

GORICK

Workplace Jargon Glossary

WORKPLACE BUSINESS JARGON

Jargon	Meaning	Used in a Sentence
2.0	The improved version of something	<i>"Let's call this the Strategic Plan 2.0."</i>
30,000-foot view	The big picture	<i>"At the 30,000-foot view, the problem is..."</i>
80/20	Find the way that will lead to the most progress with the least amount of work	<i>"We don't have time to do a full analysis. Let's 80/20 this."</i>
Action item	Something that has to get done	<i>"Did any action items come out of the meeting?"</i>
Actionable	To make it clear what someone needs to do	<i>"Your email isn't actionable enough. What do you want the reader to do with your message?"</i>
Add value	Contribute something useful	<i>"That was a value-added comment you made."</i>
Adjourn	To officially announce the end of a meeting	<i>"Meeting adjourned."</i>
Agenda	A list of topics that will be covered in a meeting	<i>"Make sure you send an agenda before the meeting to give people an idea of what to expect and so people have a chance to suggest changes."</i>
Align upon	Agree upon	<i>"Let's align on the meeting agenda first."</i>
AP	"Accounts Payable" (The department inside of a company that is in charge of paying people the organization owes money to)	<i>"Your reimbursement is an AP of the company."</i>
Apologies	Sorry, but for professionals who don't want to say 'sorry'	<i>"Apologies for the delay in responding."</i>

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

AR

"Accounts receivable" (The department inside of a company that is in charge of receiving money from people who owe the organization money)

"Our AR is over the top. So many clients still haven't paid us for our services."

ASAP

"As Soon As Possible"
(A marker for something you should probably do immediately)

"We need to respond to this ASAP."

At the end of the day

The most important consideration

"At the end of the day no one is going to read this."

B2B

"Business to Business"
(A company that sells something to another organization)

"This furniture company makes most of its money selling B2B—by selling office chairs to companies."

B2C

"Business to Consumer"
(A company that sells something to individual)

"This other furniture company primarily sells B2C to families and college students."

Backburner / Frontburner

Backburner: "Something that is a lower priority or that is being postponed for later (like putting a pan on the backburner of a stove to cool down)"
Frontburner: "Something you should be working on as a top priority"

"Let's put this project on the backburner for now."

Ball in [someone's] court

Whoever is responsible for making the next move

"The ball is in the legal department's court. We need their approval before we can proceed."

Bandwidth

How much time you have

"I'm not sure I have bandwidth right now."

Bellwether

Something that hints at the potential beginning of a trend

"The fact that so many customers are rating our product highly is a bellwether that this will be a hot product."

Benchmark

Something to compare to

"50% margin sounds high. Is this in line with industry benchmarks?"

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Best practice

The most trustworthy, correct, or acceptable way of doing something

"We should look up some best practices from industry associations."

Bite the bullet

Suck it up and do something difficult

"Let's just bite bullet and fire this person."

Blessing

Get approval from someone higher up

"This report has been blessed by the VP."

Blocking and tackling

Basic work needed to get something done

The last week was spent on the basic blocking and tackling.

Boil the ocean

Over complicate something simple by looking at too many things

"Just do this one calculation. Don't boil the ocean."

Brain dump

To give another person all the files and knowledge that one holds

"Would you have 30 minutes in the coming days to do a brain dump on this project before you leave for vacation?"

Broken record

To say something over and over again to the point where it's annoying

"Forgive me if I sound like a broken record on this, but I think it should be shorter."

Buckets

Dividing lots of information into different categories

"We collected a lot of feedback from our customer surveys. What are the major buckets of feedback?"

Business case

Why it makes sense for a business to try something new

"If you are selling to a for-profit, the business case typically needs to be about how your solution will increase revenues and/or decrease costs."

Buy in

To get someone's endorsement on something

"Submitting this proposal to the procurement department before getting the department heads' buy-in is a surefire way of getting nowhere. Set up a meeting with him first."

Cadence

A certain routine or pattern

"Would you like to meet on a weekly cadence?"

