



Can Proper Definition Keep You From The Dark Side?

Words are important. They form a huge part of our communication and can have a lasting influence, whether in a book or as a remembered dialogue.

Sometimes our communication can be incomplete and left open to interpretation or misinterpretation. We can often rush our communication, even when we talk to ourselves and can often leave out important details.

This may seem pretty harmless, but can lead to confusion, frustration, mistakes and wasted time.

Have a look at this list below of everyday words that are regularly used in workplace communications.

What is the one essential word that you can put after all of the following to enhance them?

(Try putting them in a table or a grid and trying different word combinations)

- **Business**
- **Retirement**
- **Exit**
- **Marketing**
- **Sales**
- **Investment**
- **Financial**
- **Succession**
- **Growth**
- **Expansion**
- **Game**
- **Project**
- **Action**
- **Development**
- **Strategic**
- **Operational**
- **Contingency**
- **Income**
- **Training**
- **Resource**
- **Back-up**
- **Procurement**
- **Recovery**
- **Project**
- **Wealth**
- **Short-term**
- **Medium-Term**
- **Long-term**

Most people would say that these words are fine on their own and I have to admit that they are all fine, positive, laudable words. I'm a big fan of each of these words and use many of them in a variety of combinations on a very regular basis.

I would, however, argue that on their own they are undefined and lack critical context.

On their own, they provoke questions, the least of which could go like this for each word or phrase: “_____? What about it?”

“Business what? What are you talking about?”

“Why are you just saying income to me? Explain yourself!”

Try them in turn for yourself or try saying them to the next person that you see.

Did they respond with a question, ask for clarification or just end up calling you names?

Ambiguity can waste a lot of your precious time and send you down the wrong path.

By the wrong path, I don’t mean that without definition these words may make you turn to the dark side or commit acts of evil. They really do not have that sort of power. So you have no excuse. Nobody is making you do that. It’s all on you, so please get a grip.

Anyway...

By wrong path I’m referring to working under a misunderstanding of what is being asked of you and doing work that is either fruitless or counterproductive, taking you even further away from your goals.



By misinterpreting what is required of us by each of the listed words or phrases you can make a lot of costly mistakes, waste a lot of precious time and fail to make the right kind of progress.



Imagine for a second that your boss gave you those words as an instruction, without elaborating or explaining. Just one of those words and an expectation that you will deliver a result based on it.

Do you have enough information to work with to confidently produce what you know for certain is required?

The chances are that you'll end up stressed out by the lack of clarity and the pressure to deliver what is expected. Can it really be done or will you end up in a mess, delivering an unfocused piece of work that is trying to cover all bases?

What would you do if your boss approached you right now and just barked one of those words at you, followed by a deadline? What would you do?

Has this ever happened to you?



"The road to hell is paved with ambiguity"

George Marcou - SALT Business Growth Consultancy

The need for Clarity

It's clear from the examples, especially if you tried them out on a friend or have experienced them yourself that what is desperately needed is **clarity**.

All of the confusion and stress can be corrected if you already find yourself on the wrong path or totally avoided by starting in the right way at the beginning. You just have to add the right word.

The same magic word works in each case.

It counters ambiguity and is the catalyst for answering every question resulting from it.

Sounds good, right? The complete antidote to the mess described above.

Have you already guessed the word?

Many of the words on the list are often treated as **Wishes** or **Ambitions** or even things that provoke great acts of **Avoidance** rather than think about them altogether. Some people walk through life treating some of those on the list as **Dreams**.

Do you dream of business or retirement or income?

If you've been around in business for long enough you may look at many of the words with a tinge of **Regret**.

You may feel that **Pain**, **Gain**, **Thinking**, **Overrun** or **Deadline** also combine well for some of them.

Try the list with followed by each of these words and see how that makes you feel?



Do you feel better or worse than before?

Only one word is actually going to help you to gain **control** over every item on the list.

That word is...



Plan (obviously)

The four-letter word that can help you to spend fewer days shouting other 4-letter words.

The word that helps you to avoid a lot of disappointment.

Example: You want to retire at some point? Maybe with a decent bit of money?

Have a **Retirement Plan**. Simple. A comfortable retirement is much less certain without a plan. A good plan can almost certainly guarantee it.

