

**Dear Reader,**

In this summer issue, we revisit TLAs, those infuriating Three-Letter Acronyms designed to shorten lengthy words and messages, at the risk of defying interpretation if the recipient is not ITL. (In fact TheFreeDictionary.com is definitely not ITL on this one, since it gives 14 other English definitions for 'ITL').

Aside from having several potential meanings, do TLAs actually shorten anything – except the recipient's patience? One reader pointed out that the rhythms of English are such that we tend to space stressed syllables about equally apart when speaking. This means that three consecutive stressed syllables, as in a TLA, will take about as long to say as six syllables of which three are naturally stressed. So for the spoken word at least, initialisms may not save any time at all! Try testing this theory with our latest line-up of TLAs.

Have a wonderful, buzzword-free summer!



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The ABCs of TLAs: More Business Acronyms Decoded

1. **ALO: A Learning Opportunity.** Generally something you would rather not do that someone higher up the corporate ladder has decided will be "good for you".
2. **BDU: Brain Dead User.** Covert IT technical support staff term to describe an equipment or software failure caused by human ignorance, as in the urban legend about the new computer user who complained that the "coffee cup holder" had broken off already.
3. **BPO: Business Process Outsourcing.** The process of offloading what used to be core business functions (customer service, health and safety, human resources, manufacturing, – you name it) to an external company in the interests of improved efficiency, lower costs, higher profitability – and bigger bonuses for the CEO.
4. **CSF: Critical Success Factor.** A necessary element for the success of a project or organization. By reading this you're contributing to one of our CSFs at **EC Buzz** (for which, thanks!).
5. **CYA: Cover Your A**.** Definitely a CSF for keeping your career on an upwards trajectory.
6. **EOM: End Of Message.** This TLA goes in an email subject line to inform the receipt that the subject is the whole message. Sometimes followed by NRN ("no reply needed"), e.g. "Meeting confirmed for 11 a.m. EOM/NRN". This can be genuinely time-saving provided your recipient doesn't spend so long trying to figure out what the TLAs mean that he's late for the meeting.
7. **KPI: Key Performance Indicator.** A financial or other metric used to measure a company's performance or success in meeting its business objectives. Need I add that unless you know what your CSFs are it's pretty hard to figure out what your KPIs should be?
8. **LMK: Let Me Know.** A new TLA, popular in the ad agency world, according to our sources. In spoken language, this scores a dead heat with the whole phrase.
9. **SEP: Someone Else's Problem.** Definitely the best type of problem to have, since it can be safely ignored – but make sure it really is SEP if you want to CYA.
10. **TNT: Thanks, But No Thanks.** Typically used in reference to that growing pile of rejection letters endured by job applicants. TNT is also short for the explosive trinitrotoluene, encountered in the unit of measure for the power of nuclear bombs. In our case, of course, we're talking about damp squibs.

Parting Words

Thanks to another reader for sending in this sentence:

"Bill disagreed with the CEO in the F2F meeting and committed a BFM. As a result of this CLM, Bill is no longer ITL. In fact, he's now doing KP at KFC."