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Indiana's Rex Huppke says: "The war against workplace buzzwords is a lonely one."

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When it comes to the language of business, sometimes I wish subtitles were available. It's like watching one of my favorite British TV series. The actors on *Downton Abbey*, *Sherlock* and *Foyle's War* are speaking English, but I need subtitles to understand their accents.

[This article first appeared on the [Rosenberg Blog](#).]

I admit to a certain resistance to using “new school” terms for which there were perfectly understandable words in the past. Here are some favorites:

- *Transparency* has replaced *openness* and *honesty*
- *Onboarding* instead of *orientation*

- *Core competency* is the new *basic skill*

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People smarter than I am started using these new terms and they caught on, to the point where not using them exposes you as being out of touch. As the *Chicago Tribune's* Rex Huppke says: "The war against workplace buzzwords is a lonely one."

Huppke's [April 17 column in the Tribune](#) discussed talent management consultant and "fellow buzzword loather" James Sudakow's new book—*Picking the Low-Hanging Fruit and Other Stupid Stuff We Say in the Corporate World*. I just ordered a copy. Huppke described the book as "a dictionary of dippy corporate slang that explains strange phrases like 'increase the footprint' which means increase market share. The book appropriately skewers the use of a language in ways that few of us actually understand."

Huppke interviewed Sudakow, who explained that this sort of language allows people to look like they're part of a special group that knows what it all means, and is particularly prevalent among consultants.

"They're brought in as experts on stuff and if they have their own language, that makes them seem like they're even greater experts. But it doesn't. It's the opposite. It's like their credibility actually goes down because people wonder, 'Why can't you just use normal words?'"

"Alas," concludes Huppke. "Sudakow said he tried fighting the good fight but it didn't help. So he did the next best thing. He joined them."

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*Marc Rosenberg is a nationally known consultant, author and speaker on CPA firm management, strategy and partner issues. President of his own Chicago-based consulting firm, [The Rosenberg Associates](#), he is founder of the most authoritative annual survey of mid-sized CPA firm performance statistics in the country, The Rosenberg Survey. He has*

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