



INDUSTRY BUZZWORDS: Too much or just right?

We have a budgetunity here to employ the services of a high-thread count, centergistic consultant who can provide not only collaborative thought leadership, but also codify our strategic issues so we can block and tackle them, then go forward by actionable steps using best practices.

In truth, we never heard any prospective client say all the above words together in one sentence, but if we had, we would have known we were awarded the project and could begin doing our thing, as they say. Buzzwords are everywhere in the workplace these days. Some say too much. But some declare they describe more precisely what we're trying to say.

Here's what the online organization BuzzWhack says about the matter: *BuzzWhack understands that within any given group, buzzwords can be functional tools that communicate ideas and concepts quickly. But once those buzzwords move outside that group, they can be baffling and bring all understanding to a halt.*

Hence, BuzzWhack's online dictionary, from which we've taken a few buzzwords and meanings you may have heard and not understood entirely, and may want to begin using:

actionable: A legal term that's been co-opted by marketers, consultants and techies. In the legal world, it's "giving cause for legal action," such as a lawsuit. Now it's anything you can take action on. "After analyzing your production line, we recommend these four actionable steps."

B2A: Business-to-anybody. A business concept born of desperation.

B2B: Business-to-business was too traditional sounding. B-to-b was too clunky. But B2B is way-cool and much easier to work into headlines and ads.

B2B2C: The abbreviation insanity continues. Now we have Business to Business to Consumer.

B2C: The consumer version of B2B.

B2E: Business-to-everybody. Sounds a bit greedy, doesn't it?

B2G: You guessed it: Business-to-Government. With the government being the largest employer in the U.S., it's BIG business.

best practices: A term describing business tactics (and strategies) used in successful companies. The term, however, can be misleading. While "best practices" seems to imply success, they may have nothing to do with the actual success of the company.

bloatware: Software that has more features, buttons and capability than you'll ever need -- thanks to faster computer chips, cheap memory and big hard drives. It eats up storage space on your drive and hogs memory in order to run. The result of bad or simply lazy design.

blocking and tackling: The basics or fundamentals. Another example of business folks using sports terms and analogies (football

in this case) to make themselves clear - even though the message is missed by those who don't follow sports. "First, we need to get back to blocking and tackling, then we can discuss advanced strategies and techniques."

budget dust: Year-end money that must be spent before it is swept away by the cold winds of a new fiscal year.

budget flush: The "use it or lose it" spending spree that occurs near the end of the fourth quarter. The last-minute draining of the budget is such a common practice by IT departments that Wall Street analysts factor it into their technology stock projections.

budgetunity: An "opportunity" for innovative budgeting. Used to put a positive spin on Michigan's budget crisis several years back. "The shortfall in revenue has given the governor a budgetunity."

centergistic: Focusing on one main goal or purpose. "We need to keep this meeting centergistic if we're going to make our deadline."

CLM: A three-letter abbreviation making the rounds: Career Limiting Move. It refers to any incident that puts a roadblock in your career path. "Jack spilled coffee on the boss. It was a major CLM." [This definition is more clear now that the Council of Logistics Management changed its name to Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals.]

codify: Consulting gurus have really latched onto this one. It's simply one of those words that sounds important. Primarily, they "codify" information when they arrange or systematize it. Hopefully, so it makes sense. "We'll codify the strategic issues for you."

collaborative: This year's buzzword maker. Just put "collaborative" in front of any word or

phrase and you're in business. Psssst: Collaborative means "working together."

thread count: Originally a textile term indicating the quality of the fabric. The higher the thread count, the higher the quality. Now used to indicate perceived quality of nearly anything. "The consultant is expensive, but his/her work is high thread count."

thought leadership: Sounds very Orwellian, but it's not. It's what occurs during a meeting when someone states the obvious before anyone else can get it out.

value stream: Six Sigma buzzword that encompasses every step in the process of producing and delivering a product or service - whether it adds value or not.

win/win: A fascinating business concept that somehow eliminates the "loser" in any deal or project. Loose translation: "This really works for us and we all pray it works for you, too."

Speaking of definitions, some even in the business we all work in are confused about the meanings of supply chain, distribution and logistics. Here's the consensus.

Distribution, part of the supply chain, means the commercial activity of transporting and selling goods from a producer to a consumer.

Logistics is most frequently associated with the actual transportation of goods, as in trucking/shipping operations or with companies that provide warehousing and distribution services for others (third party logistics services providers – 3PLs).

Supply chain refers to the flow of materials, information and finances from supplier to production to distribution to final use.

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www.jasedlak.com
info@jasedlak.com
216.206.4700