Can of worms

An seemingly small issue that gets turned into a much bigger issue

"Let's not open that can of worms."

Canary in the coalmine

A warning that some danger is ahead

"A lack of pre-orders may be a canary in the coalmine that this product will not sell well."

Chair

The person in charge of orchestrating the meeting or leading a group of people (committee).

"Can you chair this meeting?"

Champion

Either "a mentor who will advocate for you when you are not in the room" or "a person who is going to push a certain project through to approval"

"This project will die on the client side unless we find an internal champion who can own everything."

Chatham House Rules

Go ahead and use whatever information I'm about to tell you, but you didn't hear it from me and you definitely shouldn't share it to others.

"Chatham House Rules apply to this meeting."

Chime in

To contribute to a discussion

"People might tell you to free to chime in to meetings, but you should be careful about speaking up when you are new because you do not yet know what others want to hear."

Circle back

Meet again

"Let's circle back once you've had a chance to draft something up."

COB

Close of Business, which typically means at 5:00PM

"If someone tells you to get something to them by COB, they probably actually mean by 4:00PM to give them time to review your work before they leave at 5:00PM. If you aren't sure, ask for clarification."

Committee / Task force / Working Group

A group of people who meet to discuss a certain set of topics and to make a certain set of decisions

"Let's split this large group up into sub-committees who can investigate each topic further and then return with recommendations."

Consult

To ask for someone's opinion

"You should consult your manager before sending out a mass email."

Context

Whatever the other person needs to understand what you are trying to do or explain

"Before you dive in with the numbers, provide the audience with some context behind your research."

Core competency

What we are really good at

"Design is not our core competency."

Counterfactual

What could have happened if a certain situation did not occur

"Sure, if we didn't hire this person we wouldn't end up with this big mess, but we don't have a counterfactual. Maybe this is an innocent mistake that everyone would have made."

Critical path

The longest set of activities that must be completed, one after another, before a deadline

"Let's decide on the date and time for the next meeting because without this information we cannot send out invitations and inviting speakers is the task that takes the longest time."

CYA

"Cover Your Ass" (To do something so that you don't get blamed for something later)

"You should write down what you agreed upon in email as a CYA move, just in case he changes his mind later."

Deck

PowerPoint presentation

"Please update this deck with the latest numbers."

Deep dive

Look into something more closely

"Let's do a deep dive on this topic tomorrow."

Deliverable

Anything that needs to be produced

"The deliverable is a 10-page report."

Delta

The difference

"The delta between the top selling product and the second best selling product is massive."

Dive right in

Start right away with whatever you wanted to discuss

"Let's dive right in. What do you need?"

Dotted line vs. Solid line (reporting)

Dotted Line reporting: A situation where two people work with each other, but where neither person has managerial authority over the other person

"I am dotted line to Eric and solid line to Lea. In other words, I work with Eric—and he sometimes gives me work—but Lea is the person who has

Dry powder

Solid line: A situation where person A is person B's boss

the power to fire me."

Ducks in a row

Extra, unused, resources (especially money)

"We have plenty of dry powder left for the upcoming quarter."

Drop the ball

To prepare everything necessary

"Let's meet with the VP once we have our ducks in a row."

Drop the ball

Screw up

"Good job not dropping the ball on that presentation."

Due diligence

Research to try and understand how legitimate something is

"I haven't done my due diligence on this candidate, but if you have, I'll trust your opinion."

EA

"Executive Assistant" (to someone important)

"When setting up a meeting with someone important, work with that person's EA."

Elephant in the room

An uncomfortable topic people would rather not discuss

"That was a useless meeting. People talked a lot, but never once addressed the elephant in the room."

Engage

Talk to / Contact / Work with

"Don't forget to engage with the other team."

EOM

"End of Message" (An acronym people put on a short message to signal that they are done—usually reserved for higher-ups who don't have to care about being polite and professional)

"Can you come to my office? EOM."

EOD / EOW

"End of Day" / "End of Week" (Either end of the work day/week—5PM/Friday—or end of the actual day—12AM/Sunday, so make sure you clarify if you aren't sure)

"I will get back to you by EOW."