The same applies to every word on the list. Go back through the list and add the word plan after every item.

Each word now has a purpose and they start to look like things that you should have, right?

"Things happen when you have a plan that makes your goals easier to achieve. A great plan should make the achievement of those goals inevitable."

George Marcou - SALT Business Growth Consultancy

Characteristics of a good plan

Linear - There are clear steps that get you from a-to-z.

Logical – each step makes sense i.e. the action(s) directly lead to the desired result(s).

Purposeful – There is a clearly defined objective or objectives that represents an outcome that you really want to achieve.

Insightful – Clearly shows an understanding of the full range of challenges and potential pitfalls associated with the activity and can convincingly mitigate, avoid or even turn these into a commercial advantage.

Applicable - A good plan is one that is formulated in order to be used. A good plan should describe actions that will achieve your desired result.

"The act of jumping out of a plane is far smarter if you have already foreseen the need for a parachute."

George Marcou - SALT Business Growth Consultancy

Similarly, before you engage in a business activity that involves incurring ongoing costs, it is wise to ensure that your income-creating activities are well planned, so that you can pay those bills.

Many new business owners (and lots of experienced leaders) look at the word **business** and forget to adequately plan. This makes running the business a bit of a gamble, proven by the rates of business failure.



The Casualties of Confusion

Over 360,000 businesses are reported to have failed in the UK in 2016, with many more struggling to survive.

As at the end of June 2017 over 300,000 businesses were on the brink of failure, according to official figures.

Many businesses that have a business plan find that it is inadequate when it comes to guiding their business, so make sure that **your** plan has the above characteristics.

A recent survey conducted for Talk Talk found that up to 85% of SMEs (over 4.6 million businesses) feel that they are “Winging it” as a result of not having an adequate plan that gave them proper direction.

Around 80% of new businesses fail within their first 2 years of operation, but many of the survivors fail to achieve their potential. Around 96-98% don’t last 10 years before they fail.

The next set of foreseeable challenges that with further increase the pressure on organisations includes:

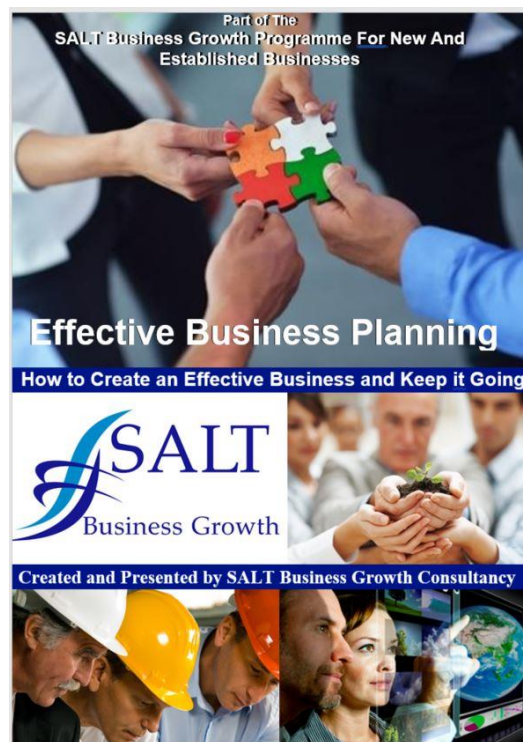
- GDPR
- BREXIT
- Increased business rates
- Higher cost of goods from Europe
- Increased interest rates
- New competitors
- Tougher market conditions

You will have to find new ways to cope with each of these issues that will hopefully leave you in a stronger position than before. Do you have a plan?

SALT Business Growth are experts in business planning and have helped companies to survive the recession, improve their results and achieve their goals.

We create business plans **with** our clients to ensure that it can act as a practical instruction manual for the successful ongoing operation of their business.

If you would like to receive a copy of our guide to Effective Business Planning or have a business planning question, let us know by contacting the SALT Business Growth Consultancy by phone or email, or through the website.



Please share this article with business owners and management professionals who face difficult business challenges every day. By working together, we hope to bring down the high levels of business failures and to help more companies to achieve the success that they deserve.



Call us today about your business challenges

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