



## WRITING ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

### The brutal truth about using jargon

Jargon is one of the easiest bad habits to slip into and - what's even worse - we sometimes don't even know we're using it. If you want to be different, original and visible you really have to wear yourself off jargon forever.

#### Here we go again

When was the last time you talked about *enhancing the proposition* in order to *address the needs and requirements of the stakeholders* to get their *buy-in*? Did you ever promise to *exceed their expectations* with some *rad blue-sky thinking*? Did you reassure them that you were *all on the same page*, knew that there was an *elephant in the room*, but were *on the case*, busy *pushing the envelope*, and *driving it* all forward by *stepping up to the plate* with a *fresh package of ideas* and *new roadmap* in place? O.K.

#### The right and the wrong time

Look, jargon is fine when you're with those who speak the same version as you. It's almost part of the bonding process. It's shorthand and you all know what you mean because you all do the same thing. However, to the potential customer and the brand new audience who don't know you from Adam, too much jargon will just make you sound like every other Tom, Dick and Al. Boring, predictable and ever so slightly patronising.

#### Blown it

Jargon alienates an audience. It makes you sound like you're bluffing. Worse than that, it can give the distinct impression that you simply can't be bothered to relate to your customers and be open and honest with them.

Jargon is also lazy. It's an easy way out of really explaining what you do. Have you ever said, 'we're in the market of supplying solutions'? Shame on you. Someone once said that to me.

She actually said, 'we're in the market of providing lifestyle solutions' - to which I replied, 'No actually, you sell flats. Just say so'.

#### 5 ways to break the habit and say 'No'

- Try imaging your text as a conversation you're having with a complete stranger in a park. Would it bore them silly? Would they run away? Seriously, would they know what you meant and would they care?
- Read your text out loud to an objective third party – preferably a friend. Ask them if it makes sense and tell them not to hold back. Breathe.

- Take a red pen and remove every American phrase you slipped in there by mistake, as in references to baseball or football. Avoid the use of extracurricular activity language instead of adjectives (you simply can't be *passionate* about office furniture, paperclips or IT – seriously), and any reference to *collateral* unless you are talking finance.
- Lose anything referring to blue skies or elephants...you get the picture? Forget the phrase 'added value', never talk about being 'cutting edge', and or ever refer to your company as a 'premier' anything unless you are in a football team. Solution is not a good word, ever, unless you're talking about dry contact lenses. Banish it from your vocab right now and hundreds of brand experts and web designers will love you forever.
- Sum up in one sentence what you intend to say. If you can't reduce it to one sentence you need to very honest with yourself and admit you're not sure what you're talking about either.

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