

**Reach out:** 1. To contact in some way. 2. Truly horrible way of suggesting any form of interaction with a colleague or associate, offered in an “arms around the world” sort of tone; visions of two fingers only just touching, a la the Sistine chapel, or a film villain about to drop off a cliff despite vain attempts to hold them back; possibly acceptable if sung by a member of the Four Tops.

**Going forward:** 1. The opposite of backwards. 2. Truly a king amongst kings; the undisputed champion of utter bullshit, with the possible exception of ‘proactive’; entirely pointless modifier somehow designed to suggest a forward-looking demeanour, when any fool knows that a backward one would be detrimental for everybody, except possibly historians who should indeed adopt a backward-looking approach; selfish waste of time perpetrated by anyone using these two utterly redundant words – those subjected to them could probably increase their life expectancy by removing themselves from the room immediately whenever they are spoken, thus saving years of meeting time. (*see –focused; Forward-looking; Future-facing; Futureproof; Goal-oriented; Here-and-now-ness; Momentum; Moving forward; Proactive*)

**Cascade (vb.):** 1. Of water, to fall down, as in a waterfall. 2. To tell the other people in a company something, usually subordinates; to pass on information; to inform (a quality often beyond most large companies); to keep in the dark; to fail comprehensively to mention anything helpful at all; to patronize with kindergarten observations or bland, uninformative platitudes; to say nothing at all. (*see Mum, keep*)

**Circle back:** 1. Go back to a point previously made. 2. Endlessly revisit the same bloody point, when it was perfectly clear in the first place, often several hours ago. (*see Agenda bender; Marker buoy, let’s put a \_\_\_ on that; Tangent, returning to the*)

**Offline, take it:** 1. Something not done online. 2. I refuse to discuss this now because I can’t think of a decent response on the spot, so I am resorting to the first awful Americanism I can think of to buy some time. (*see Clicks and mortar; Obfuscation; Ringfence*)

**Square the circle:** 1. Attempt the impossible, based on the insoluble mathematical problem of constructing a square with exactly the same area as a given circle. 2. Conundrum faced by managers of failing businesses every day; conjurer’s trick that can’t be pulled off in the real world; Catch-22. (*see Box, think outside the, try and put a \_\_\_ round that one; Catch-22*)

**Jump on a call:** 1. Join a conversation on the phone. 2. Strangely energetic phrase suggesting that stringent physical action is somehow involved in the simple business of having a chat; a close cousin of jumping on an email, which sounds positively inadvisable.

**Ducks in a row, get our:** 1. Take some aquatic birds (that we own) and arrange them neatly; make sure we know what we are doing. 2. Rush around in a blind panic trying to create some vague semblance of order; generate an illusion of organization where there is none; bluff; lie; pretend we know what we’re doing when we patently

don't; frantically draft an impressive looking chart that suggests structure, rigour and process. (see *Act together, getting our \_\_\_\_\_: Hymn sheet, singing from the same; Realignment; Wavelength, on the same, not on the same; Wildebeest in a row, has the lion got his*)

**Space:** 1. Area or market. 2. Pathetic new use of a perfectly good word, as in “*We want to be leaders in the technology space.*”; as redundant as ‘situation’, ‘solution’, and ‘out there’. (see *Out there; Situation; Solutions, end-to-end*)

**Deliverables:** 1. Things that should be delivered. 2. Condemning rap sheet of items that palpably failed to happen; wish list; wishful thinking; not a cat in hell's chance of occurring; much-abused default position for lazy managers wishing to appear practical, as in “*What are the deliverables on this guys?*”

**Socialize:** 1. Get on with people. 2. Fail to get on with people, but smile anyway. (see *Commoditize; Diarize; Democratize; Monetize*)

**Bucks, bang for your:** 1. Number of satisfying explosions, or possibly orgasms, for an amount paid. 2. Value for money; nothing whatsoever to do with value for money – more a case of desperately trying to receive more for less; vain cry of under-resourced manager, as in “*I need more bangs more my buck, Fiona!*” (*Dial up*)

**Stakeholder:** 1. Person or company with shares in an organization, or some other kind of vested interest. 2. Horribly abused word for any Tom, Dick or Harry who wants to have a say; particularly abhorrent when manacled to another word, as in stakeholder interests, stakeholder values, or stakeholder issues; the phrase “increasing stakeholder value” invariably means the opposite, or is a smokescreen for increasing value only for the company directors. (see *Engage, engaged, engagement; VC; War chest*)

**Key learnings:** There is no definition for this – learning is knowledge gained by study. There is no such thing as a key learning, nor several of them, unless it means learning how to use a key. (see *Criteria, key*)

**Engage, engaged, engagement:** 1. To involve. 2. Straightforward verb now transmogrified into a grotesque bastard son of its original form; ‘customer engagement’ has nothing to do with an impending marriage, but simply refers to their paying attention; ‘engaging the staff and stakeholders’ simply means getting them to agree to something as opposed to rejecting it outright. (see *Stakeholder*)

**World-beating, -changing:** 1. The best there is; revolutionary. 2. Truly breathtaking piece of arrogant twaddle; suggestion that a project or product can change the world, or beat everyone else; arrogance on a staggering scale, even judging by the by the appalling standards of macho businessmen in the highest echelons of an enormous company; pompous, elitist hubris of the lowest order; rank self-aggrandisement; words to be avoided at all costs in company reports and mission statements. (see *Mission statement; World class*)