ETA

"Estimated Time of Arrival" (When you expect to show up somewhere)

"What's your ETA?"

Executive decision

To make a decision yourself without putting a topic up for a group vote

"Don't waste people's time with a long poll for food preferences. Just make an executive decision."

Executive summary

A bullet point list of the most important information, usually presented as a slide at the front of a long PowerPoint 'deck'

"When explaining ideas to people, start with the executive summary—then pause and let others react, rather than dive straight into the details."

First pass / quick pass

The first draft of something / My quick skim of something

"Please find attached my first pass at a draft email for Joe. Let me know if you have any edits."

Framework

To put some structure around a bunch of information (e.g. by putting it into 'buckets' or themes) or to create a methodical way of making a decision (e.g. creating a framework for deciding what types of initiatives to pursue)

"Given the many ideas floating around the team for blog posts, I suggest that we look at new content through the following framework: (1)

FTE

"Full-Time Employee" (Someone who works for 40-hours per week or however many hours is considered full-time)

"This company has 5,000 FTEs."

Function vs. Industry

Function: The department inside of a company (e.g. Engineering, Human Resources)

Industry: The type of company (e.g. Technology, Retail)

"Pretty much all companies, regardless of function, have the same functions."

FYI

"For Your Information" (Information you are sharing and that people don't need to reply to)

"FYI – the 2pm meeting has moved to room 203"

Gantt chart

A chart that lists a series of tasks that need to get done as part of a project along the side, a list of upcoming dates on the top, and a series of bars in the middle showing when each of the tasks will get done

"Please put this project plan on a gantt chart so that we can visually see all the overlapping tasks that we need to get done at the same time."

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Get the ball rolling

Start something

"James — how about you get the ball rolling by giving your update first?"

Give a heads up

Tell someone ahead of time

"Just a heads up that I will be on vacation starting tomorrow."

Going forward

From this point on

"Going forward, Jen will be your main contact."

Grandfathering

Allow whoever signed up earlier to follow the old rules and be exempt from the new rules

"Should we raise our prices for everyone, or should we grandfather in our existing clients?"

Granular

Specific

"This explanation is too vague. Can you be more granular?"

Gut feel

Immediate reaction

"What's your gut feel towards this color scheme?"

Hard copy

A print-out of a document

"Can you give me the next draft in hard copy?"

Hard stop

A time when I definitely need to leave; otherwise, I will be late to my next appointment

"I'd love to chat, but I have a hard stop at 2:25pm. Is that okay with you?"

Has legs

Has potential

"This idea may have legs. Let's bring it up in our next team meeting."

Headwinds vs. Tailwinds

Tailwinds: Situations or factors that make something grow more or move higher
Headwinds: Situations or factors that make something move more slowly or move lower

"Falling gas prices are a tailwind trucking companies because it costs less money to fuel their trucks, but are a headwind to gas companies that want to make more money."

High level

The one-breath-or-less version of whatever you want to explain

"No need to explain it to me in a meeting. Just tell me the high level takeaway right now."

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

HiPPO

“Highest Paid Person’s Opinion” or
“Highest Paid Person in the Office”

“Just sit and take notes. There won’t be much of a discussion because it’s all up to the HiPPO.”

Hit the ground running

Be useful right away, without needing to bother others for help

“Can you meet with Carl so he can hit the ground running?”

Hypothesis

Your guess as to what will happen given what you know about the situation

“Before you begin analyzing any data, come up with a hypothesis.”

In the loop

Included in the conversation /
Made aware

“Keep me in the loop on how things go.”

In the pipeline

Things that people expect to happen or tasks that people expect to do

“What new product features do we have in the pipeline?”

In your wheelhouse

Your specialty

“Python isn’t quite in my wheelhouse.”

Incentivize

To give someone a reason to do something

“\$20 gift cards could help incentivize people to take our survey.”

Invite

A calendar invitation (typically from Outlook or Gmail)

“Send me an invite for this Thursday 2pm and we can catch up then.”

