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Geek Speak II – The Awakening

By John Warzecha

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Geek-Speak or techno-babble is pervasive. It seems that we are so impressed with our technical knowledge and expertise that we forget our audience. As I stated in my first article "Geek-Speak," it is important to simplify, simplify, simplify. This applies, not only to e-mail or on-line business, but to everyday usage as well.

Recently I observed a salesman in a computer store mesmerizing an elderly couple with his techno-babble. They had come into the store looking for a computer for some very basic needs. The salesman was very impressive with his knowledge. He talked about the clock speed of the computer. He compared the various processors and showed them the 3-D Graphics capability of the computer. Then they were told about the 56K, V.90 modem, that they could get a DVD ROM and that, if they wanted to, they could upgrade from 64MB of RAM to 128MB of RAM.

It was obvious that he knew the product extremely well. His technological knowledge was encyclopaedic. Just as impressive was his monumental lack of knowledge of the customer. He never listened to them at all. They smiled and agreed with his evaluation, thanked him for his time, and proceeded to look at other products. A few minutes later the same salesman cornered another couple and proceeded with the same techno-babble or Geek Speak.

A few minutes later this same elderly couple were approached by another salesman who offered assistance. They seemed reluctant to talk to him. I could only assume that they were afraid of the same barrage of Geek-Speak that they had been subjected to before. His first question to them had nothing to do with the computer other than asking what they were looking for. During the next thirty minutes he talked to them about their interests. He discovered that they had a son in Australia and a daughter in England, not to mention an extended family throughout North America. They informed him that they were both history buffs. He also

found out that she enjoyed cooking. He discovered that they would like to stay in closer touch with their family. This was one thing that he focused on.. Not once did he talk about DVD, RAM, ROM, clock speed, or pixels on a screen. They had heard about e-mail but never really investigated the possibilities. They had believed that they were past the point of obtaining any serious knowledge of computers. The first salesman reinforced this belief that computers were too complicated. This is not to suggest that elderly people cannot become computer literate, but the approach of the first salesman convinced them that it was beyond them.

Once the second salesman discovered something of their needs, he began talking about the simplicity of e-mail and how they could stay in touch

fairly easily. He talked about doing searches through the Internet on their favourite history topics, and the various cooking news groups that could be accessed online. He carefully told them about accessing information online without using technical jargon and how they could actually send and receive pictures. The possibility of receiving pictures of their grand-children intrigued them. They really liked the idea that, even though they may not be able to get to Australia, they could receive regular pictures of their grand-children growing up. When he talked about the capability of the computer, he used language that they understood. They received the same information as they did from the first salesman, but in a language that was not peppered with impressive Geek-Speak. He sold them on ideas that were interested in. By the time he finished, they had bought over three thousand dollars worth of computer equipment. He did not sell them the computer and peripherals—they were ready to buy—but they just wanted to understand what they were buying.

This kind of simplification of the techno-babble or Geek-Speak that I discussed in my first article can affect sales, not only in a store situation, but also online. There will always be a necessity to use Geek-Speak but it is essential to know your audience. More sales are lost because someone, in a misguided attempt to impress their audience, confuses that same audience with a barrage of technical jargon or Geek-Speak. One must judge the audience carefully and the first step is to listen to the questions that are being asked. Better still, ask questions that will elicit a response that will result in gaining some information about the prospective purchaser. It is easy to sell someone a product that they are impressed with but that they don't need. The most successful sales people however, are those who sell someone a product they need. The result is repeat sales because the customer knows that their needs will be met and they won't be loaded up with peripherals that become dust collectors.

John Warzecha, who holds a teaching degree, a B.A., and an M.A., is V.P. of Communications at Wyka–Warzecha Enterprises, <http://www.wyka-warzecha.com>, a site devoting to helping website designers achieve amazing special effects, streaming audio with easy to use Java based products.

"Geek Speak"

By Bob Osgoodby

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In the dictionary, a Geek is defined as "A carnival performer whose act usually consists of biting the head off a live chicken or snake". Today however, it has taken on the additional meaning of someone who doesn't fit the norm, and usually refers to someone highly knowledgeable in computers.

If you think about it, a geek can exist in any occupation or field of endeavor. They all have their own language peculiar to their trade. If two meteorologists meet at a party, and start talking about isobars they will understand each other. Doctors might discuss new radical surgery techniques, while lawyers might discuss torts.

If they use the same terms with people not in their profession, they might not be understood. People who do this are guilty of "Geek Speak".

If you try to advertise your business and use "Geek Speak", while you will most likely be understood by others in your field, you will quickly lose the majority of people.

No matter how knowledgeable you are in your field, don't try to impress others with highly technical language – they won't have a clue as to what you're talking about. Use everyday words that people can understand. We all know that technical terms have their place, and to another person in the field, can denote specific things in a minimum of words.

"While your ISP can cancel your account if you spam", might be understood by people experienced in online protocol, those new to computers might not know what that means. A better way to say it might be: "If you send copies of the same email to people who didn't request it, the company that provides your internet access can cancel your account". Here we said the same thing, but didn't use "Geek Speak".

Always try to phrase your advertising so that people who don't know anything about your business, will understand what you are saying.

Bob publishes the free weekly "Your Business" Newsletter Visit his Web Site at <http://adv-marketing.com/business> to subscribe, and place a Free Ad for your business.



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