

DROP the Pink Elephant



15 ways to say what you mean...and mean what you say



BILL McFARLAN

Foreword by EAMONN HOLMES, GMTV Presenter

*Drop the
Pink Elephant*

What the papers say ...

'What a great book. I would have no hesitation in recommending this book to anyone.'

'This book is a must-read for anybody in a client/customer-facing position. I think anyone who talks to other people could benefit from reading it.'

MARKETING Magazine

'If your DNA's short on charisma, here's a guide to charm heaven. Learn how to captivate your listeners and speak so people understand you better. An easy read with perky drawings and bullet point summaries.'

HER WORLD Magazine

'McFarlan's method for revolutionising communication ... is as relevant to how we relate to family and friends as it is to how to get the best from a workforce.'

THE HERALD

'Even if you normally steer clear of self-help books, do try the very funny and perceptive Drop the Pink Elephant by Scottish television presenter Bill McFarlan.'

CALEDONIA

'It is very rare that anything that is good for you is also fun ... This book, however, is enormously pleasurable to read and the words of wisdom sink in without a murmur.'

CITY TO CITIES

'... it goes on to tackle every aspect of personal communication in a crisp, entertaining style. Plain English supporters will be particularly interested in chapters dealing with jargon (especially unfamiliar abbreviations) and grammar.'

PLAIN ENGLISH Magazine

'This is a fascinating must-read.'

GLASGOW EVENING TIMES

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15 ways to say what you mean
– and mean what you say



BILL McFARLAN



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to:

My dad and late mum, whose love and security taught me realistic optimism.

My wife Caroline, whose loving encouragement has guided me through triumph and setback alike for four decades.

My children Victoria, Emma and Andrew, whose tolerance of my Pink Elephant obsession is a credit to each of them.

May they – and everyone who reads this – benefit from sharing that obsession.

And to Johanna MacVicar, whose courage and optimism in the face of illness and adversity extended her short life, gave new hope to others and gave new life to two dozen strangers. Literally.

And special thanks to Caroline and Victoria for their incisive proof-reading of this book to ensure it follows my principles on punctuation, grammar and clarity.

Thanks also to John Moseley and the entire Wiley-Capstone team for their belief in this book and the opportunity they have created to share my principles with the world.

About the Author

Bill McFarlan is a journalist, broadcaster and Executive Chairman of Pink Elephant Communications – one of Europe's leading communications training companies.

He established The Broadcasting Business in 1989 — and celebrated 25 years of helping individuals and businesses build great presentations and conduct positive media interviews by creating Pink Elephant Communications with his son Andrew in 2014.

Over 28 years, he's led several thousand courses and seminars in Britain, across Europe, In the USA, Canada, Caribbean, Australia and Africa.

He's a regular speaker at conferences and passionate advocate of confidence-building techniques.

Bill's journalism career began in local newspapers in the late 70s...moving through three years as a radio presenter then 22 as a TV presenter.



He anchored Reporting Scotland, Breakfast News, Sportscene and World's Strongest Man in 10 years with the BBC.

Outside training and broadcasting, he's an Executive National Vice President with Arbonne International, owning a successful worldwide skincare and nutrition business with his wife Caroline, whom he married in 1981.

They have three grown-up children – and four grandchildren – all of who live near them in Glasgow, Scotland.

To enquire about how the techniques in this book can be delivered to you or your organisation, contact Pink Elephant Communications on 0141 427 2545 or at www.pinkelephantcomms.com.



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World's Top Ten Pink Elephants

Simply remove the word in **bold** letters to reveal the picture each phrase creates.

*'I did **not** have sexual relations with that woman,
Ms Lewinsky.'*

US President Bill Clinton in January 1998 on his relationship with the White House intern. Ten months later he apologized for misleading the American people with what he said

*'I did **not** rape Ulrika. I would **never** rape anyone.'*
Well-known UK TV presenter, whose denials were quickly followed by further allegations from numerous women

*'There can be **no** whitewash at the White House.'*
US President Richard Nixon, who relinquished the presidency because of ... a whitewash at the White House

*'Telling my story was **never** about money.'*
Paul Burrell, former butler to Princess Diana, who sold his story to the Daily Mirror for a reported £300,000

*'This is **not** a war on Islam.'*

Tony Blair on the War on ... Terrorism

*'I must state once and for all that I am **not** (Prince) Harry's father.'*

James Hewitt on that growing resemblance between Princess Diana's younger son and her former lover