It is what it is

Something we can’t change

“Jane leaving means more work for the rest of us, but it is what it is.”

Iterate

Work on multiple versions of something until it is perfect

“Don’t just send me the final version. Let’s iterate upon this together.”

Key takeaways

The main point, idea, decision, or summary

“When others ask you for the key takeaways, first summarize everything into a single sentence, then offer to elaborate if others want more details.”

Lagging indicator/ Leading indicator

Lagging indicator: A signal that can give a sense for future performance
Leading indicator: A signal that helps us measure past performance

TBD

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Level set

Go over a topic so that everyone in the group has the same understanding of what is going on

"Since not everyone was able to attend last week's meeting let's begin by level setting."

Lever... to pull

TBD

TBD

Leverage

Use

"Leverage the people around you. Don't be afraid to ask questions."

Light a fire under (someone)

Pressure someone to do something

"Unless the CEO lights a fire under the team, I'm not sure it will go anywhere."

Lipstick on a pig

To try and make something low quality look high quality

"Let's not put lipstick on a pig. This idea is terrible."

Loop in

Include / involve someone (in a conversation)

"Mind looping me in on the email thread? CC me."

Low-hanging fruit

Something that's easy to do, yet makes an impact

"Let's complete the low-hanging-fruit tasks before tackling the tasks that will take several days."

Material

Substantial enough that people will notice

"Changing this assumption won't move the needle."

Mission critical

The most important task that will make or break something

"We are in a hurry. Don't worry about anything that is not mission critical."

Model

An Excel file with a bunch of assumptions and formulas used to calculate something

"Can you model out our costs over the coming year?"

Move the needle Move the dial

Substantial enough that people will notice

"Don't worry, this won't even move the needle"

MECE

"Mutually Exclusive and Collectively Exhaustive"

Mutually exclusive: categories that do not overlap.

Collectively Exhaustive: when everything being analyzed fits into one of

"When structuring your ideas, make sure that you are MECE. Categorizing high school students into 9th grade, 10th grade, and 12th grade is MECE because high school students can only be in one of those categories."

	the categories	<i>Categorizing high school students into teenagers, video gamers, and women is not MECE because someone can sit in more than one of those categories."</i>
Net-net	The final result, after everything is taken into account	<i>"Net-net, it was worthwhile to attend that conference."</i>
No worries	Don't worry about it	<i>"No worries, I've made the same mistake before."</i>
Off the record	To discuss something without the conversation being recorded or shared with others	<i>"Let's keep this conversation off the record."</i>
Offline	Not reachable	<i>"I will be offline during my hiking trip."</i>
On board	To be in agreement with	<i>"Make sure that Claire is on board with the email before sending it out to the rest of the group."</i>
On my radar	Draw to your attention	<i>"I wanted to put this on your radar."</i>
On the same page	Be in agreement or have a common understanding on a certain topic	<i>"Before you go off and start an assignment, make sure that you and your manager are on the same page around when you should check in."</i>
OOO	"Out of Office" (When someone is on vacation or not available)	<i>"Make sure you set an email OOO greeting before you go on vacation."</i>
Out of pocket	Either "not reachable by any form of communication" (because the person is on an exotic island) or "paid for by yourself"	<i>"I will be out of pocket next week because I will be at a conference. I will be paying for the flights out of pocket because my company is stingy."</i>
Open the floodgates	To give permission for others to do something that will overwhelm certain people	<i>"Let's double-check this form before we make it live, since we don't want to open the floodgates to questions from confused customers."</i>

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Optics

How people perceive the situation

"It's bad optics if the intern presents to the client"

Optimize

To find the most efficient or effective method of achieving a certain goal

"If you find yourself doing the same thing multiple times, try to optimize the way you approach the task by looking for a shortcut or more efficient approach."

Optionality

To give people the freedom to choose

"It's helpful to give your manager multiple options to choose between. Even if they choose the one you wanted all along, people appreciate optionality."

Panacea

Something that will solve every problem

"This solution may not be a panacea, but it will at least help us meet this upcoming deadline."

