

THE OLYGARCH'S GUIDE TO LEGACYSPEAK

Legacy narratives are proleptic, they tell the regeneration story as a series of 'flash forwards' in a way which anticipates outcomes and forestalls objections. They are supposed to be part of the catalytic effect created by the Games themselves and their very enunciation is meant to establish the discursive conditions required for regeneration to take place. In this way Legacy turns into the cause of itself as an effect, something we were taught at school is a logical impossibility, but does not seem to deter those who enumerate its possibilities. Legacy narratives are written in 'Legacyspeak', the current Esperanto of the Olympic movement. It consists in a lexicon of portmanteau words – words that can be made to mean almost anything to anyone – which are endlessly reiterated in various permutations. The words are drawn principally from the vocabulary of business and management studies supplemented by social and environmental science and constitute a distinctive syntax of Olympic governance. They permeate the diction of business meetings as much as they do the style of report writing and the audio-visual presentation of ideas.

Legacyspeak is an extreme case of what linguists call *nominalisation* in which actions are turned into objects and verbal processes are turned into abstract nouns. At its simplest this involves the deletion of concrete human agency and its replacement by abstract entities which become the chief protagonists of the storyline. So instead of a transactive model of causality involving a) an actor b) a process of modal action described by a verb, located in a specific time and place, and c) a consequential effect, we have an account dominated by purely impersonal and often literally non verb-alisable processes of agency and accountability. It is a language of action without an intentional human subject.

Instead Legacyspeak creates a world of de-contextualised, thing-like entities, often reduced to acronyms, which have the mysterious capacity of acting or being acted upon, but lack any attributable responsibility for the outcome. The preponderance of agentless passive verb forms is a notable feature of this discourse: nobody ever seemingly does anything to anyone, stuff just happens.

So if you are too bored to think of a confusing but seemingly meaningful phrase for that important report, or need to say something suitably abstract to impress VIPs that you know

what you are talking about but can't be bothered to actually think, then use our automated legacyspeak machine. All you have to do is make up any three-digit number and find a matching word from the columns below. For example, 424 produces 'responsive strategic commitment' – just what Lord Coe ordered – and 268 gets you 'best value impact indicators – what post- Olympic project could do without them?

COLUMN 1	COLUMN 2	COLUMN 3
1 Benchmarked	1 Community	1 Delivery
2 Best value	2 Strategic	2 Output
3 Joined up	3 Stakeholder	3 Consultation
4 Responsive	4 Monitored	4 Commitment
5 Inclusive	5 Sustainable	5 Additionality
6 Consensual	6 Market led	6 Regeneration
7 Maximised	7 Client	7 Evaluation
8 Interactive	8 Partnership	8 Indicators
9 Multiple	9 Proactive	9 Impact