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## **Speaking the (clear) language of success**

Charlotte Business Journal - by Adam O'Daniel Staff writer

Deborah Bosley is turning big words into big money.

Bosley is the founder of The Plain Language Group, a Charlotte firm that works with large companies to translate complicated legal and technical information into easy-to-understand words and phrases.

### **How did you recognize plain language as a business opportunity?**

Everywhere you look, you see ineffective, jargon-filled, incomprehensible writing. Bad writing costs companies time, money and customers.

Imagine how different the financial crisis might have been if buyers actually understood the terms of their mortgage contracts, or how cautious some of us might be if we could understand the conditions of our credit-card statements.

### **Why do clients contract with you instead of writing in plain language themselves?**

Sometimes the content experts are the wrong people to write the information. They are too close. I'm able to translate complex information to make it easily accessible to a non-expert audience.

### **Are businesses required by law to put documents in plain language?**

Sometimes. Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, California and 28 other states require plain language in contracts for loans less than \$50,000, insurance policies, benefit statements or other specific contexts.

Many successful companies have recognized that whether required or not, the use of plain language improves the bottom line. A Fortune 100 financial-services company sent a letter to thousands of its clients approaching retirement. In the first week, it received 10,000 phone calls because clients didn't understand the letter. After we redesigned the letter, the company gained millions of dollars in new assets because clients could understand the information, and that increased a sense of trust. Plain language paid off big time.

#### **QUICKINFO VITAL STATS**

- Bosley is also an English professor at UNC Charlotte.
- She founded The Plain Language Group in 2005.
- For details, go to [www.theplainlanguagegroup.com](http://www.theplainlanguagegroup.com).