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The Language of Leadership

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Summary Statement

Companies serve their constituents, produce goods and sell services through the relationships they build which serve to increase the company's market share. This sustains the business. Otherwise, they are forgotten. This appears to be the case with any viable company. Companies, across many industries, cultivate their relationships by utilizing many economic and social tools. But, no tool is more important to gain a corporation competitive edge than the corporate commodity called jargon.

From the relationships cultivated between the various departments within the corporation itself, and between the organization and it's external environment, emerges a new, unique and often obscure vocabulary called jargon. The term 'jargon' may be defined as the professional vocabulary used to symbolize the complex concepts that define the corporate environment. Jargon defined this way is different from slang which commonly refers to vulgar vocabulary that is often used outside a professional environment.

These new terms, called jargon, quickly become a new language for the workplace. The terms are used to express both complex concepts and simple functions. The terms become the vocabulary that needs to be recognized and understood by the various departments within the company, by the consumers of its products, by its competitors,

and by its shareholders to enable the company to build the relationships that can increase its market share.

The new language is designed to equip the corporation to meet the demands of competition in an environment experiencing a fast rate of change. But, this terminology sometimes causes confusion for employees; the words intended to clearly define departmental or individual objectives can sometimes render interpretations that are muddled and conflicting.

For example, terms such as: *Balanced Demands, Flexible, Empowerment and Rightsizing* are part of the new language used to encompass complex concepts for meeting the goals of business. But, these terms define concepts less clearly when applied to the specific role of an individual employee leaving the term open to interpretation and possible misinterpretation. For instance, phrases like "remaining flexible" may be used to describe the desired corporate environment and its goal to increase market share. But, for one employee remaining flexible may be interpreted as open mindedness and for another remaining flexible may be interpreted as a longer work day and shorter work week.

I began thinking of the corporate arena as a place that needs effective leadership to explain the jargon that describes it. I decided to investigate the common business jargon used, the characteristics of the current business environment, and to postulate a definition

that one aspect of effective leadership is successfully explaining the obscure new

vocabulary of the business environment for employees.

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Introduction

The workplace of the 1990's has experienced an unprecedented rate of change. The number and frequency of these changes happens more quickly as corporations compete in a global business environment. Some of these changes include: shifts in the attitudes and skills workers bring to their jobs, and changes in the expectations the consumer has for the goods and services they buy. These changes place heavy demands upon the corporation. And, most companies have answered these demands with an unprecedented number of responses. Many organizations are quick to respond to the marketplace, to their employees, and to the consumers of their products. Quick responses, in the right direction and scope, guarantee companies a competitive edge. Organizational responses include: partnerships with various governmental agencies of foreign countries to produce goods and provide services overseas, implementing ergonomic training sessions for employees, and utilizing consumer opinion panels that judge the companies goods or services on a continuous basis. The results of these actions can provide corporations a means to increase profit, increase employee productivity, and increase market share. All of these things are necessary to sustain the business.

How, when, and why specific companies respond to their constituents' needs and wants can be called, "the corporations' personality." Corporate personalities are evidenced in company practices. For example, a specific corporation may choose to implement a corporate volunteer program. Sending volunteers into the community to aid in projects like painting homes for the elderly, or low income, helps the corporation build

a reputation for caring about its community. That company can be thought of as having, or wishing to have, a "caring personality." On the other hand, a company may choose to focus on developing its business by incorporating smaller companies into its' corporate holdings. This company is developing a reputation for valuing rapid growth and may be viewed as having an "assertive personality" in the marketplace. Part of the personality of an organization is defined by its practices and those practices lead to the words used to describe the company. Such as: socially responsible, communal, networked and mercenary. They can describe how the company has responded to society. The words describe the personality of a corporation or its "corporate culture." "Corporate culture" can be thought of as the blueprint from which a company responds to its customers, its employees and society.