Paradigm shift

Fundamentally change people's thinking

"Good luck trying to convince the team. I'm not sure they are ready for this paradigm shift."

Pencil in

To roughly agree on (a date, usually)

"Let's pencil in next Monday at 2pm on the calendar and we can confirm on the morning of."

Pick your brain

Ask for your perspective

"I'd love to pick your brain about this new project"

Ping (someone)

Contact (someone)

"Ping me tomorrow at 2pm and we can chat then."

Plenary

A gathering of everyone involved in a project or committee who otherwise meet and work in smaller subgroups

"Let's host a plenary kickoff so that everyone has a chance to meet one another before splitting off into subcommittees."

POC

"Point of Contact"

"Who is the right POC for this initiative?"

POV

"Point of View" (Someone's opinion)

"My POV is that it's too early to ask for a raise."

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Pressure test

To find counter examples in an attempt to find exceptions or a rule, weak points to an argument, or something that was overlooked

"Have you pressure-tested the assumptions in your Excel analysis? I'm not sure this number is correct."

Push back

To give a counterargument

"My only push-back to this idea is that it will take more than six months before we know if it will work."

Put on the backburner

Deprioritize whatever you are doing

"Let's put this on the backburner for now."

QC

"Quality Control" (To double-check something to make sure it works and that there are no mistakes)

"Let's QC this report one more time before sending it out."

Quarter / Q

A three month period in a company's financial calendar (e.g. Quarter 1—or Q1—represents the first 'quarter' of the year, which is usually January, February, and March)

"Our sales increased by 20% in 1Q2019."

Quick wins

Something that is impactful and that doesn't take a lot of time or effort

"Acknowledging that John came up with this idea in the meeting is a quick win for getting on John's good side."

Red tape

Bureaucracy

"The approval involves a lot of red tape."

Reinvent the wheel

To redo something from scratch rather than make use of other people's work

"When starting a new assignment, resist the urge to reinvent the wheel. Start by digging around to see if others have attempted a similar task before."

Resonate

Whether you like something

"Please see below for my list of questions for the podcast. Does this resonate?"

Revenue

Money that an organization makes from others (via customers)

"Every business is interested in increasing its revenues and decreasing its costs."

Reverse engineer

To examine someone else's work to try and figure out how they did it.

"This company says it made over \$5 million last year. Dig through the prices

RFP

“Request for Proposal” (When an organization announces to the world that they would like other organization to send them a plan for solving one of their problems or meeting one of their needs

of their products and whatever you can find about their store volume to reverse engineer how many customers they must have served.”

“This RFP is super long.”

Roadmap

A plan, calendar, or timeline

“Before you hide away for a month to work on this project, present your roadmap to your manager so you both agree on what needs to be done.

Rocket science

Something that’s really difficult

“This is not rocket science. Just update the slide.”

ROI (Return on Investment)

How much benefit you get for putting in a certain amount of money or time

“Let’s rank these initiatives by their ROI.”

Scalable

“To do more of something with far fewer less time or energy than it takes to do something once

“Allowing every customer who calls to speak with a human being within 10 seconds is not scalable because we’ll need to hire more people.”

Scope

The boundaries for a project, where in-scope represents all the tasks that one can/should do in a project and out-of-scope represents all the tasks that are irrelevant

“Is pricing in scope for this conversation, or should we not talk about price at all—because it might turn people off—and wait until the next meeting?”

Shiny objects

Attractive things that distract people

“Be wary of all the shiny objects you will come across. Focus on the main project.”

Shoot yourself in the foot

To screw yourself over

“Let’s not shoot ourselves in the foot by setting a deadline that we cannot meet.”

Skip manager

Your manager’s manager

“Going to your skip manager with questions without first asking your

Slippery slope

A situation where doing something gives permission for something worse to happen

immediate manager can embarrass your immediate manager."

"It's a slippery slope to promote this person ahead of schedule because it will lead to others asking for an early promotion too."

