Buzz...Buzz...What is a Buzzword?

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Before we begin buzzing about buzzwords, let’s get a solid definition in our minds. A buzzword is an original, minted word or phrase that becomes very popular for a period of time. Buzz words often derive from technical or business terms, or originate in jargon, acronyms or neologisms. For example, a common buzzword phrase which most people have at least heard, and probably even used, is to “think outside the box.”

What are some of the reasons for using a buzzword?

- To achieve quicker communication, for example in a specialized, technical or business workplace.
- To create a sense of belonging within a specialized group. The use of buzzwords shows that you are a part of a specialized group – that you belong.
- While they often start in the business community, they often move over into everyday life through many mediums: digital and social media communications, television, etc. The use of them shows you are staying abreast of the most recent communication lines and developments.

The first recognition of buzzwords was in 1946, coming from business students studying at Harvard University, as a way to help them be more successful in their studies. (1) The use of buzzwords and phrases enabled students to quickly recall items of importance for studying, quizzes and tests. (1)

Let’s consider some buzzwords and phrases that you could use in the weeks to come to impress family, friends and co-workers. (2)

Data Smog: Too much information. A Google search that turns up six million references would be data smog.

Prairie dogging: A modern office phenomenon that occurs when workers pop their heads up out of their cubicles to see what is going on around them.

Sticky: The interesting or compelling trait of a web site that causes you to stop (stick) and read it even though it is not applicable to your search.

Digital Amnesia: The result of being so overwhelmed by the amount of data available and the speed with which it hits you, that you cannot retain any of it, or remember where you put it on your hard drive.

Frying Spam: The increasingly time-consuming task of deleting spam from your inbox.

Treeware: Paper based, printed material such as manuals, newspapers and books.

Payroll Orphan: Someone who has lost his or her job.

Cellopain: The crass idiot who talks loudly and obnoxiously on his cell phone in a public place such as restaurants or in an office with other desks and people nearby.

Loop Mail: Email that is CCed or copied to you to keep you “in the loop.” Much of it is unnecessary and useless.

Krudzu: A management idea or concept that overtakes and strangles real workplace progress. It is a play on the word "Kudzu,” which is an invasive vine that took over vast acreage in the southern United States. In conclusion, we should note that digital communications in chatrooms, individual emails, and entities such as Facebook, using acronyms such as YOYO (You’re on Your Own” and YYSSW (Yeah, Yeah, Sure, Sure, Whatever) are also titled “Buzzwords” but we will save that examination for another time and article. To investigate, read more in The Buzzword Dictionary by John Walston, listed in the Citations below. It is a GR - Great Read!

Citations: