omniscience. They airbrush out personality, quote platitudes about customer service and swamp their audiences with meaningless statistics.

Martin Broughton has grasped that colour is what's needed when you stand up to speak in public. Take this elegant little story in one of his BA speeches:

***Today, it's fair to ask whether the US fare-paying passenger has real quality options.***

***If price is the sole criterion, then yes, the consumer does have some cheap options. But in truth, the choice the US passenger has today - all too often - is between cheap price with cheap service or more expensive price with cheap service.***

***It's summed up in the apocryphal story of the young man who approached the check-in desk of a well-known American carrier just before Christmas. He saw above the counter a sprig of mistletoe.***

*Seeing that the check-in attendant was an attractive young lady he leans forward, points to the mistletoe and says "Does this mean it's my lucky day - am I allowed a kiss?"*

*"No" comes the reply. "It means you can kiss your baggage goodbye".*

*Can the US aviation industry truly put its hand on its heart and say it's proud of the service it offers the domestic consumer?*

It's light, it provokes thought, and it keeps the audience awake.

It would seem highly likely that Martin Broughton actually reads out his speeches before delivering them, because he has a keen sense of rhythm. He's polite without being sycophantic, funny without being frivolous and serious without being boring.

*Welcome to this evening's CBI Annual Dinner. It is a great pleasure to see so many of you here this evening given the straightened times we are living through. We are once again privileged to have with us this evening the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. To some, he is the saviour of the world's financial system, to others he's the culprit who got us into this mess in the first place. That's the beauty of our democratic right to free speech – everyone is entitled to express their opinion.*

He understands the American idea of roasting your speaker. That is to say, if you want to be really appreciate your guest, you don't flatter, you tease:

*Alistair Darling arrived at Number 11 just as the sub-prime crisis in the United States marked the beginning of an economic downturn.*

*Since then, he has had to nationalise one bank, and throw a £50 billion lifeline to the others.*

*He has had to scrap with non-doms, and with his own backbenchers, on income tax.*

*He has battled with almost everybody over capital gains tax.*

*The man who only three years ago was voted the most boring politician in Britain for a second year in a row is now one of the infamous McBottle Brothers in the pages of The Sun.*

***Made Secretary of State for Transport in 2002 precisely because he could be relied upon, as the phrase of the time had it, to “take the department out of the headlines,” Alistair Darling has clearly been working to a different agenda at Her Majesty’s Treasury.***

***I am sure that he will be hoping that his first budget in March this year – judged by one newspaper to be the “most boring budget in history” – marks a resumption of normal service.***

***Speaking as an accountant, I would like to put in a good word for being boring.***

***The value of being boring is often under-estimated – particularly by investment bankers.***

***For us accountants, on the other hand, being voted the most boring person in the profession for two years in succession would represent the very pinnacle of professional success.***

Martin Broughton makes elegant use of quotation:

***It was Mark Twain who as so often hit the mark when he said: “those that don’t read the newspapers are uninformed and those that do read the newspapers are misinformed”. I’m sure that’s a sentiment the Prime Minister sometimes shares.***

***Perhaps I should close by quoting Benjamin Disraeli, who said that: “the difference between a politician and a statesman is that the politician thinks of the next election while the statesman thinks of the next generation”. On that note, I will raise my full glass and ask you to join me in a toast to “statesmen”.***

He also personalises things and avoids abstract arguments. Climate change is probably the hardest subject to say anything amusing or concrete about, Broughton cleverly focused on the prophets of doom:

***If we find the right way to harness the support of the travelling public, we can make real progress on climate change – and isolate the George Monbiots of this world who will never be satisfied until every runway is grassed over.***

He also has the courage to sweep everything aside and tell an appropriate anecdote, like this one to British insurers:

***I will close with a true story which I think demonstrates imaginative thinking from both the claimant and the insurance co in a particular claim made in North Carolina.***

### ***Cigars in Charlotte***

***A man from Charlotte, North Carolina, having purchased a case of rare, very expensive cigars insured them against fire. Within a month, having smoked his entire stock of fabulous cigars, the man filed a claim against the insurance company.***

***In his claim, the man stated that he had lost the cigars “...in a series of small fires”. The insurance company refused to pay, citing the obvious reason, that the man has consumed the cigars in normal fashion. The man sued and won.***

***In delivering his ruling, the judge stated that since the man held a policy from the company in which it had warranted that the cigars were insurable, and also guaranteed that it would insure the cigars against fire, without defining what it considered to be an “unacceptable fire” it was obligated to compensate the insured for his loss.***

***Rather than endure a lengthy and costly appeal process, the insurance company accepted the judge’s ruling and paid the man \$15,000 for the rare cigars he “lost in the fires”.***

***After the man cashed the insurance cheque, the insurance company had him arrested on 24 counts of arson. With his own insurance claim and testimony from the previous case being used as evidence against him, the man was convicted of intentionally burning the rare cigars and sentenced to 24 consecutive 1 year terms.***

The million-dollar question is, does Mr Broughton write his own speeches? The UK Speechwriters’ Guild can’t answer that question. Broughton’s speeches did show marked improvement when he left British American Tobacco – although they showed promise even back then.

Broughton’s straight talking style is commendable for many reasons.

It’s good for journalists, because they can find something to write about. They can pick up on a phrase like ‘economic vandalism’, which he used to describe the Government’s introduction of a top rate of tax.

It's good for the organisations he represents, because he shows how he may be the boss, but he can be down-to-earth, engaging and wise.

It's good for audiences because they are entertained, informed and amused.

Guild-member, Professor Max Atkinson, emphasises how the effective use of rhetoric boils down to a few techniques. There seems to be a simple equation: the more the speaker uses these techniques, the better speaker he or she is perceived to be. Obama's speeches overflow with three part lists, contrasts and arresting images. Broughton is aware of the fundamentals of rhetoric.

***What business wants from the system of corporate taxation in Britain is Clarity, Certainty and Competitiveness.***

***What we are getting is Cost, Complexity, and Capriciousness.***

Broughton speeches pass the tests that Orwell sets for writing good English: he's not afraid of short words, he avoids hackneyed business jargon, he doesn't wallow in the passive tense, he's pithy and he has an ear for a lively phrase. He's realistic without being pessimistic. And he can write a taut, persuasive and uplifting peroration.

**Chancellor, these are times of grievous uncertainty in the financial markets.**

**And we support the steps which you are taking to address the causes of that uncertainty.**

**But these are times also of stupendous opportunity in the international markets for goods and services.**

**We believe it is in your interests, as well as ours, that you and your colleagues in government now do all that is within your power to keep markets open and free.**

**Free of excessive taxation.**

**Free of clumsy regulation.**

**Free of tariffs and quotas and subsidies, and of all of the other paraphernalia of the protectionist delusion.**

**If markets stay open – and, better still, become more open yet – there is little wrong with the world that the daily miracles of British business cannot fix.**

The UK Speechwriters' Guild wishes to raise standards of communication in public life, by drawing attention to those who excel.

We encourage British executives to follow Martin Broughton's example.

Business doesn't have to be boring, In the hands of men like Broughton it isn't. He has a rare ability to put the conflicts of management and the challenges of leadership into simple and entertaining words. If such laconic charm does not come naturally, it is available to executives who employ the services of Britain's leading speechwriters.

**Brian Jenner**  
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