

# A HIERARCHY of LANGUAGES for BUSINESS

The following table sets out an ordered hierarchy of the various communication languages used in a modern business. The rigour with which any given language type communicates to others will vary from close to nil for gossip and close to perfectly for a deployment flowchart.

<i>LEVELS of ACTIVITY</i>	<i>OUTPUT</i>
<b>1. Everyday Discourse</b>	
a. Gossip	<i>Random noise generation</i>
b. Discussion	<i>Weak signals generation</i>
c. Argument	<i>Problem s &amp; Insights</i>
d. Definition	<i>Dictionaries &amp; Formalities</i>
<b>2. Business Communication</b>	
a. Operational Definition	<i>Formal Statements</i>
b. System Definition	<i>Block Diagrams &amp; VSM</i>
c. Process Flows	<i>Deployment Flowcharts</i>
d. Tasks	<i>Work Instructions</i>
<b>3. Information Technology</b>	
a. Logical Definitions	<i>First Metre Diagrams</i>
b. Data Flows	<i>Information Frames</i>
c. Programme Code	<i>ASP.NET 2</i>
d. Machine language	<i>Binary code</i>

Most businesses – certainly SMEs – manage using Level 1 languages but aspire to the benefits of Level 3 language for reasons more to do with perception than understanding or knowledge.

Few business managers (i.e. process owners) thrive within Level 2 although they would always agree that everyone else below them should do so.

Most IT staff operate at Level 3 but rarely with a business discipline that is readily understandable to their business colleagues, despite the fact that all the process know-how comes from the business, not from the IT department. (The early scribes did not have to understand the content of the document they drafted for others to read, anymore than a successful business manager would expect to understand 3b, c or d above. He would however expect to understand 3a as he should likewise be master of 2a to d.

Business managers rarely have free time to think or reflect – just to be seen doing so for many managers would be tantamount to applying for a written warning from their boss! The reasons for this lack of blue-sky thinking, of course, vary from fire-fighting and trouble shooting to attending endless meetings and worrying about the boss rather than the customer. Level 2 activity is therefore often alien to first and second line management. Periods of undisturbed creative concentration rarely exceed 15 minutes or so in practice before some interruption, such as the telephone, an e-mail or a colleague.

Periods of sustained focus (i.e. periods of concentration only ‘interrupted’ by occasional ‘refreshment’ breaks) can last for most of a day in the world of off-line managers and the IT department. These people can cope with Level 2 activity but rarely have the detail know-how to engage with the realities of the gemba where all value is created.

A new, transitory, role is perhaps emerging wherein IT staff with business ambitions can migrate to the gemba and help with guiding process workers and their managers safely through Level 2 to Level 3 until the simple techniques required for on-going incremental improvement can be taken on board by line workers and process owners using business logic prototyping applications such as *Management-NewStyle's FlowMap Pearl Diver*. Eventually ASP.NET 2 is where the business application needs to be to deliver real-time web services to the business and its associates.

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