

# How to Spot the Jargon, Cliches and Catchphrases in Your Own PR Content

Doreen Jarman, Tableau Software, @DJruns

Matt Flegal, Trulia, @mattf20





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1) confused, unintelligible language; 2) the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group; or 3) obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words.

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# You'll know it when you see it

deep dive  
mission-critical  
synergy  
knowledge base  
out-of-pocket  
mission critical  
laser focus  
leverage  
take it offline

move the needle  
on your radar  
in the weeds  
push the envelope  
end user

core competencies  
value-add  
touch base  
deliverables  
net-net  
think outside the box  
open the kimono  
bandwidth  
circle the wagons

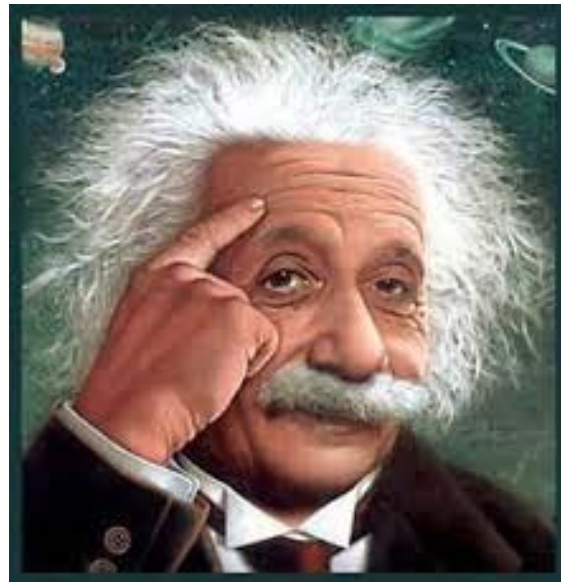
perfect storm

all hands on deck

siloes

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“Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius -- and a lot of courage -- to move in the opposite direction.” – Albert Einstein



# Kill

# Use

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**leverage** → get, gain, use, pull, win, do, take

**utilize** → use, show, fill, take, apply, push, work

**end-user** → client, customer, audience, shopper,  
buyer

**synergy** → team, powerful, effective, stronger,  
more, together

**strategic** → smart, sharp, strong, vital, savvy, wise,  
clever

**Kill**

**Use**

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**mission-critical** → main, big, major, central, chief,

crucial

**win-win** → good, smart, strong, clear, sound, skillful

**value-added** → worthwhile, effective, better, helpful,

ahead

**ideate** → create, think, craft, whir, plan, test, solve

**operationalize** → make, do, put, carry, finish, use, see,

work

# Kill

# Use

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**best-practice** → successful, prime, proven, winning, tested, solid

**mission-critical** → main, big, major, central, chief, crucial

**scalable** → grow, expand, wide, more, big, spread, include

**champion** → support, push, press, sell, do, spread, lead, guide

**deliverables** → results, value, outcome, change, effect

**outside the box** → different, bold, striking, unique, brave, exciting

**Assignment: “Unjargon” the following examples\***

## **Strategic**

**Example:** “Your attendance at the strategic planning meeting next Wednesday is mandatory. We’ll be discussing our strategic goals for the coming fiscal year.”

\*From “10 Pieces of Business Jargon That Suck” by Greg Lacour, Brand Journalists, September 18, 2012



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## Strategic

**Unjargoned:** “We have a mandatory meeting next Wednesday to discuss our plan for the next fiscal year.”

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## End user

**Example:** “Our new website maximizes interaction and efficiencies for our end users.”

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## End user

**Unjargoned:** “Our new website is easier for customers to use.”

## Mission-critical

**Example:** “It is absolutely mission-critical for this business that we consistently meet customer expectations.”

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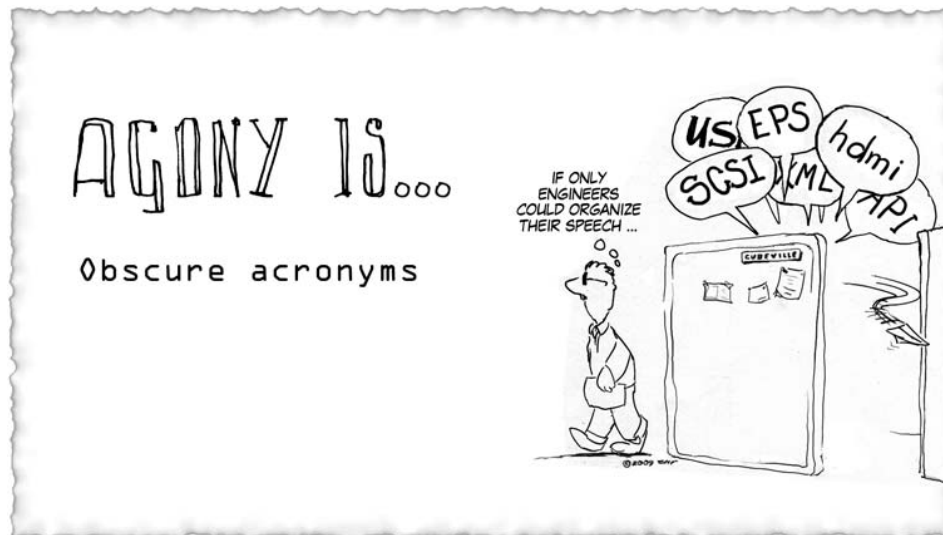
## **Mission-critical**

