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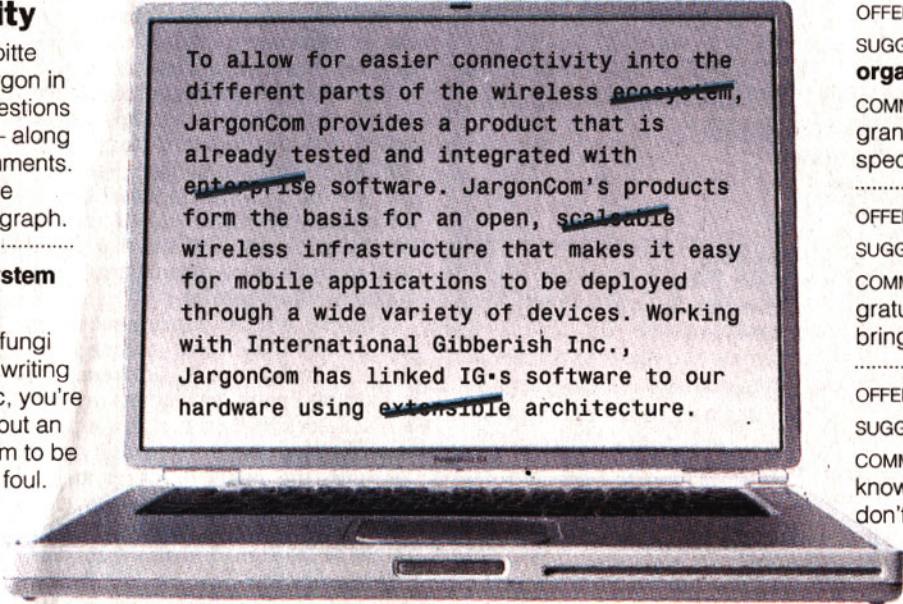
A Dose of Clarity

New software from Deloitte Consulting identifies jargon in writing and offers suggestions on how to eliminate it — along with some editorial comments. Here is how the software handled a sample paragraph.

OFFENDING WORD **Ecosystem**

SUGGESTION **System**

COMMENT Frogs, bugs, fungi and so on. If you're not writing for National Geographic, you're probably not writing about an ecosystem. A dated term to be avoided. Moderate bull foul. If you're writing for National Geographic, we apologize. We enjoy the pictures.



To allow for easier connectivity into the different parts of the wireless ~~ecosystem~~, JargonCom provides a product that is already tested and integrated with ~~enterprise~~ software. JargonCom's products form the basis for an open, ~~scalable~~ wireless infrastructure that makes it easy for mobile applications to be deployed through a wide variety of devices. Working with International Gibberish Inc., JargonCom has linked IG's software to our hardware using ~~extensible~~ architecture.

OFFENDING WORD **Enterprise**

SUGGESTION **Company, organization**

COMMENT Often overused: a grandiose word that isn't very specific.

OFFENDING WORD **Scalable**

SUGGESTION **None**

COMMENT Overused; often gratuitous term. And let's not bring weight into this.

OFFENDING WORD **Extensible**

SUGGESTION **None**

COMMENT You don't really know what this means, we don't really either.

Holy Change Agent! Consultants Edit Out Jargon

By JONATHAN D. GLATER

The people blamed for incentivizing companies to repurpose, build mindshare and utilize change agents have taken aim at their own lingo.

Deloitte Consulting, an arm of the accounting firm **Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu**, has developed a free software program, **Bullfighter**, that identifies jargon in documents. The goal is to make it easier for investors to decipher what companies are trying to say, said Chelsea Hardaway, the Deloitte marketing director who led the

team that designed the software.

"We hope that it is a fun way to make business communications safer for all of us," Ms. Hardaway said. Upon request, she shifted effortlessly to the language of consultants to offer an alternative — or, perhaps, actually the same — explanation: "We envision a center of excellence where our accelerated change agents can maximize their core competencies."

The software, which works like a spelling checker program to spot questionable words and phrases in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint documents, is available on the Deloitte Consulting Web site at

www.dc.com/bullfighter.

"The fact that a consulting firm comes up with it is somewhat ironic," said Tom Rodenhauer, president of Consulting Information Services in Keene, N.H. After all, he said, consultants often introduce mysterious but important-sounding business terms that over time have a way of afflicting the general population.

"The terms are supposed to define what are otherwise very nebulous concepts," he said. "Value-driven, mission-critical — there's a misconception that consultants

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are great communicators. They're not. In some cases, they're the worst."

Ms. Hardaway's team at Deloitte began working on the software after a consultant in the firm's Dallas office posed a challenge: Instead of just talking about plain talk, design a tool to help people talk plainly. That consultant, Paul Keene, will probably be the firm's first "chief bullfighting officer," Ms. Hardaway said.

"It's sort of a 'physician, heal thyself' kind of deal," she said.

The software design was relatively straightforward. Next, the firm held a contest to build a dictionary of objectionable words and phrases, or

"bullwords." The winner of the contest received a trip to the California Academy of Tauromaquia — otherwise known as bullfighting school.

"We got over 10,000 submissions," Ms. Hardaway said. "Some of the most hated were 'leverage,' 'bandwidth,' 'touch base,' 'incentivize,' 'inoculate,' 'bleeding edge,' 'robust,' 'synergize' and 'envisioneer.'"

Deloitte's consultants have used the software to analyze companies' filings and statements and have found a disturbingly high volume of bullwords in certain industries, particularly computers, whether companies involved with software or hardware, Ms. Hardaway said.

But getting rid of these terms may be easier said than done, said Lynn Nichols, an assistant professor of linguistics at the University of Califor-

nia at Berkeley. After all, consultants have developed their own vocabulary in an effort to describe as much as possible in very little space, she said.

"Now these serve as shortcuts," she said, and consultants will have a hard time finding other ways to convey these highly specific concepts.

But Chris Formant, head of the financial services consulting practice at BearingPoint, says experienced consultants do not use such jargon anyway.

"I can see how as a training tool for young, fresh consultants, it might make a lot of sense," Mr. Formant said of the software. "It would be kind of surprising to find that kind of gobbledygook and consultingese coming out of an experienced consultant."