**World class:** 1. As good as any comparable product or service in the world. 2. Almost certainly nothing of the sort; decidedly average; impossible to measure, since no satisfactory metric of ‘world class’ has ever been developed. (see *Challenger*)

*brand; Market-leading; Mission statement; Scalable; Thought leadership; World-beating, -changing)*

**Disruption:** 1. Breaking things up. 2. Somewhat fatuous term for interrupting someone with a selling message – good for the advertiser and possibly bad for the recipient. (*see Abruption*)

**Across the piste:** 1. Everywhere. 2. Disastrous confusion between piece and piste, inadvertently leading to saying the opposite of what was intended; a piste is a restricted strip of land, and so by definition narrow, whereas the idea here was to suggest a wide expanse. (*see Across the board, right; Across the whole piece; Off-piste*)

**Across the whole piece:** 1. Everywhere. 2. Baffling conflict between one piece (presumably singular) and pieces (presumably several); vague suggestion of a lot of stuff; comprehensive, but uncertain in what way; grandiose; omnipresent; often accompanied with a world domination sweep of the arm, as in “*I want Project Duckboard implemented across the whole piece, Barry.*” (*see Across the board, right; Across the piste*)

**Box, think outside the, try and put a \_\_\_\_ round that one:** 1. Nine-dot matrix game usually called the Gottschaldt figurine, which challenges the solver to join all nine dots with four lines without removing the pen from the paper – it can only be solved by taking the lines outside the perceived square, hence the phrase. 2. Hackneyed piece of nonsense used as a euphemism for having a perfectly average thought; plaintive plea for originality that is almost never answered; all-round conspiracy designed to convince one and all that everyone is rather intelligent. (*see Blue-sky thinking*)

**Needle, moving the:** 1. Making something happen; going faster than before. 2. Full-throttle, balls-to-wall, cock-of-roost, unadulterated machismo; this expression has everything that testosterone-fuelled Sales Directors require, including suggestions of fighter pilots, racing cars, speed and power; a veritable classic for pumping up the troops, as in “*We really need to move the needle on this one guys!*” (*see Crash and burn; Maxed out: Needle, pushing the; Pushing the envelope; Troops; Wheels coming off*)

**Needle, pushing the:** 1. Moving at excessive speed; about to explode. 2. An even heavier duty version of moving the needle, in this example it has been pushed as far as it can go, with dangerous consequences; running hot; overheating; about to blow a gasket; massively overdoing it, usually due to hubris or too much coffee; losing it on the chicane; careening perilously close to edge; crashing imminently. (*see Crash and burn; Maxed out; Needle, moving the; Pushing the envelope; Wheels coming off*)

**Back burner, we’ll have to put that on the:** 1. Make that low priority from now on. 2. We announced this project in a blaze of glory but it has now become apparent that it’s doomed, so ignore it - but if anyone asks don’t tell them we cocked it up. (*see Front burner, let’s bring that onto the*)

**Proactive:** 1. Tending to initiate rather than react. 2. Omnipresent adjective in advertising and PR agencies, as in “*We pride ourselves on taking a proactive*

*approach*”, as though a passive or reactive one would be more appealing; pretty much redundant word, and a close contender for worst bull of the lot, along with ‘going forward’. (see *Going forward*; *Reactive*)

**Kimono, open the:** 1. Reveal a little of the inner workings. 2. Disgracefully sexist remark perpetrated by sweaty businessmen in Terylene suits to imply that business is somehow like sex. (see *Collars and cuffs, I bet the \_\_\_\_ don’t match; Get into bed with; Matching luggage; Playtex strategy*)

**Blue-sky thinking:** 1. Purely theoretical thinking. 2. Waffle; static; hot air; piffle; inconsequential rubbish; stuff that will never happen in a million years. (see *Beanbags; Big picture; Blue sky, to; Blue yonder; Brainstorm; Static; White noise*)

**Pivot:** 1. Reorient business direction to improve product or income. 2. Embark on a massive U-turn after significantly cocking it up; much-loved so-called entrepreneur’s term for changing tack after embarking on a dead duck. (see *Coming or going, he doesn’t know if he’s; Evolving to meet customer demand; Tweak; U-Turn*)

**Silos, working in:** 1. Conducting one’s business affairs from inside a silage storage container. 2. Daft pseudo-agricultural term to signal that everyone is doing their own thing and not talking to each other – standard practice in most companies; even worse as a verb or adjective, as in “*We don’t want to silo the Accounts department,*” or “*Production has really become siloed, don’t you think Jane?*”

**Vertical market, \_\_\_\_\_ integration:** 1. A specific market; merging two businesses that are at different levels of production. 2. Overly posh phrase for two companies getting together because they each need what the other has; completion of a previously patchy service; ‘vertical market’ adds a particularly pointless dimension to what should otherwise simply be a market, especially when abbreviated to ‘verticals’, as in “*Charlie, can you give me a rundown on the verticals in the telecoms market please?*” (see *Integrate, integral, integration*)

**Smashed it:** 1. Did a really good job. 2. Euphoric summary of a meeting that went really well, apparently – often followed by a call from the customer or prospect saying that they didn’t like it and/or you didn’t get the business; a triumphant form of instantaneous self-delusion. (see *Nail it*)

**Agile:** 1. Lithe, nimble, flexible. 2. Constantly shifting through lack of decisiveness, as in agile content, agile management, or agile strategies. (see *Fluid content*)

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