A simple example describing a corporate culture can be drawn from the professional sports arena. For instance, hockey organizations have developed seemingly harsh "personalities" stemming from an intensely competitive "corporate culture." In hockey, organizations bear such names as *The Bruins* and *The Blackhawks, which intend to conjure images of bravery,* and in every way reigning supreme over their opponents. The names certainly provide a clue as to how the organizations may conduct their business by the words used to describe the game. Another indication of *corporate personality* is the words that are used to describe how the business achieves its goal. In the hockey business, scoring points is the goal and the words used to describe that business are: checking, *fouls, and press.* These words are the hockey businesses professional jargon

and describe how the business accomplishes the goal of scoring points. Words like *checking* describes the accepted manner in which the goal is achieved. The practice of *checking* certainly reveals the personality of the Hockey organization. There are many pieces of the puzzle when putting together a composite of a *corporate culture*. Two pieces have been discussed: the name an organization chooses for itself may provide a clue as to its corporate culture, and the professional jargon used to describe the corporations' business also provides a clue to its personality. None, however, is more crucial than the jargon that is used within the confines of the corporation. Because it is jargon that describes the processes between people that drives the corporation.

Ask a computer programmer, for example to quit *prairie dogging* and take a look at some *treeware* put together on a *Xerox subsidiary,* or run the risk of being *swiped out* or at the very least left *404.* The computer programmer will know that one should sit down and read the documentation, which was created from an unauthorized photocopy, or one will miss an update. (Wilbers p. D2)

But, I doubt one would hear a hockey player use the above terminology. The hockey industry has a professional vocabulary all of its own. Words that define the essence of that particular business. The hockey business has its own jargon. It is the same of any business environment.

Language emerges as jargon in the corporate arena. "A kind of professional shorthand." (Wilbers p. D2) It is this type of language that defines a business, sets trends, and creates products and services for any given industry.

Changing terminology is necessary and desired. Jargon can create opportunities for businesses to build constituents, to capitalize on a trend, or to create a new service. For instance, the term *Generation X* represents a concept that has afforded clothing companies and soft drink companies the opportunity to create new goods and services. The obscure term, Generation X, has identified a new segment in the market that some companies have capitalized on and profited by. Jargon can be useful; it provides a tool for "doing business" and becomes valuable to those who know how and when to use it. But, jargon can also become a roadblock for company employees struggling to incorporate the obscure terms into their daily duties. Terms can become elusive and mysterious to those who cannot embrace their meaning. Jargon sometimes operates less to inform and clarify and more "to exclude the uninitiated from the inner circle." (Wilbers p. D2) This is true of the US corporate environment. New terms and concepts continuously emerge in this highly competitive and changing arena which can cause confusion and uncertainty for the groups' members.

The emerging language, in the corporate setting, describes the business of a corporation. Jargon and "Biz-ese" now describe concepts once described by simple words in the corporate environment. (Omega p. 15.) Biz-ese is a term describing business speak. With the emergence of Biz-ese in the workplace, what one person

expresses, and what is actually understood by the receiver may be very different.

Explaining the continuously new language in highly fluid environments calls for effective

leadership.   .

Explanation of the professional vocabulary rests with the leader. Without a leader to

precisely define the jargon for an individual employee, it becomes questionable whether

the group can sustain itself. In other words, it is a leader's job to bring about meaning for

the emerging new vocabulary.

Leaders can transform unfamiliar terms and abstract concepts into specific practical,

actionable ones. Leaders can " inspire action…by skillfully using [common] language to

frame ideas and goals" , without manipulation, by linking them to a shared and desired

purpose. (Fairhurst 1996)

 Framing puts into context the plan needed to achieve a common goal and sustain the

group. The frame provides the picture in which individuals can insert themselves.

(Fairhurst p. 53) Understanding how the new concepts, often symbolized by jargon, are

relevant makes them easier to grasp and easier to implement into the employees daily

routine.

