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The Content-Free Buzzword-Compliant Vocabulary List

"Our powerful software is flexible, intuitive, easy-to-use and integrates seamlessly with your other tools. Robust and scalable, your organization can enjoy the benefits of our best-of-breed world-class offering."

How many times have you read this in marketing materials for software? Does it provide you with any real information – or is it simply a string of meaningless buzzwords?

When you or your team uses these words and phrases in a presentation or software demonstration, you risk loss of credibility. Presentations and demos, in particular, need to focus on facts – not supposition – in order to achieve technical proof or generate a real vision in the customers' minds.

Here's the list of words that can get you and your team into trouble - we call it the "Content-Free Buzzword-Compliant Vocabulary List":

1. Robust
2. Powerful
3. Flexible
4. Integrated
5. Seamless
6. Extensible
7. Scalable
8. Interoperable
9. Easy-to-use
10. Intuitive
11. User-friendly
12. Comprehensive
13. Best-of-breed
14. World-class

How can you communicate the ideas behind these buzzwords and stay in the land of facts? Look for concrete, fact-based examples that illustrate the ideas.

For example, instead of saying, "Our software is robust," you might state "This software is deployed and in day-by-day production use by over 10,000 users around the world today." Or, alternatively, try "Our users enjoy a 99.98% uptime on a 24/7/365 basis." The more specifics and numbers you can provide make these statements more credible and support your claim.

Similarly, you can replace the trite and hackneyed "user-friendly", "easy-to-use" and "intuitive" claims by being focused and sticking to the facts. You can cite the specific number of mouse clicks necessary

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to complete a task, for example. Or, perhaps you can reference that users of your software out-of-the-box have never found the need to purchase training. Just the facts, Ma'am…no hyperbole!

A good test you can apply to your own material is to ask the question, "In whose opinion?" If it is a quote from a customer, then that's terrific, and you should identify the quote accordingly. However, if the answer is that it came from your marketing department (or your lips!), then you should find a way to rephrase.

For example, if you find a phrase in your literature or presentation materials such as "Our powerful software…," then you should ask in whose opinion is it powerful? You can turn this from useless fluff to real stuff by providing a working example: "Our customers state that our software reduces their typical workflow cycle time from several days to less than an hour."

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) software is a key topic of discussion in many organizations today. Nearly every CRM software vendor says their tools are "powerful". In whose opinion? Are they able to lift tons of steel or send satellites into orbit? What makes their software powerful?

Replacing items on the Content-Free Buzzword-Compliant Vocabulary List with substantive claims provides you the opportunity to differentiate from most competitors. Compare "Our powerful software is world-class…" with "Our software enables 10% increases in close rates, 14% reduction in sales cycles, and customers also report substantial increases in the quality of leads generated and pursued…"

Two of the worst offenders on the Content-Free Buzzword-Compliant Vocabulary list are "seamless" and "integrated". Everything, it seems, is "seamlessly integrated" with everything else. Why, then, is there so much work for companies that provide integration capabilities?!

Once again, providing real-life, fact-based examples is a solution that enables you and your team to rise above the competition and earn a positive reputation for being fact-based. "Our Sales Force Automation solution automatically enters all tasks, appointments, and telephone calls onto your Outlook calendar, without requiring a single mouse-click. Set it up once from the Preferences Menu and our software keeps all of your calendar operations synced and up-to-date with Outlook." Much better!

"Scalable" is easy to improve upon. With regards to the number of users, how about: "Implementations of our software range from single users in sole-proprietorships to over 2,500 users in Fortune-500 companies." If you are referring to concurrency, consider something like "Our ASP installation is currently supporting companies with a handful of daily transactions to organizations who are processing well beyond 10,000 transactions every hour."

When a vendor says their software is "flexible," are they talking about software capabilities, or their willingness to be flexible with their licensing policy or pricing? Use specific examples that are focused and relevant to the customer at hand, whenever possible. Using verifiable, real-life statements will

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encourage your customers to respond with a more positive, open attitude – which will help you in achieving your objectives.

How about "world-class" – what does this really mean? If your customer is concerned about local language and currency support, then you can speak directly to these capabilities. "We provide support for the major European languages, Japanese and Cantonese, and handle direct use and automated conversion of the currencies used in each of the relevant geographies."

Stick with the facts, avoid meaningless buzzwords, and enjoy increased success with your presentations and demonstrations!

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