

CHANGE YOUR LANGUAGE TO CHANGE YOUR FUTURE



By Sid Raisch

Make sure that top management and frontline associates are on the same page.

Our words define us. Our shared words define our culture. The culture of a person, a family or a company is a fragile environment. Our cultures are in a delicate balance the same as an ocean reef or deep virgin forest, as determined by our words.

In those examples, outside influences destroy them. In human cultures, it is not the effect of outside influences, but the damage they cause from within that destroys us. In the same way, these human cultures can be improved by choosing language that builds us from within.

The shared vocabulary of a family and company culture is perhaps our single most important critical success factor.

If we carefully and purposefully recognize the impact of words and choose to add or eliminate them accordingly, our condition improves.

Start With Replacing

An easy and profitable way to begin cleaning up our vocabulary is to eliminate and replace word for word or phrase for phrase. Here are some examples:

ELIMINATE	REPLACE WITH
Markup	Margin
Help/Employee	Associate
Boss	Leader
Bid	Proposal
Complaint	Suggestion
Discount	Value

Define and Defend Misunderstood Words

Did you know that the word profit is not a four-letter word?

Of course, profit is a six-letter word. Still, a large portion of our American culture despises corporate profit and, to a large segment of those, profit of a small business included.

Small business profit is simply misunderstood. To change the conversation, we must redefine the words in the conversation and change the way people define certain words — like profit for example, which is a necessity for updating, modernizing, computerizing and generally keeping up appearances, if not for upgrading customer and associate experiences.

So, what's wrong with a reasonable profit? Oh boy, now we had better define the meaning of "reasonable" profit — for a garden retailer it is a minimum of 10 percent EBITDA, another word to define.

Add These Words and Phrases to Improve Your Business Acumen

Are there words missing in your life? There are several words that add value to your business conversations and may become the conversation.

Some of these are acronyms that are now common to business culture and have become verbs in and of themselves. I'll leave it up to you to look up the definitions of these words and acronym-words to gain a working understanding of them, so you can incorporate them into your culture.

- EBITDA – Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization
- GMROI – Gross Margin Return on Inventory Investment
- NDA – Non-Disclosure Agreement
- ROI – Return on Investment

- ROE – Return on Effort
- Gross Margin
- Run Rate

Avoid Corporate-Speak

Overuse of business phrases is an unimpressive attempt to impress. If you worked in an office or watched "The Office," you heard a lot of these.

- Assets
- Downsize
- Rightsized
- Deliverables
- Branding
- Monetized
- Leveraged
- Actionable

Exclusive Versus Inclusive Vocabulary

What about those acronyms I used in these examples? Some cultures get caught up with jargon specific to themselves that make no sense to outsiders. This can be dangerous.

Be especially careful of allowing a different vocabulary to emerge in top management that is not shared with frontline associates.

It is common for small business owners to fear their employees knowing what's going on with their finances. As John F. Kennedy once said, the only thing to fear is fear itself.

Fear more that your frontline associates don't know the meaning of financial business terms, for if they don't, they can't help improve them.

Mitigate fear with non-disclosure agreements, which should be a minimum standard of employment in your company or involvement with your organization. Don't worry about violating the trust of an individual by asking them to sign an NDA, which is intended to maintain trust throughout a relationship.

Live Better Without These Words and Phrases

Our cultures get caught up in language that doesn't need to exist.

1. Any vulgar or swear words not to be mentioned specifically here because they have been eliminated from my personal and company vocabulary. Some argue that



Rosedale Arbor

Add lasting style to your garden with our beautiful Rosedale Arbor, built with exceptionally durable Western Cedar. It is one of few woods that contains natural oils that resist decay and repel insects and fungus. Uniform cell structure and superior paint-holding capabilities result in outstanding stability for years of service.

- Adjustable to fit paths of 36, 42 and 48 inches.
- Furniture-style, mortise and tenon joinery of rail to posts.
- Lattice panels are double fastened at every joint.
- Made in USA

Creating positive space outdoors

(800) 489-8718
arboria.com

Circle 112

A Process to Eliminate Culture Defeating Vocabulary from Your Culture

This is a great team or family exercise. Simply write the word or phrase to be eliminated from your personal, family or company culture on a Post-it note.

Then all together ceremoniously crumple it into the palm of your hands and toss into the round file.

Some teams establish a penalty jar where after a grace period an amount of money such as a quarter, dollar or five-dollar bill is deposited by the offender who uses the word.

The money may be used to throw a pizza party to celebrate the cleansing of the vocabulary.

these words "punctuate" conversation and establish importance to matters. I argue that they are vain attempts of self-importance, but you make of them what you will.

2. Inside jokes. The problem with inside jokes are that they define that there are outsiders — those who don't understand the inside joke. Work to be inclusive, not exclusive.
3. Discriminatory words and phrases. These words and phrases are best left unsaid, lest you be politically incorrect, or have a death wish. Political incorrectness is no longer acceptable, politically or otherwise. The times have changed. Get with them or stay home, and not in your home office or on Facebook or Twitter.

Jargon du Jour

From time to time our culture adopts certain words and phrases and overuses them to a fault. This seems to happen with each generation.

Back in the '60s we had words and phrases such as lay it on me, dig it, hang loose, jam, outta sight, cool, man, peace, love, and war man, just lay it on me?

Florida Dancing Birds
since 2004, now made in Michigan

garden art that dances on the breeze

see full line at www.FloridaDancingBirds.com
(727) 744-4193

Circle 113

Remember surfer dudes and Valley girls in the '80s and their overuse of bag your face, gag me with a spoon, tubular, rad, grody, to the max, gnarly, awesome and of course totally, for sure, right?

It's good to be current. More recently, commonly overused words and phrases include "Netflix and chill," hookup, BAE, fam, squad, FOMO, goals, GOAT, RT, swipe left, swipe right, savage, narrative, literally and WOKE.

Don't know what they mean? Google it? No, YouTube it.

A Word for Tomorrow

In 1967 Dustin Hoffman appeared on the big screen in "The Graduate." His parents' friend, Mr. McGuire tells young Ben that there's a great future in plastics. He was correct. Plastics of the early 1960s became space age plastics that we can't live without touching today.

The word for you, for our industry is "consumables." Consumables are purchased by consumers. By definition, consumables are consumed in their use. Therefore, they must be replenished.

There is a greater future in consumables than we've experienced in our industry.

The most consumable product our industry sells is an annual. If it weren't for the annuals — specifically the product turn of annuals — most garden retailers would not be in business today.

The first thing I ask clients to do is to maximize their sales and turns of annuals. This is an effort to "buy time" by generating greater cash flow and profit with which to correct problems and invest in opportunities.

But annuals are a once a year opportunity. If you want to become more financially capable, more successful by all measures, consider carefully how you can sell more consumables more often, to more consumers — online.

P.S. Here's a new acronym-word to keep you current: BOPUS — Buy Online, Pick Up in Store. **LGR**



Sid Raisch is a consulting service provider to The Garden Center Group and serves as president/CEO of Bower & Branch.

He is a board member of AmericanHort and Come Alive Outside. He has been inventing and reinventing the way things "don't get done" into "get it done" strategies that increase profit-ability, market-ability, oper-ability, and owner-ability of garden centers, landscape operations and a few wise suppliers of plants and products for 38 years. He can be reached at 937.302.0423 or sid@horticulturaladvantage.com.