Jargon has been introduced as a part of today's corporate culture. Jargon has been

identified as a tool of business. The ability of a leader to define professional jargon is

critical to sustain the business. It would be of value to further discuss jargon and its

implications for leadership.

Purpose of this Study

Why study the jargon in the business arena? " Because jargon often takes on a life of

its own." (Wilbers p. D2) Jargon emerges in the workplace as an aberration to the

established business vocabulary. And, it provides a challenge for leadership. It is readily

absorbed into a company when consultants introduce it, when management repeats it, and

when employees implement it into their daily routine. Jargon will be forever a part of the

corporate environment because of its unique ability to describe dimensions or conditions

that create profit opportunities. For example, jargon is used to promote goods and

services; books and articles have been written on the subject of jargon. Jargon is a

definable and specific part of the business arena and as such is possible to further

investigate.

This research will begin by identifying the current business jargon and discussing

some common characteristics of the current US for--profit business environment as an

environment that makes use of jargon. Secondly, the paper will focus on the need for

leadership to clarify the ambiguous terms.

Limitations

This paper is limited in space from defining a leader in any other way than one who clarifies professional vocabulary and will not distinguish between leadership and management. This paper will not assess the appropriateness of using jargon. This paper will look at the business environment as a whole and will not distinguish between industries.

Literature Review

From the business environment jargon emerges which is current and captures the enduring business concern; to make a profit. Each type of business has its own language to be sure, but several terms have recently emerged from corporations, crossing several industries, making these terms some of the corporate jargon of the nineties. These are the terms that are used to leverage a competitive edge and to portray most company changes in a positive light. They are the tools for "doing business". Jargon helps the language of the corporate workplace remain fluid and dynamic.

"Biz-ese" is the term Monique Omega gives to the emergence of the business terminology. She describes business catch phrases as "a type of slang to be spoken in order to be in the business environment." (Omega p.15) She writes of the five following words as having added conflict and confusion to corporate America. She also states that these words *are* necessary to describe the corporate atmosphere. These are Attrition, Hidden Agenda, Team Effort, CYA and Deadlines. Her list of words is like the jargon

found by Lancaster, who writes of the benefits of keeping abreast of the current language,

and understanding the effects it has on the workplace.

Lancaster's opinion is that if one wants to be viewed as a valuable member of the

group, it is best one understands how the words and concepts fit into the everyday

activities for obtaining the overall corporate goal. (Lancaster p. B1) He writes of five

terms he believes that individuals need to be fully aware of in order to be fully aware:

Delayering, Core Competencies, Constant Whitewater, Empowerment and Derailment.

(Lancaster p. B1) Lancaster suggests that individual's who understand the terms, and use

them skillfully have the key to managing one's career. (Lancaster p. B1)

Kennedy, states that one must " realize that in today's workplace the same words mean

different things." (Kennedy p. 55) She believes, " one of the results of the radical

workplace changes in the last five years has been the evolution of the way we [speak]."

(p.55) She cites two business terms in her writing which have had, she believes, the

greatest impact on business: Balance demands and Flexible. 'Balance demands' has

come to replace crisis management with a positive twist. And 'Flexible', Kennedy

reports, " has changed from flexible thinking or open mindedness to the ability to make

quick changes in direction." (Kennedy p.55)

The changing definitions described by Kennedy are becoming more typical of the

business environment. Employees who may have understood the corporate jargon in the

past may find they are not " on board" when new definitions are assigned to old terms.

For example, 'proactive' now means the opposite of reactive. (Getzler p.176)

Getzler points out that the term 'proactive' used to mean " inhibitive of memory" but

aggressive marketers have designated it " opposite of reactive" .

The jargon is the language of business and the vocabulary continuously changes,

adapting to express the current business environment. It can help define a new concept

and help reexamine established practices. For example, the term " big picture" can be

confusing. Nearly every employee in the current corporate environment has heard the

term. Does the term reflect the overall goal of the company to increase employee

productivity? Or does the term reflect corporate values?