*'I'm **not** thick. I'm **not** a bimbo. And I'm **not** a tart.'*

Big Brother 2001 runner-up Helen Adams on herself.
The audience drew its own conclusions

*'I **don't** do drugs. I **don't** drink and drive and I **don't** have five kids to three different women.'*

Former Scotland captain Colin Hendry, accused only of elbowing an opponent

*'Read my lips. **No** new taxes.'*

US President George Bush ... before he increased taxes

*'It did **not** happen. Gennifer Flowers' story is **not** true.'*

Bill Clinton again, who later admitted under oath that he did in fact have sex with Ms Flowers



Foreword

I've worked in TV almost all my working life and first met Bill when he joined the *Breakfast News* presentation team in 1991. It was clear back then that he analysed every word, every tone and every twitch of his own performance ... and that of his interviewees and colleagues.

I saw why when I joined him in presenting some communication skills courses. The insight he offered into what each participant said ... and what they meant ... was tremendous. And after adopting his rules, each person showed a remarkable improvement in their ability to get their message across. *Drop the Pink Elephant* captures those rules and puts them in a bottle for anybody wanting to make more impact in their lives by really connecting with other people. It's essential reading for everybody interested in creating a deeper understanding with their colleagues, clients, family and friends.

Eamonn Holmes

Introduction

We agonize over the words to choose in an important letter. Devising a report can give us writer's block. Even writing a postcard can concentrate our mind on choosing our words carefully.

But in conversations, words can come gushing out of our mouths with hardly a thought for the impact they'll have on their audience. We spend so much more time speaking to people than writing to them, yet we seldom give enough thought to the consequences of our choice of words.

This book sets out to change all that.

Drop the Pink Elephant draws its conclusions from what I've learned about communication in over a quarter of a century working in the media. It's based on my career in journalism, which started in local newspapers as a cub reporter and took me through radio into television, presenting news and sports programmes for the BBC, Sky Sports and Independent Television.

That taught me to write – and to talk and behave on camera – with the reaction of the audience considered in everything I did. From that experience, I set up a media consultancy that has advised many of Britain's leading companies on how to handle

the communication of new orders, product launches, industrial action, plant closures – and, tragically, even deaths.

That is all very well. We are naturally inclined to watch what we say in formal communication. But so much of our communication at work and at play is informal. And it is here that the cracks begin to appear.

So I've had to struggle like everybody else with my human frailties that constantly test what I've learned – to establish whether I talk a good game through my work, or actually live it. From the many occasions on which I've got it horribly wrong – and there are many, as you'll see – I gladly share my experience. That's taught me, on reflection, where it went wrong and how to fix it. Applying the lessons will help you to avoid such pain.

Much of what I suggest is simple common sense. But most of us learn common sense from suffering from the nonsense of a bad experience. So the simple rules I'm suggesting will, if applied, help you through many a tricky situation with clients, colleagues, family and friends.

And while changing our behaviour is a slow and often painful experience – although essential if we are to grow as human beings – changing the way we talk to people is instantly achievable and highly rewarding. Indeed, it's a first necessary step to changing behaviour.

Each chapter covers a different area of improving the way you communicate, but all are related. For instance, being positive in your language leads to eliminating negatives and the baggage we bring into our conversation. Removing words that water

down your message – words like ‘hopefully’, ‘reasonably’ and ‘quite’, ‘I’ll try’ or ‘I’ll do my best’ – increases the commitment of the message.

Choosing the right word at the right moment every time is impossible. But applying the simple rules of this book is easy. If there’s one golden rule it’s this: make sure you engage your brain before opening your mouth.

But it’s like learning to drive a car. First, learn the theory of the Highway Code to understand the rules of the road. Next, put the rules into practice. This is, of course, where things go wrong.

Why? Almost certainly because the Highway Code was abandoned for a moment. As with driving, you will have bumps and scrapes when putting these rules into practice, often caused by the thoughtlessness of somebody else.

But be patient! And practise the rules at every opportunity. Practise them in job interviews, client meetings, over family dinners, with friends and colleagues. Use them at work, in the pub and at home. Apply them in the company of anyone and everyone with whom you interact. The more often you apply these rules, the more often you’ll communicate effectively. It will become as automatic as brushing your teeth. In fact, treat this book as your mental floss.

And, above all, have fun enhancing your communication skills. You’ll soon notice how others struggle to compete with your new-found talent. You will discover a new ‘you’. Subtle. Persuasive. Engaging. Confident. And you will relish every opportunity to try out your new skills.

