

## Stop Slingin' Slang! Prospects and Clients Leary of Loose Language

By Craig Harrison



Despite attention to four-color brochures, meticulous grooming and letter-perfect newsletters, consultants constantly undermine their hire-ability and employees hurt their promotability through sloppy language skills and inappropriate word choices in their communication. What point is shined shoes and polished purses if you're constantly shooting yourself in the foot with your own words?

### **Slang is sloppy...precision preferred**

Professionalism counts in the work world. Proper English shows good taste, good schooling and an understanding of professional protocols. Avoid slang. You're not a short-order cook! Slang is a shortcut that suggests excessive informality and lack of appreciation for the workplace setting and expectations.

- ❖ I wish I had a nickel for every consultant who told me he or she was **gonna** do something! Gonna is gutter. Replace all uses of "gonna" with "going to" and others will perceive you to be a professional with plans. *Gonna* is what an elementary school student will do when the recess bell rings. *Going to* is what dedicated and focused professionals intend to do, a part of a strategic plan, an act with intention.
  
- ❖ Sadly, **very unique** isn't. Unique, by definition, means one of a kind, unparalleled, without peer. Adding very in front of unique is as meaningless as doing something 110%, 115% or 150%. And you thought grade inflation was bad! OK, we get the point.
  
- ❖ Prove you're a graduate by knowing the difference between **alumni**, **alumnus** and **alumna** and **alumnae**. The first and last are plural, the second and third refer to a male or female graduate of their alma mater. Alumnae refers to women graduates. Alumni refers to coed graduates.

❖ **Figuratively vs. Literally.** When you say you could eat a horse, you are speaking figuratively. Only the Donner party meant it literally. One consultant told his client "he literally killed to get a past job." Really? Who wants to hire a murderer?

❖ Degrees *are* important. So is understanding **the degree** to which you are in favor or opposed to something. Don't get a third degree burn! When you tell people you are 360° opposed to something, they won't hire you since you obviously failed geometry. 180° denotes complete opposition. Once you've rotated 360° you've come full circle and are back where you started from. (Do not pass go, Blockhead. It's back to square one!)

❖ **More Than vs. Over:** Over is a preposition and generally refers to spatial relationships: "The plane flew over Sacramento." Use "more than": Silicon Valley has more than 10,000 programming jobs.

❖ **Myriad vs. A myriad Of:** Myriad means "many." Not "a myriad of" problems. That would like saying, "he has *many of* problems," which would be wrong. We would say, "he has many problems."

❖ Don't bother asking about **renumeration**. You're ineligible, because you won't be retained. The correct word is **Remunerate**, to give someone money or to be paid, which you will be, when you use the correct word.

❖ **Irregardless.** There is no such word. Regardless of what you've heard, the correct word is "regardless."

❖ **Interred vs. interned.** If you worked without pay, you interned. Ironically, it can also refer to serving behind bars, as in a prison. As bad as that is, when you say you interred, it suggests you were buried! You'll never get ahead if you're already six feet under. Unless you're born again, stick with interned.

❖ **Presidents and Olympians are forever so.** Everyone wants respect but nobody gives it anymore. When you speak of a United States president such as Bill Clinton, George Herbert Walker Bush or Jimmy Carter, they're still *President* Clinton, Bush, or Carter respectively. (Note that President Jimmy Carter is now a Nobel laureate too!) When you refer to Olympians Mary Lou Retton, Billy Mills or Peggy Fleming, they're Olympians (not past or former Olympians). Just like recent medalists Apolo Anton Ohno, Sasha Cohen, Shani Davis or Chad Hedrick, Even ones who didn't medal, like Bode Miller will forever remain Olympians.

## **Pronouncements on Pronunciation**

Just so you know, although shift happens, **paradigm** is and always has been pronounced pair-ah-DIME, not para-DIG 'EM.

Yet these days alternate pronunciations are plentiful: harassment, nuclear (nucular is also acceptable until 2008), and database (pronounced dah-ta-base or DAY-ta-base).

By the way,

- ❖ The singular of data is **datum**
- ❖ The plural of stadium is **stadia**
- ❖ **Media** is plural for **medium**. TV is a medium. Radio, too. Print (a.k.a. newspaper) is another. TV, radio and newspapers together are forms of media.

It is a fact that customers do business with those they know, like and trust. Speaking well builds trust with clients. It reflects a shared value, the proper use of language. Speaking well is a sign of your professionalism, suggesting you will adhere to other standards of good business: honesty, fairness and service.

When you speak well the world respects you and wants to do business with you. Can ya dig it?

### ***About the author:***

**Professional speaker Craig Harrison's Expressions of Excellence!™ provides sales and service solutions through speaking. For more information on Craig and his work visit [www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com](http://www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com)**