Although, it is easy to speak the new business language, it is difficult, for some

people, to grasp the concepts they represent and integrate them into their everyday duties.

Employees may be asked to grasp the " big picture" . But, without a leader to shape the

meaning of the trendy talk into a real, viable set of actions specific to the members of the

group, individuals may be left merely saying the words. For example, seeing the " big

picture" may mean implementing ideas that increase the level of customer service an

organization wishes to provide. For some employees, this may specifically mean having

to vary their lunch schedules to answer the incoming telephone calls over the lunch hour.

The varied lunch schedule is a means to attaining, or seeing, that " big picture" . The

varied lunch schedule is the meaning, or the specific action, the leader gave to employees

to help them attain or grasp the "big picture".

 Graham (1994) has identified six terms, unique to business, which he describes as the

latest words and phrases that define the corporate environment: Outsource, The big

Picture, We're going to Partner, We must become more flexible; Tear down walls; Open

up lines of communication, Reengineering and Empowerment. (p. 3-6) He asserts that

business speak can be a valuable tool for those wishing to guide others to achieve a

common goal.

   Getzler recognizes the exclusive jargon and identifies three terms, he believes,

describe the business environment: Tweak, Synergy and Proactive. Tweak he defines as

a marvelous word meaning, "to manipulate figures so that they come out to say what you

want them to." (p. 176) He defines synergy as results far exceeding expectations.

Kennedy, Getzler and Graham may be called the jargon watchdogs of corporations today.

They point out that the business language is jargon and it is quick to change. It is unlike

the language one hears in other facets of ones life, and as an employee in any industry,

one is expected to learn and absorb the continuously changing vocabulary or risk the

misunderstanding and confusion that comes to those who do not understand.

   Mike Consol writes he is "one who has seen the last decade leave the English

language littered with business fad and fetish in the Western part of the US." (Consol p.

17A) He describes what he believes to be the six most significant [obscure] business

terms defining the corporate arena: Downsizing, Reengineering, Win-Win situation,

Partnering, Synergy and Empower.   (Consol p. 17A)   jargon is fluid and dynamic.

Terms can change in meaning. For instance, " partnering" is a prevalent term describing

the nineties corporate business atmosphere. Partnering has come to mean strategic

alliance. But, in the past partner had always been used as a noun. (Graham p. 4)

Partnering has now been redefined to better describe corporations in the 1990's. When

the definitions change, it creates an opportunity for industries to reexamine a product or

service in a new way. This leads to better goods and services and more goods and

services. The term " empower: serves as an example. The term 'empower" has forced

management in companies, wishing to remain competitive, to shift their attitudes about

lower echelon employees in the workplace. Management has been challenged

 to view lower echelon employees as more valuable to meeting the corporate objectives as

a part of exploring the benefits suggested by the term " empower". The term " empower"

has created a demand for books on the subject, and has created more consumer

convenient services, such as automatic teller machines, for example. Jargon describes the

business environment and the practices of corporations. Just as checking, fouls and press

describes the practices used in the hockey industry. Each industry fosters an environment

that attracts departures from the established vocabulary because the use and

implementation of those departures can give a company a competitive edge over other

companies in its industry.

Erick Shonfeld cites the term virtual as being the most widely used bit of jargon. But,

virtual, he asserts, is to corporations as reading diet books is to losing weight. (Shonfeld

p. 22) Individuals cannot grasp the concept or any benefits of understanding the concept

through the words alone; one must have the experience of it.   The first step in

experiencing something is to have the phenomenon put into a context that is meaningful

and understandable to the individual. An example of leadership and context is the idea

that "most parents have a dream for their children. Some want their children to be

doctors, some musicians, and all want them to be healthy, wealthy and wise. These are

parents who raise their children by focusing on [context]. Following in father's footsteps,

or in the footsteps father never had and therefore wants for his [child], are well known

examples" of giving a concept meaning. (Davis p. 74)

Giving a concept specific meaning, especially for a group, is difficult without

leadership. Leaders can provide a context from which concepts can be understood.

