Corporate jargon creating disconnect in the workplace

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Insight from Eloise Leeson-Smith, linguist and language expert

Corporate jargon is something that's commonplace in most offices, but whether it's "touching base", a "quick win" or "drilling down", jargon in the workplace has become overused and is having a negative impact on employees and the quality of communication within businesses.

In fact, a recent report from [Axios HQ](link) estimated ineffective communication can cost over £11,000 per employee in lost productivity. And with communication between colleagues now taking up 72% of the work week, it's no surprise that employees and executives cite a lack of effective collaboration and communication as the main cause of workplace failures and frustrations.

This ineffective communication can arise from corporate jargon which can leave employees feeling left out and create a barrier between them and their colleagues. Workplace jargon is often used to convey a sense of belonging, a rite of passage or a marker of shared experience. There can be a breakdown in communication with those who aren't familiar with the office lingo, leaving employees feeling disempowered to ask the necessary questions to understand what's being said.

Luckily for employers, new research by water dispenser brand Brita Vivreau has put corporate jargon under the spotlight. The research has revealed that jargon leaves office workers feeling disconnected at work and less likely to start conversations with their more senior colleagues. Almost a third (31%) said jargon makes them feel less confident speaking to senior colleagues and a quarter (25%) are less likely to speak up in meetings.

Interestingly, corporate jargon has an even bigger impact on gen Z employees, with 38% being less likely

to start a conversation with colleagues and 32% being less likely to ask questions. On top of this, almost a third (30%) feel that corporate jargon is used in the workplace for the sake of it and that senior managers are the worst offenders (45%).

Belonging at work has been found to be more important for Gen Z workers who feel it's important to be happy at work and feel included, rather than just showing up.

But what is the takeaway from all of this?

For any company wanting to foster a workplace culture of inclusion that prioritises staff's mental wellbeing, creating opportunities for employees to communicate and connect authentically is essential. Non-work-related conversations in the workplace should be encouraged as they give employees a chance to be themselves and discuss what's going on in their lives, which will inevitably affect them at work as well. Moreover, those 'water cooler moments' enable authentic conversations and relationships to be established between colleagues.

The company's research highlighted the importance of in person conversations. More than two thirds (68%) of office workers said that being told well done in person by their manager feels more genuine than an email to the whole company (25%) or a voucher (10%).

Almost half (48%) said they have their most authentic conversations with colleagues in the office when making a tea or coffee, and that water cooler conversations make them feel more part of a team (33%) and help them establish relationships with colleagues (43%).

So, if you want to encourage an authentic workplace culture that supports an efficient and productive team, read [Brita Vivreau's research](#) and start thinking about toning down that corporate jargon.