

Shunning Vogue Words

In *The Elements of Legal Style*, Bryan Garner cautions the writer against trendy words:

Whenever you write a word or phrase that is on the tip of everyone's tongue, strike it out. Vogue words cheapen prose, partly because their fashionableness wears down their meaning to the blandest generality, partly because they make you sound like an unthinking writer of ready-made phrases.

In the following sentences, underline the words you think fall into the category of “vogue words”:

1. Hopefully, our ongoing dialogue with our clients will impact their decision to proceed, liability-wise, on a need-to-know basis.
2. The bottom line is that we definitely won't achieve a meaningful understanding of the overall parameters of this issue until we have determined the cost-effectiveness of our approach.
3. Because she knows the framework of our clients' operational practices, which are at the cutting edge of the industry, we should request her input and constructive criticism.
4. The question at this point in time is as follows: Did the death of the insured eventuate from bodily injury effected solely through external, violent, and accidental means?
5. Upon receipt of your signed copy, we will take a proactive, rather than wait-and-see, approach in preparing for a worst-case scenario.

Garner identifies the following vogue words:

bottom line	need-to-know basis, on a
constructive (criticism, engagement, etc.)	ongoing
cost-effective, cost-efficient	
definitely	
dialogue (noun or verb)	on the cutting edge (or leading edge)
	operational
dimension	-oriented (or, worse, “-orientated”)
environment (e.g., work environment)	overall
escalate (=intensify)	overly
eventuate	
exposure (=liability)	parameters (except in computer contexts)
	point in time
framework	to process (a claim, dispute, etc.)
hopefully	proactive
impact (as a verb)	realistic
input	
interface (except in computer contexts)	state-of-the-art
	viability
lifestyle	wait-and-see attitude
matrix (except in computer contexts)	-wise (liability-wise, crime-wise)
meaningful	worst-case scenario

Garner’s comment:

Lawyers use all these phrases, but they also have their own jargonistic vogue words: *three-tiered analysis*, *balancing test*, *cost-benefit analysis*, and *two-pronged test*. Have done with them all.