

3 Reasons To Embrace Jargon In Legal Marketing Content

By **Wayne Pollock** (August 2, 2022)

Speaking your clients' language is a surefire way to show you can be a trusted adviser.

There comes a time in your life when you learn that certain rules can be broken — and that breaking these supposed rules can often be a net positive.

When you learned you didn't have to wait 45 minutes to go swimming after eating, you could spend more time playing with your friends.

When you learned you could read in dim light and not damage your vision, you could sneak in some quality late-night reading.

And when you learned you could go outside in the cold with wet hair, you could spend less time getting ready in the morning.

Today, you will learn you can break another rule without consequences — and reap benefits from doing so.

That rule? You shouldn't use jargon in your marketing and business development content, particularly your thought-leadership content.

Jargon has gotten a bad rap.

Before I go any further, let's make sure we're on the same page about jargon.

Jargon is defined by Merriam-Webster as "the technical terminology or characteristic idiom of a special activity or group," or "obscure and often pretentious language marked by circumlocutions and long words." For our purposes here, I'm referring to the first definition.

If you are like most lawyers, you were told at some point in your career to avoid using jargon whenever you write.

You were told that eliminating jargon makes your writing easier to read and understand, which makes it more compelling and persuasive.

The more compelling your marketing and business development writing is, the more likely past, current and prospective clients and referral sources will be to find you knowledgeable and send new matters your way.

This is great advice — if we're talking about legal jargon, aka legalese. Legalese is a roadblock to a reader's comprehension of your writing. Even when writing to fellow lawyers, legalese clouds your efforts to communicate effectively.

But if we're talking about specific jargon from the industries your clients are in, well now, that's a whole different ball game. Suddenly your use of that jargon doesn't push your readers away; it pulls them close.



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Here are three reasons why you should absolutely use industry-specific jargon from your clients' industries in your thought-leadership marketing and business development content.

1. Jargon shows you're knowledgeable about your clients' industries.

Remember those inside jokes you had with your high school or college friends? Putting aside how funny those jokes might be today, the jokes played an important role. They were a way for you and your friends to know who was part of that friend group. The jokes strengthened bonds between friends, and just as importantly, kept others out of the group.

Think about the different friend groups you had back then and have today. I'm willing to bet each had their own inside jokes or code words that were not shared by your other friend groups.

That's one reason you should use industry-specific jargon in your thought-leadership content. It communicates to your audiences — presumably past, current and potential clients in particular industries — that you are an insider like they are and part of their group.

By using jargon, you demonstrate your knowledge of their industries. It is the equivalent of referencing an inside joke with your friends.

Using jargon builds your credibility and, when combined with your content's thoughtful analysis, positions you as an authority on the specific business and legal challenges your audiences face. It's a shortcut to being seen as knowledgeable about their industry.

Of course, your use of jargon can only carry you so far. If your content doesn't bring the goods in the form of industry-specific knowledge and analysis, your audiences will sniff that out and not see you as a credible authority.

2. Jargon lets you take efficient deep dives.

Another reason you should use industry-specific jargon is because it allows you to efficiently explore complicated topics.

When you're using industry-specific technical terms and don't have to explain them, you can more quickly get into the substance of what you're discussing. You can devote fewer words to bringing your readers up to speed on the things and concepts embedded in those terms.

When you're freed from having to include these explanations and can assume a base level of knowledge by your audiences, your content can also play host to more thoughtful and complex discussions.

Want an example of this? Look no further than the Law360 Expert Analysis articles from my fellow contributors.

Because they assume their target audience — lawyers who might send them business directly or via referrals — understands the areas of law they practice in and the way legal proceedings operate, you'll see most contributors jump right into the weeds without having to explain certain concepts.

When they do so, they can get into a thoughtful analysis without getting bogged down in coverage of the basics.

3. Jargon lets you write precisely targeted thought-leadership content.

When you know how your target audiences speak about the business and legal issues you would like to be hired to assist them with, you can use jargon strategically to craft content that precisely targets both the kinds of clients and the kinds of matters your firm wants more of.

For example, let's say your firm wanted to pick up compliance work from pharmaceutical companies, particularly as it relates to their sensitive electronic data.

You'll want to show general counsel at these companies through your thought-leadership content that you and your colleagues would be the right choice to handle this work. But you'll also want to persuade compliance and technology personnel at these companies that you and your colleagues are up to the task.

By weaving into your content the jargon that compliance and technology personnel use regarding their data systems and compliance efforts, you can talk directly to them and demonstrate why your firm would be the right firm to handle a particular type of matter.

Use jargon, but do so responsibly.

One downside of using industry-specific jargon in your thought-leadership marketing and business development content is that if you're not careful, your content can quickly devolve into a thicket of industry terms that is unreadable and indigestible. When this happens, even the people you're trying to reach by speaking their language will not stick around and read what you have to say.

When your pieces of content are heavy on industry jargon, you'll want to write in a breezy style that helps a reader move through your analysis or arguments without getting tripped up.

You shouldn't be writing paragraphs that span three-quarters of a page.

You shouldn't be writing long sentences when splitting them into two or three separate ones would increase readability.

You should vary your sentence length and structure to keep your readers interested.

Overall, you'll have to compensate for a heavy helping of jargon by making your content particularly easy for your target audiences to read.

Jargon can supercharge the effectiveness of your thought-leadership content.

Jargon, for lack of a better word, is good. Jargon is right. Jargon works.

When writing thought-leadership marketing and business development content targeting particular audiences, include industry-specific jargon that those audiences use in their business dealings.

It will show you're knowledgeable about those audiences' industries.

It will help you take efficient deep dives.

And it will allow you to write highly targeted content for those particular audiences.

But perhaps most importantly, when you use jargon in your thought-leadership content, it will help that content stand out from the glut of bland, humdrum content your peers and competitors are publishing. That content speaks to no one in particular and does little to persuade a reader that the author and their law firm are qualified to handle the reader's next legal matter.

But your use of jargon will do much of that persuading for you.

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