

## 10 Ways Buzzwords Are Undermining Your Leadership

On several occasions when teaching, I've noted the difference between buzzwords and leadership. In fact, I think that a key facet of leadership is **knowing the difference between a strategy and a collection of buzzwords**. In the corporate world, there are a multitude of buzzwords (and phrases) that need to fall out of existence. And, yes, I'm an offending party on several of these.

- Learnings
- Synergistic
- Guru
- Bandwidth
- Thinking outside of the box
- Let's talk offline
- Deep dive
- Granular
- Come-to-Jesus moment

The list could go on and on. For those who lead in the church, we have a completely other set of buzzwords. The sad thing is that many of the words have an important meaning.

Nevertheless, they **have become junk-drawer terms that are applied to everything and often come to mean nothing**. A short list would be:

- Postmodern
- Missional
- Relevant
- Contemporary
- Gifting
- Resonate
- Gospel

A few of these terms are important to me. They might be important to you. And, yes, I just put "Gospel" on the list. The reason is not that the biblical term has lost its meaning but that it has been so widely applied that others have lost a sense of its meaning. The three questions I have are simple: *"When you use that term, what do you mean?"* and *"Do the people listening to you understand what you are saying?"* and *"Do they now understand enough to follow where you are leading?"* It is a lesson that was driven home for me when I recently traveled to teach at the Kiev Theological Seminary. When leading, we must know these facts.

- Just because you speak does not mean that they heard you.
- Just because they nodded their heads in affirmation does not mean they understand.
- Just because they said they understand does not mean that they agree.
- Just because they agree does not mean that they will do it.

**So, as I consider the power and the bane of buzzwords, I would offer these 10 thoughts.**

1. Buzzwords begin as a rallying cry and end as words too broadly applied. **Leadership constantly looks for fresh ways to keep the movement alive.**
2. Buzzwords are a poor substitute for the real content. **Leadership offers a vocabulary of meaningful dialogue.**
3. Buzzwords give a false sense of momentum when stagnation is the reality. **Leadership identifies stagnation and tackles it.**
4. Buzzwords are an easy way to say nothing when those who follow you need to hear something. **Leadership shows the willingness to have the difficult conversations.**
5. Buzzwords kill the meaning of a movement. **Leadership continues to give life to a movement.**
6. Buzzwords are the escape hatch for the speaker who is unprepared. **Leadership finds a way to be the most prepared person in the movement.**
7. Buzzwords provide a facade of being knowledgeable. **Leadership actually learns.**
8. Buzzwords give false hope of a possible future. **Leadership tells a beautiful and detailed story of what can be.**
9. Buzzwords are big ideas boiled down to the lowest common denominator of thought. **Leadership offers everyone a way to access the big ideas and bring understanding to them.**
10. Buzzwords make important words eventually seem disposable. **Leadership redeems the important meaning of words and phrases.**

Read more from Philip [here](#).