

# MARKETING TIP

Extra Mile Marketing | Best Practice

October 2019



## Speaking in gobbledygook – how jargon affects relationships with your clients.

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jar-gon<sup>1</sup>  
/'järgən/  
noun

noun: **jargon**; plural noun: **jargons**

1. special words or expressions that are used by a particular profession or group and are difficult for others to understand.
2. obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words an academic essay filled with jargon
3. confused unintelligible language

Informal: lingo, -speak, -ese, mumbo jumbo, geekspeak, computerese, legalese, bureaucratese, psychobabble; unintelligible language, obscure language, gobbledygook, gibberish

I was recently cc'd on the following email from an internal person to a client of ours who is not a marketer or developer.

"Instructions: Copy and paste this code as the first item into the <HEAD> of every webpage on the EHN site. If you already have a Global Site Tag on your page, simply add the config line from the snippet below to your existing Global Site Tag."



So, here I am writing a blog about jargon and I just couldn't resist sharing. See, even the best of us forget that our audience does not understand things to the extent that we do. We use jargon primarily because it makes sense to us, but to our clients, it may be just gobbledygook. Building relationships with clients involves good communication.

Keep in mind that, in general, clients don't respond well to jargon. C-level audience members are accustomed to feeling like the smartest person in the room. You can easily alienate them if you use language that they don't understand. There is no quicker way to ensure you will not be asked back to do a presentation!

In *Quality and Innovation*, Nicole Radzwill states, "The use of jargon can either communicate competence in a field or alienate people who need to know more about it." Jargon is

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### STATS & FACTS

"The use of **jargon** can either **communicate competence in a field** or **alienate people** who need to know more about it."



sometimes used to shorten an explanation of something technical

or to show prowess with the subject. Unfortunately, in most cases, the use of technical jargon alienates our prospects and clients. Either way, you can almost feel the eye roll and then blank stare from the reader on the other end.

In reality, the best way to ensure that your message is received is to take the extra time to fully explain what the reader needs to know. This means you need to think about who is going to read and care about what you are writing. For example, if you are writing to a C-level person within an enterprise company, they want to know how your product or service will help their business. They don't need to hear the "guts" of how it works. So, talking in plain English, in business terms, is the best way to communicate. However, if, for example, you are talking to physicians, you can utilize

standard medical terms, such as neoplasm, cerebrovascular accident, or myocardial infarction, but you will still need to avoid using acronyms or terms used exclusively by your business.

Here are some tips to assess whether your communication is jargon-free:

1. **Would your best friend, who is not in your field, understand what you are writing?** Test it out. Have others read your message and see if they can tell you what your communication means.
2. **Does your communication include acronyms, or shortened words?** Go through and highlight every acronym, technical term, and buzzword so you can go back and think through if your target audience will understand what you have written. The rule of thumb is to never use an acronym that you haven't spelled out completely prior in the communication.
3. **Is there a shorter way to say this?** We like to call this "word economy". Remove all unnecessary words. If there are superlative words or multi-syllabic words, can you take them out? Can you explain the same thing with shorter, standard words and shorter, easy to follow sentences?

Last, I will leave you with an actual excerpt from a large tech company's own branding guidelines:

Acronyms and abbreviations can have an adverse effect on clarity, voice, and SEO. Although some acronyms are widely understood and preferred to the spelled-out term, others aren't well known or are familiar only to a specific group of customers.

If an acronym will appear only once in your content, just spell out the term. Don't introduce it in parentheses after the spelled-out version.

Avoid using an acronym for the first time in a title or heading, unless it's a keyword that you need to place in the title or heading for SEO. If the first use of the acronym is in a title or heading, introduce the acronym (in parentheses, following the spelled-out term) in the following body text.

Global tip: In machine-translated content, be careful with acronyms that form common English words, like RAM. If the acronym appears outside of the parentheses and without the spelled-out version, it might be translated incorrectly.

If you need help translating your technical jargon into accessible language, give us a call or send us an email. We are excellent translators!

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