SME

Either "Subject Matter Expert" or "Small and Medium-sized Enterprise"

"Davis is a SME on SMEs" (a ridiculous sentence you will hopefully never hear)

Socialize

To share an idea with others to get their endorsement before a big group decision is made

"Make sure you socialize an idea around the team before you present it a big meeting. If you don't, you run the risk that someone pushes back and embarrasses you publicly."

SOW

Scope of Work / Statement of Work—a contract that states what work needs to be done, by when, and according to what timeline, for a project to be considered a success.

"Can you please draft a SOW with our partners for me to review?"

Spin your wheels

To put a lot of effort into something but not make any actual progress towards a certain goal

"If your manager asks you to write a 500-word blog post, set up a meeting or send an email to your manager after you brainstorm a few topics and after you write an outline of what you plan to write. If you don't, you risk spinning your wheels by polishing up an essay on the wrong topic and needing to start all over again."

Stakeholders

Anyone who is affected by something

"Parents are a stakeholder of their child's education."

Strawman

A rough draft or outline of something

"Don't just hide away for weeks and come back with a 20-page report. Give your manager a strawman first."

Swim lane

Whatever you are responsible for

"Samir needs to stay in his swim lane and stop doing other people's tasks."

Synergy

Some extra benefit arising from two things being combined

"Since our teams are working on similar topics, there are a lot of synergies from us sitting close to each other."

Synthesize

To take everything discussed at a meeting or all the information found on a topic and roll them up into a summary or a set of themes

"Read through all the news on this company and synthesize your findings into 10 bullet points on what this company's strategy is."

Table (something)

To postpone discussion on a topic in a meeting

"Let's table this issue for now because we are running short on time."

Table stakes

The bare minimum expectation

"Following instructions is table stakes in a new job. What really matters is whether you can go above and beyond what you were explicitly told to do."

Take this offline

Let's follow up one-on-one later, rather than discuss in front of everyone right now

"Let's take this offline."

Take to the next level

Improve

"Let's take this analysis to the next level."

Think outside the box

Think more creatively / tell me something I don't already know

"I need you to think outside of the box more."

Throw under the bus

Make someone look bad

"Wow, way to throw the intern under 'the bus!'"

Timebox

To set a time limit for finishing something

"Let's timebox the next item on the agenda because we are running short on time and I want to make sure we end the meeting on time."

To your point

I am mostly interested in hearing myself speak, but I want to give you the sense that I was listening when you were talking earlier by relating my idea back to whatever you said

"To James' point earlier about needing to keep the videography team in the loop, perhaps we could send out a blast email with everyone CCed?"

Jargon

Meaning

Used in a Sentence

Too many cooks in the kitchen

There are so many people involved in getting something simple done

"Let's limit the meeting to 4 people so we don't end up having too many cooks in the kitchen."

Touch base

Let's discuss further

"Let's touch base about this report."

Traction

Measurable progress towards a goal or acceptance among a group of people

"Our tweet is getting traction on the Internet. It's been re-tweeted 100+ times."

Triangulate

To arrive at an estimate by piecing together a bunch of available data points

"I couldn't find any data on customer traffic for the winter holidays of 2010, but, given that we have data for the rest of the year and customer traffic increases by 20% from November to December, I triangulated customer traffic by multiplying November's customer traffic by 1.2."

Two cents

Opinion

"I think we can make this email shorter, but that's just my two cents. Feel free to send it if you want."

UI / UX

"User Interface" (Whatever the user touches or interacts with) / "User Experience" (The process that a user takes to do something)

"The UX of this form is terrible. There are so many buttons I need to click to get even simple things done. The UI also looks like it was made in the '90s."

Unpack

Explain in more detail

"I'm not quite familiar with this concept. Mind unpacking this concept for me?"

Value prop / Value proposition

What makes something attractive

"The value proposition of this new service is that it helps companies cut costs."

Wrap (one's) head around

Try to understand

"I'm still trying to wrap my head around whether this is even feasible."

YTD

"Year to Date" (The period of time between January 1st of this year until now)

"What is our YTD website traffic?"