Jargon provides leaders with a tool to create the changes necessary to sustain the

business. For example, if the context from which all company concepts should be

understood is "to make a profit" and the concept of "flexibility" emerges as the means

to make profit. A leadership opportunity has been created. "Flexibility" needs to be

specifically detailed, by the leader, to encompass profit making. Flexibility may be

explained to workers as staggered start times. Requesting some employees begin work at

7:30 a.m. and work until 3:30 p.m. and having others start at 8:30 a.m. and leave at 4:30

p.m. may help A Central time zone corporations work better with its Western and Eastern

time zone customers. Thus, helping to increase profit for the company.   Jargon is a call

to leadership to clearly state the concept by lending the framework or context in which

the jargon needs to be understood.

Shonfeld expresses a phenomenon, suggested by other experts, that occurs when individuals do not grasp the meaning of the new term; that they are left confused and ineffective in the workplace. (Shonfeld p. 22) Without a leader to put the word into context and make the concept real to the members of the group, the desired goals are unlikely to be met. Shonfeld warns using jargon can cause confusion. Especially the terms, Team Player, Reengineering, Vision, Paradigm shift, Restructuring and Empowerment. These words, because they are frequently overused, are more widely misunderstood and are more likely to cause confusion and create the necessity for effective leadership. (Shonfeld p. 22)

Byrne calls the jargon a business in itself. " Terms such as cycle time management, values based change, collaborative workplace, and process centered organization... are structured around concepts of empowerment, flexibility, reengineering and seeing the big picture and act as 'trademarks' for business consultants and the services they provide." (Byrne p. 44)   Looking at the terms as a business in themselves builds upon the notion that the jargon is a desired and necessary part of the environment. And, that businesses may actively seek consultants to coin the phrases that may help gain any hint of competitive edge.

Business experts are struggling to set the pace in their highly competitive industries. New terms are a tool and can be used to set apart one company from another. The terms can give increased recognition to a company's services and goods. For example, the term

SWOOSH can be thought of as jargon because it has become synonymous with the

NIKE© company's marketing efforts to sell its' shoe and clothing line. *SWOOSH* has

become the trademark by which NIKE© conducts its business. The term *SWOOSH* has

been marketed as the term that refers to NIKE© shoes and athletic apparel. Consumers

readily realize that *SWOOSH* is different from the clothes and shoes marketed by

Adidas©, Reebok©, and a host of other athletic wear corporations. The close tie between

the term *SWOOSH* and NIKE© apparel may lead marketing experts employed with

NIKE© to ask, " Does this item have *SWOOSH* ability?" when deciding which new

products should be introduced into the marketplace by NIKE©. The term *SWOOSH* has

given NIKE© increased recognition in the fiercely competitive industry of athletic wear.

The *SWOOSH* is the professional vocabulary describing NIKE's© leadership in its

industry because of its marketing. Jargon is a part of any industry and is necessary

because once in place the employee must use it, and desired because it becomes the

vehicle to review the status quo of operations, and it creates an opportunity for leadership.

The review of literature of corporate jargon illustrates that the arena of business has its

own language. The language changes rapidly. What one expert defines as

reengineering another may call restructuring and still another may argue the two terms are

completely different? Recognizing the business terminology and keeping up with the

new language is essential to understanding the business environment.

Introduction to the Business Environment

Larsen

It is not enough to only identify the jargon used in the business environment in order to understand it. It is also critical to characterize some general traits of the corporate environment in order to better understand it. In examining the current US for profit business environment, I looked for broad characteristics that might cross industries to characterize the corporation of the 1990's in order to better know that arena. To accomplish this, an interview was conducted to extract the general traits of the business arena. The interviewee holds the title of "trend follower" in a highly respected company adept at identifying the trends of business. A trend follower is someone who can generalize the characteristics of business by identifying the emerging trends in the operations of companies. The purpose of the interview is to begin to explore the commonalties of corporations and to make the connection that these commonalties make it possible for corporations across many industries to use jargon.

