

FOR STUDENTS

TIP SHEET

Business Buzzwords

Business terms and phrases to know. (Hint: You could use some of these in your job applications.)

actualize	To make real; turn into action.	"To actualize this vision, we need a tactical plan"
at full tilt	All the way, the most you can do.	"Our crew has been operating at full tilt for a week, and I'm starting to detect burnout."
bandwidth	Ability; capacity; how much a person can handle.	"I don't have the bandwidth to take on another assignment. Couldn't someone else do it?"
best of breed	Something to aspire to; nearly unattainable perfection.	"We don't need a best of breed solution. We just need something that will work for now."
big picture	Vision; strategy; imagined direction.	"To really understand the big picture, you have to listen to the boss talk about his vision."
bio break	An opportunity to use the restroom.	"During the training session, the instructor gave us frequent bio breaks."
bleeding edge	Newest; previously uninvented; hotly competitive.	"We're trying to create a bleeding edge solution here, so of course it's risky."
braindump	Everything someone knows, unedited; a blast of ideas.	"I've written down everything I know, sort of a braindump on paper."
bubble up	Emerge; come to the surface; become obvious; win out.	"Once we start looking into this problem, other issues we aren't aware of now will bubble up."
bucket	Compartment; category; holding area.	"We're moving money around and have set up new buckets for temporary financial categories."
burn out	When someone is over-extended or over-stressed, to the point of fatigue.	"With too few people and too much work, employee burn out is a serious problem for us."
burn rate	Velocity; rate of progress; pace; throughput; horsepower (for potential burn rate)	"We don't enough resources on this project to sustain our present burn rate."
buy-in	Agreement; concord; accord and approval	"Without his complete buy-in, we'll never get approval from the committee."
close the loop	Include everyone; finish out an open-ended discussion	"Just to close the loop on this, let me make this one last point."
customer-focused	Tuned-in; responsive; aware of customer needs.	"Any business that isn't customer-focused is doomed to failure."
cycles	Operating power; applies to machines or, metaphorically, to people	"The jet lag I'm feeling is significant, and at the moment I'm running on limited cycles."

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downsize	A sanitized term for laying people off.	"We'll downsize our workforce to reduce expenses."
drill down	Decompose; derive the detail.	"As we drill down into the problem further, I'm sure we'll find more to worry about."
empower	Infuse with genuine authority.	"HR is always talking about how important it is to 'empower' the workforce, but our managers don't seem to think it is."
exit plan	Departure steps; escape hatch.	"We have an exit plan for this approach, in case it doesn't work out."
face time	Time spent with someone in person (face to face)	"Because we're now using teleconferencing, it means we'll get less face time with our clients."
front-load	Put a lot of work in early on.	"We'll front-load the project plan with a lot of work so that we'll have more time later on to make up for any slippage."
fudge factor	A margin of error that produces a more satisfying result.	"You can get the company financial position to look really good if you allow us to inflate the revenue by a huge fudge factor."
go forward	In the future; out ahead of us; direction.	"As we go forward with this idea, I hope you'll let me know how it's going."
go/no go	Time to decide: are we going live with this project or not.	"The project is coming to a critical juncture. Many people aren't sure we're ready to release the product, so we need a go/no go meeting with all the decision makers present."
hardball	Tough or difficult; a term drawn from baseball where there are softballs (which aren't really very soft) and hardballs, which are very hard).	"He's a manager who likes to play hardball, so don't expect an easy time working for him"
low-hanging fruit	Easy, obvious, cheap to get ahold of. (From Aesop's Fables.)	"In solving this problem, we've already gathered all the low-hanging fruit. Now it's time to go after the other potential harder-to-find causes of the problem." (From Aesop's Fables.)
mindset	What we believe; how we behave; preconceived notions.	"Bill Gates believes software should be proprietary and profitable; that's always been his mindset."
next generation	What's coming; next best release.	"It's a next generation product, and it will leave its predecessors in the dust."
ping	Ask, query, inquire, assess, poll.	"Let's ping the group and see what everyone's opinions are about this."
proactive	Get out in front of; anticipate.	"The proactive approach is not to wait and see what happens."

re-engineer	Re-configure; rearrange; re-map; re-think.	"If the process isn't working, let's look at re-engineering it so it's more effective."
rightsized	Reduce; contain; where staffing levels meet budget levels (an even cheerier form of "downsize")	"Our new finance director says we need to 'rightsized' our operation, that we're currently overstaffed and overcommitted on expenses for our budget."
scalable	Adjustable, something to recalibrate	"We're looking at a much smaller version of the same design, but I think the original is scalable to what we need."
seamless	As if it were one; flowing together nicely.	"Those two departments have always worked together well, almost like one seamless operation."
silo	A self-contained universe, part of a project or other organization, often dangerously cut off from other self-contained worlds	"We've been operating in silos for long enough, and it's time we get out of our silos and become better connected across this organization!"
spearhead	Take the lead on	"I want to be the one to spearhead a project to cut out waste around here."
streamline	Improve by reducing or eliminating waste; process improvement by removing unnecessary steps	"Streamlining processes always sounds like a great idea, but often results in less effective ways of doing business."
synergize	Get the most out of; related to the popular term "synergy" used to describe the advantages and planned gains from merging two operations	"If we want to really synergize this effort, let's look at what strengths each side brings with it and take the best from each."
train wreck	Trauma; difficulty; unanticipated huge problem	"It's a giant mess now, and I've known it was a train wreck waiting to happen for a long time!"

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