

Tax company knows the worth of plain English

Clear, concise language should be the rule when it comes to important documents, according to WriteMark Plain English Awards judge Lynda Harris but people have come to expect less.

Napier-based firm Kiwi Tax has been shortlisted in the awards' best website category and staff were due to travel to Wellington today to find out if they have won.

Making something plain and easy to understand was not easy, said Mrs Harris, and a number of factors were considered by judges when picking a winner.

"Accounting is such a jargon language we always talk to people in a clear manner."

Kylie Berry, Kiwi Tax director

"The structure, the key message, language and presentation are the big areas and there are a multitude of factors within those as well," she said.

If anyone has struggled with a contract, government form or even university enrolment form, they will understand why plain English is important for the public.

"We found a lot of people didn't even expect clear English in a lot of things, they were merely resigned to the fact they would have difficulty understanding some things," Mrs Harris said.

The Plain English Awards were originally established to encourage firms to write more clearly in their documents, especially those with legal or financial implications.

"Often, there are thousands that rely on the documents and it's more about jargon in information New Zealanders depend on every day," Mrs Harris said.

"We thought we'd encourage more clarity by honouring those with good language and pointing out those which are bad."



CLARITY: Kylie Berry and Brena Smith show off the simple style which has seen their website shortlisted for a WriteMark Plain English Award.

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The awards have, in some cases, pushed for change, especially in the public realm.

Mrs Harris said in 2006, the winner/loser of the Brain Strain category, which points the finger at difficult language was Studylink's student loan contract.

"After that, it was re-written and

thousands of students were able to benefit from a more clearly written document."

Kiwi Tax director Kylie Berry said the firm had worked to make their website as clear as possible to reflect its style of business.

"Accounting is such a jargon language we always talk to people in a

clear manner," Ms Berry said.

"Sometimes when accountants are dealing with clients they talk their own language and the client can come away a bit frazzled."

Ms Berry said the firm's base clientele was small businesses and residential property investors who appreciated a personable approach.

"The website is done by our other director Brena Smith so it's all done 100 per cent in-house and she puts in a lot of time and effort to improve the flow of the website — giving it a clear understanding and a nice, usable look," she said.

"It's just about being approachable."