**Unjargoned:** “This business has to satisfy its customers or go under.”

# Using Acronyms

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- What are they?
  - Shorter forms of words or phrases that can come in handy when you need to repeat the same word or phrase a number of times
- Should you use them?
  - If it's critical to your writing and your word or phrase is going to be used multiple times




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## About OCEG

OCEG is a nonprofit think tank that helps organizations achieve Principled Performance. We provide standards, resources and a hub around which many professionals can collaborate including:

- board members
- business executives and operators
- risk executives
- audit executives
- compliance executives
- financial executives
- IT executives
- HR executives



## Values

Our philosophy and values stem from experience as Fortune 50 executives, auditors, lawyers, IT professionals, research analysts and startup entrepreneurs. We use this diverse experience to shape what we do and how we do it. We use the "Well, I should hope so / hope not" test for all of our values (we hope all of these pass the test).

1. **Open.** Allow anyone to join and participate, for FREE. Make most of our resources openly available, for FREE. Allow other organizations to build on our resources, for FREE.
2. **Diverse.** The community is strongest when it comprises many professions (auditors, compliance managers, lawyers, risk officers,

## Mission

To help organizations achieve Principled Performance by providing a community and authoritative GRC resources for integrating the governance, assurance and management of performance, risk, compliance and ethics.

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# Keep it simple

The image illustrates a Tableau dashboard across multiple devices. At the top left, a smartphone shows a line chart with data points for July 1, 2005, August 1, 2005, and September 1, 2005. To its right, another smartphone displays a world map with data points of varying sizes. Below these, a tablet displays a 'Daily Sales Dashboard' for the 'South Region'. The dashboard includes a line chart for 'Sales: \$71K' from 10/21/2007 to 12/31/2010, a 'Sales by Segment' map, and a 'Customer Detail' bar chart. The bar chart lists customers such as Burgerville, Quince, and Normal, with sales values ranging from \$174,473 to \$197,332. The dashboard also features a 'Premier Threshold' set at \$175,000 and a 'Customer Search Box' with filters for 'Customer Segment' (Salaries, Catering, Contractors, Restaurants) and 'Region' (All, Central, East, West).

Tableau helps people see and understand their data.

STORY PHILOSOPHY IMPACT

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**Tableau** helps  
people see  
and understand  
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# We are mozilla

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# Pushing back on clients, execs and legal – show them a few of these

- **Original:** “The website is now fully operational with the ecommerce functionality all set up.”
- **Rewrite:** The company has launched its website.
  
- **Original:** “In the fourth quarter we paced our promotional activities to avoid the holiday season promotion clutters in the market.”
- **Rewrite:** We ran holiday promotions earlier than usual this year to increase their effectiveness.

- **Original:** “The new company and its management team has invested a substantial amount of their time and effort in laying the groundwork for the company’s unique value proposition to its potential customer base while setting the stage for developing its brand of products.”
- **Rewrite:** The new company is developing its marketing plan.
- **Original:** “The company’s customer-centric business model provides a strong value proposition to consumers.”
- **Rewrite:** Customers like the company’s prices and service.
- **Original:** “Questions may be poised [sic] to management by participants on the call and in response the company may disclose additional material information.”
- **Rewritten:** Executives will answer questions during the call.

# Things to remember



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- Keep sentences short – don't write a 30-word sentence when a 10-word sentence will do.
- Avoid words like delighted, thrilled, pleased, excited and proud – they have no news or business value and don't advance the story.
- Imagine your audience as a normal person, even when explaining more complex concepts about how things work. How would you explain a new software platform to your mom?
- Don't use industry jargon, buzzwords or acronyms – and avoid corporate words like synergize, facilitate, leverage and impactful.


# Things to remember

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- Use people examples whenever possible.
- Feature spokespeople who lend credibility to your news (and draft their quotes for them).
- Rethink writing as you know it. You're not writing for your professors to read any more – you're writing for everyday people. Get to the point asap.
- Use these concepts in all of your communications, not just press releases. Keep emails, social media posts and all other writing simple and jargon-free.





Questions?