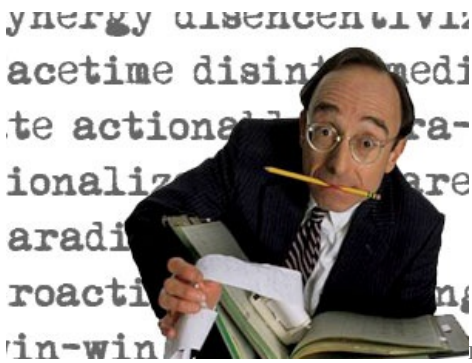


IS USING BUSINESS JARGON A GOOD IDEA?



Businesspeople sure love to make up new words. There is nothing wrong with new words, as long as they (1) fulfill a need, (2) don't replace a perfectly good existing word, and (3) are clever and well conceived. For instance, "emoticon" is a necessary new word, as it gives a name to something that did not have a name before. It's easy to remember (emotion + icon) and describes what it's describing. But "irregardless" is a terrible word, as it means the exact same thing as "regardless." This is a word coined out of ignorance, and it should be abolished from usage. New words coined for use in business are added to dictionaries every year. But these words should be examined before we adopt them into standard usage, even at work. For example, "actionable," meaning "capable of being acted upon," is a useful new word. There isn't a preexisting word -- one would have to say "this item can be acted upon," rather than the shorter and easier "this item is actionable." "Actionable" is also a legal term meaning "subject to or affording ground for an action or suit at law," but it's easy to differentiate the two uses in context. As of 2009, if you use "actionable" outside of a work or legal environment, you'll just sound like an ass. But in 20 years, who knows? "I want to you to go to the store." "Well, I'm busy, but that's actionable." On the other hand, there are absurd, unnecessary business words that just cause confusion. Like "buy-in," as in "if you want to do this, you'll have to get the boss to buy-in." It just means the same thing as "agree" or "consent." It's unnecessary jargon, used in an attempt to sound smart. It fails. Some business words make no sense at all. "Componentize?" As in "to make something a component?" Who uses this? What does it even mean? Business people love to turn nouns into verbs. "Let's *dialogue* with Joe about the projects he's been *tasked* with managing." What, business people don't know how to "talk" or "assign?" Let's just let nouns remain nouns. Other goofy, unnecessary new words from the world of work include disintermediate, disambiguate, facetime, instantiate, mindshare, operationalize (gack!), productize (double gack!), and the entirely meaningless buzzword "value chain." Also, don't misuse real words: paradigm, offline, proactive, synergy, granular, interface. If you want to meet with someone, then meet. Don't "interface." In business communications, it's a good idea to, as the saying goes, eschew obfuscation. If there's simpler way to say what you mean, say it that way. Heavy use of jargon takes more effort, and will confuse anyone outside of your own profession. That said, you can't be ignorant of the jargon used by others in your work. If you don't know what a commonly used business term means, even if you never use it, you'll come across as if you don't know what you're doing. But the next time someone says "I'll ping you with a value proposition that will drive our critical path to establishing core competencies," just reply "yeah, you can email me with your idea how to figure out what the hell our company does."