



Communications Digest

*Telling stories of how small businesses succeed while giving back to the community.
Let me tell your story!*

Welcome Mid-June 2018!

With summer just days away, abundant sunshine and trees flourishing, I'm pleased to send you another issue of "Communications Digest."

In last month's issue, I reviewed Susan Jeffers' insightful book *Embracing Uncertainty* as a worthwhile companion for the journey of 21st century life.

And in "Word Nerd's Corner," I remarked on the wordiness of the term "facility," which serves political correctness more than linguistic understanding.

In this month's issue, I inquire how using "should" in our professional (and personal) lives can hinder our performance, productivity and peace of mind.

And Bryan Garner in "Word Nerd's Corner" presents the case of "hashtag" that has become a mainstay of social media, as well as of everyday conversation.

Enjoy the beauty of early summer and if you turn to holidays, this season, then happy vacation!

Sincerely,
Elizabeth

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Article One: Are you living a "should-y" way of life? On using "shoulds" in our professional and personal lives . . .

Does the word “should” hurt your performance, productivity and peace of mind?

In a 2016 article in YouInc.com, writer Kristin Marano asked just that question.

She cited the insights of Toronto psychotherapist Natalie Gold on why the word “should” holds us back, both professionally and personally. The medium is the message; the words we use to speak to ourselves dictate what we feel. Words like “should” are very powerful and can defy the child’s adage of “sticks and stones will break my bones but names will never hurt me.”

Gold says: “When we use the word ‘should,’ we create feelings of obligation and guilt, and stop ourselves from finding solutions.”

“Shoulds” tend to dominate our workplaces, as employees or freelancers, when we try to decide what to do, how to communicate with others and how to hold ourselves accountable for the mistakes that we inevitably make.

Marano says that not all uses of “should” are negative, however. A “good” example would be a “should” that guides our moral actions, such as meeting our deadlines and putting in an honest day’s work.

A “bad” application of should would be to express unrealistic timelines, goals and standards, such as thinking, “I should be able to complete that project in two days,” or “I should be the top performer in the office.”

Gold says that we will use fewer “shoulds” if we practice being aware of what “self-talk” we engage in. If we tell ourselves, “I *shouldn’t* be angry at my colleague,” when we have good reasons to feel angry, that negative self-talk is not helpful.

Instead, Gold says, it’s better to ask “Why am I angry” and “what am I going to do about it,” as these questions orient ourselves toward a solution, instead of simply attacking ourselves.

If you think you “*should*” have started a project earlier, then ask yourself why you didn’t—there may be good reasons for it. Or it may be that you lacked information to do it or it is not a project that pertains to your work or expertise in the first place—at any rate, Gold says, “forgive yourself and get started.”

If you tell yourself that you “*shouldn’t* have sent that email,” ask what motivated you to do so. Instead of ruminating, ask what you can do now about it. Apologize to the recipient? Or was it a case that you excluded or included specific content in the message that you can address now?

And if you feel you “*should* have gone to that meeting,” consider why you didn’t want to go. Will there be fallout from your missing it? These kinds of questions help you to take action, rather than staying stuck in a self-critical, obsessive cycle.

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapist David Burns wrote in the late 1980s about the need most of us have, at some point in life, of giving up the “should-y” way of life (read that out loud!)—which

of course means to stop attacking ourselves for not meeting standards that are often far too stringent or even irrelevant.

Do you find yourself using “should” toward yourself? How can you reposition yourself to act, instead of attacking yourself?

Please share on my “contact” page. I’d be delighted to hear from you.

WORD NERD’s Corner: the case of hashtag (#)

In a recent blog posting, American etymologist Bryan Garner discussed the term “hashtag” as “the quintessential VOGUE WORD of the early 21st century.”

The crosshatch symbol was already known as the “pound sign” or number symbol, but “took on a new life with the advent of Twitter and other social-media sites.”

For instance, people would post a message and then add “#happilymarried” or “#bestfriends,” always without internal spaces or punctuation. The symbol categorizes the message by keyword, which helps them to show up more easily in Twitter searches. (Readers who click on a hashtagged word in any message will see other Tweets or messages that include that hashtag.)

About 2008, Garner records, the term went so far as to enter verbal conversations, as people would follow a comment with a quip: “Hashtag annoyed” and the like.

When used in conversation, the term is often used sarcastically, such as to respond to a chronic complainer by saying “Hashtag Woeisme.”

Do you find yourself using hashtags in conversation and not only in social media messages? Please share your language bugbears with me: I’d be delighted to address them in a future issue!