I developed a set of questions, based on my personal observations and insights gained form literature, designed to uncover characteristics of today's business environment. I asked the questions via telephone interview, at 8:30 AM CST on February 12, 1998. The instrument for this descriptive study was an eight question interview created by the researcher drawn from a working knowledge of the purpose of this study. The questions were asked to gain a clearer understanding of the business environment and to what extent, if any, the jargon plays in defining a corporation. In order to address bias in the interview, I specifically asked: How *has the seemingly overwhelming presence of the professional business consultant industry played on the business environment?* I asked this question because the interviewee is intimately tied with the consulting business. The

interview I conducted is valuable, based upon the responses received, in terms of its

ability to collect the information needed to better define today's business arena. Even if

the results rest on the opinion of one, I believe the responses to be meaningful to those

interested in identifying some characteristics of the popular business culture.

Questionnaire

1. What is your background in human behavior and why are you called a trend follower?
2. Why is trend identification important?
3. Have you identified any trends in the language that's now being spoken in the workplace?
4. Have you identified the emergence of any type of "Business Speak" Language that's used in the workplace and no where else? Like for example, at home.
5. How has the seemingly overwhelming presence of the professional business consultant industry played on the current business environment?
6. Is there any actual change in the ways that businesses operate because of the "Business Speak" identified? Or are all the words just "Hype"?
7. What is different about the business environment today that fosters "Business Speak" as opposed to businesses operating 20 years ago?
8. How has the quickly changing language affected employees in the workplace? Is there confusion? Or miscommunication?

The Responses

1. My training really has come from observing business climate.. I have no formal education in human behavior. Why am I called a Trend Follower? I have 30 years of experience looking for emerging trends in the workplace, what they mean and what can be learned from them.
2. Because it helps provide a competitive edge for businesses slower to act in the marketplace. It can provide a competitive edge for businesses. The slower an organization is to see the trend and understand the change the less likely they are to be competitive in their industry. ...They would not keep up with constituents...They would become followers rather than leaders or peers.
3. I really have not looked for language trends in the workplace. As always, Euphemism are used when decisions get harder and harder to make. Reengineering a company is easier for executives than firing people. They help avoid blame or guilt— euphemism can't produce guilt or blame or shame.
4. Yes, like euphemisms ...but, that's not really new...its just accelerated. Things happen fast...people are pressed to make decisions faster, some decisions make negative

consequences for people. The Nazi's talked about the final solution—not about killing Jews.

5. It has created opportunity for people...creative people have advanced. It has enabled managers to avoid difficult decisions... If the direction of the business has been advised by an outsider that could have negative consequences for people...managers can avoid blame and uphold their integrity with the group members that are left. The expertise has made much more valuable the judgement of what is *valuable* in the business environment. Expertise was once based one one's experience now its based on one's credentials and affiliations.

6. Definitely *Change*. Astute executives leverage the talk to bring about change.. there is immediate consequences for using the language.. sometimes the immediate consequences are negative, but in the long term results can be positive. Change really has no value, though, its what we do about it that's positive or negative.

7. Increased consultant's maybe.. But, consultants don't run the business they provide advise or guidance in a ferociously competitive marketplace. The real shift, in that, is to the consumer because they have choice—they're more responsive which has always been true.

8. Leaders sent messages some spoken some tacit. For example, a company announces its offering a meditation room. which creates an opportunity for an employee to deal with stress at work. The next day, the company announces a 10% staff reduction... People in organizations often send conflicting messages like this...but, they [the employee] interpreted them in their best interest. The increasing use of abstract language means that the receivers interpret for themselves. If wrongly interpreted they're not " on board" . Specific, concrete language is uncomfortable.

