



Issue No. 12, January 2007

Dear Reader,

I hope everyone had a relaxing buzzword-free holiday. To start the new year, we're featuring some of the irritating words and expressions sent in by readers.



Elizabeth Cockle
Copywriter and Buzzword Banisher

In this issue...

- Readers' Pet Peeves
- Parting Words

Readers' Pet Peeves

1. **Actionable:** This word has a clear dictionary meaning as "subject to or giving cause for legal proceedings". So if you're in the habit of handing out *actionable* items instead of *action* items, don't be surprised if you get a call from the police.
2. **Good to go:** Originally a military term denoting readiness, this phrase can now have a more salacious connotation – definitely good to get lost.
3. **High touch inspirational:** This example of business speak seems to be pretty new – whatever it means – so let's nip it in the bud. Please write to all the marketing experts and business schools you know.
4. **Impactful:** We've dealt with "verbing" in past issues. Here's a great example of "adjectiving" – taking a perfectly good noun and mangling it into an awkward adjective. This one's a favourite of managers and marketers with limited vocabularies. Use *influential* or *effective* instead.
5. **Learnings:** We all grew up learning our *lessons*. Now we're apparently invited to learn our *learnings*.
6. **Pain point:** Here's a good example of a useful descriptive expression that's become a sore point through overuse, if not a *problem* or an *issue* that needs to be resolved.
7. **One [insert here] at a time:** These days we seem to rejoice in tackling every issue or problem one item at a time – or perhaps one pain point at a time. We used to do these things *methodically* or *systematically*.
8. **Utilize:** Popular with those who think that the more syllables a word has, the more impactful it is. What's wrong with *use*? But if you must utilize *utilize*, reserve it for those situations where the usage described is original or particularly effective.

Parting Words

"Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler."

– Albert Einstein, physicist