        The interview did uncover that jargon is widely thought to " provide a competitive

edge" for businesses. (Response to question 2.) Industries desire and need jargon in

order to keep pace in a highly competitive environment. The language can be used to

help create the desire and need for new or improved products and services. Or, the

language can be used as a powerful tool in a very ambiguous way. It may be used to

disguise reality. The interviewee implied that jargon might be used to soften the harsh

actions of a company. The issue of decision making utilizing jargon is brought forth in

the answers to questions 3 and 4.   The interviewee states " people are pressed to make

decisions faster—some decisions make negative consequences for people" and

" Euphemisms are used when decisions are harder and harder to make." If the decision is tough the " word" to describe that decision must be positively focused. This may be the reason that the term " reengineering" is widely used to describe the incidence of layoffs within a firm. The term reengineering, for any company, would seem to convey a more positive situation rather than that of firing people.

The answer to question 6-- *Is there any actual change in the ways that businesses operate because of the "business speak" identified? Or are all the words just "Hype"?* was " Astute executives leverage the talk to bring about change." This statement indicates that, in the broad corporate atmosphere, language is a tool of the workplace and can be used to frame abstract concepts into specific, actionable ones.

The answer to question 5, How *has the seemingly overwhelming presence of the professional business consultant industry played on the current business environment?* was " Expertise was once based on one's experience now it's based on one's credentials and affiliations." seems to suggest that to align oneself with the powerful business jargon can be a way to initiate one into an inner circle. Those that are privy to the mysterious language, and use it not to inform but to exclude, can be harboring a powerful weapon against their own obsolescence in the work environment. As Hal Lancaster clearly states, " If you can't talk the talk you risk taking a walk."

The interview was conducted to gain a better understanding of the corporate arena. From the response to question 8, corporations may be commonly characterized as: using

the jargon to leverage a competitive edge, striving to portray most any change in a positive light, seeking consultants as a way to become more responsive to their constituents, and employing an " increasing use of abstract language" rendering jargon a more valuable tool than it perhaps once was.

This paper has uncovered some common threads characterizing businesses in America today. An interview was conducted, and it revealed that corporations use jargon to leverage a competitive edge, and that they increasingly use abstract language to define their goals[1]. The research has also uncovered the common business jargon of corporations. Many experts, observing the current business environment, concluded that the language is obscure and quick to change. For this reason, leadership is needed to give the words meaning. Take for example the word " depression". Depression, according to Webster, means a dip, a hole or a cavity. (Webster p. 305) Depression can be thought of as the term used to describe the condition of Americas' economic situation throughout the 1930's. President Roosevelt gave context to the term when he " conveyed this message to depression-ridden America: 'There is nothing to fear but fear itself.' Anyone who was able to experience the depression in that context was no longer governed by the " depression". Poverty, unemployment, hunger, and anxiety were consequences; they were not the thing itself. Roosevelt's greatness as a leader was that he redefined the context in which people experienced their poverty." (Davis p.65) In Roosevelt's case, he successfully framed the situation for Americans to better understand their environment, thus conquering the roadblock of the fear that threatened their survival.

In the corporate environment, it becomes a challenge for effective leadership to explain the new terms in enough detail to assist individuals in their daily problem solving. One way to do this is to frame the jargon. Framing jargon may help a leader to assist individuals and group members in realizing their role within the corporation. A leader can take the mysterious terms, and explain them by assigning specific tasks to employees making the terms real and specific. For instance, by looking more closely at the term *reengineering* from the literature review. *How does reengineering relate to the daily activities of the individuals within the group?* A leader may break the concept down into specific actions. For example, a leader may assign an individual to revisit the policies guiding customer service or rework transportation contracts with the trucking lines that carry the firm's products to determine cost effectiveness. These specific activities are part of reengineering, as defined by the leader, and meet the goals of the business. Assigning the tasks specific to achieving the goal, persuades individuals to assert themselves as an intricate piece of the puzzle in obtaining the overall goal. This is framing. And, as exemplified by Roosevelt, it is an effective way to lead people both to accomplish tasks and to a brighter outlook of the future.

Business is all about expertise. The interviewee stated, " The expertise [of a consultant] has made much more valuable the judgement of what is *valuable* in the workplace." (Response to question 5.) And part of the expertise is using and framing the corporate jargon. The corporate arena was described by the interviewee as *responsive.*

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[1] Shonfeld concurs when he states " jargon is frequently overused." p. 17.

" There [are] immediate consequences for using the language" indicating that both

negative and positive consequences flow from utilizing the jargon. " (Response to

question number 6.)   The responsibility seemingly rests with the leader to ensure that the

consequences positively impact the company. And if it does, most often the jargon

becomes part of the standardized vocabulary making room for new jargon.

Discussion and Conclusions

Those that understand the power jargon holds also understand it is an important tool

for conducting business. The literature review introduced jargon as an intricate part of

corporate operations. The emergence of the new vocabulary is necessary for

corporations' to define their business, set trends, and create more products and services.

But, because the jargon changes continuously and the definitions of the jargon can also

change, effective leadership is needed to help employees understand how the terms relate

to their specific roles in the company. In order to meet company goals, each employee

must understand their role in achieving it. In the intense flurry of business operations

employees face the challenge of encompassing the new terms into their daily routine.

Effective leadership was defined as successfully creating a picture into which employees

can assert themselves to help achieve company goals expressed by jargon.

Several experts were cited in the review of literature on the jargon that they believe

best describes the business arena. Kennedy, Getzler, Graham, Consol, Shonfeld, Omega,

Lancaster, and Byrne view these terms as the building blocks of companies. The new

vocabulary describes the organization, how the company responds to its constituents and becomes the trademarks by which the company flourishes. Corporations standardize jargon into their operations to continuously challenge the status quo of their industry; thus gaining the competitive edge needed to survive. The characteristics of the corporate environment, uncovered in the interview, points out that organizations increasingly use abstract language to place a positive spin on decisions that may have negative consequences for some employees. The ability of jargon to soften the harsh realities of business makes jargon all the more desired and valuable in the workplace.

The research has identified current business jargon and has uncovered some common characteristics to better know the business environment. The result of this effort calls for effective leadership to clarify the new vocabulary that continuously emerges in the corporate arena. It can be concluded that jargon is introduced to represent any number of concepts depicting the goals of business. A broader case may be made that new terms are an emergent property of any fluid environment and, as such, they create the opportunity for applying effective leadership.

VII.   Recommendations for further study

I have studied the professional vocabulary of the corporate environment. Effective leadership was cited as the key to framing jargon. How effective leadership is applied would warrant further study. For what reasons and to what purpose an employee of the

corporate arena incorporates the jargon into their daily duties would also warrant further

study. I have interviewed but one person for this study. The interview may not be

representative of the complex business environment, but, it does provide the beginning

research into the commonalties of the business environment. Further study should

include interviewing several other trend followers to better understand the corporate

arena. I would expect more detail and a broader range of common characteristics to be

uncovered. The terms uncovered as part of the business environment may have different

meanings if investigated specifically within one industry. Perhaps more research is

needed in specific industries to better characterize the implications for jargon and

leadership. The arena of leadership is vast. I was limited in time and space from

researching the characteristics of a leader that may lend to the successful framing of

jargon. The role ethics play in how that jargon is framed should also be investigated.

It would be of value, for those searching to identify opportunities for effective

leadership, to further study jargon. Jargon may be fun to use, learning and understanding

it offers a challenge, and mastering it brings the rewards of a competitive edge for

companies; and deserves further examination.

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