

## Greetings!

### The End Times Are Upon Us!

With a few weeks of the new year under our belts, we thought the time was right for 2012's first issue of *KB CommEntary* to arrive in your inboxes. Hopefully we've reached you in time for the End-of-World Mayan Maelstrom™, because in this prophetic issue we'll be discussing commonly misused English words and phrases.

## What's Up at KB COMM?

At KB COMM, we provide mission-critical communication and learning services to clients in a variety of industries. Thanks to our established and new clients for keeping us busy. Recent and ongoing projects include:

- Creating technical documentation for a financial-transaction system developer
- Creating and revising job descriptions for the Careers website of a high-tech manufacturer
- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including communications to employees from the CEO and executive leadership team, customer letters, trade show presentations and materials, and product marketing brochures
- Writing, formatting, and performing quality control reviews of large, complex chemical residue studies intended for regulatory submission on behalf of a federally funded, cooperative research organization
- Writing supplements and formatting modules of electronic submissions to FDA for a pharmaceutical manufacturing company
- Reviewing and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to FDA and other health authorities on behalf of a medical device manufacturing company

KB COMM LLC is a certified Women's Business Enterprise. We are officially qualified to participate in corporations' woman- and minority-owned vendor programs.

Please keep us in mind for your communication or training projects.

## Tips and Tales

### Devilish Details: Beyond *There*, *They're*, and *Their*

Everyone knows that English is full of ridiculous rules, damnable distinctions, and haranguing homonyms— have you ever *wound* a bandage around a *wound*, or needed to *polish Polish* furniture? But even after you've mastered *your* versus *you're* and banished "for all intensive purposes" to the grammatical graveyard, there are still plenty of linguistic booby traps waiting for you. So that the tweed-clad elite may find someone else to snigger at (at which to snigger?), we've dutifully compiled a list of pesky pitfalls and how to avoid them.

### Non-words and Near Misses

This category includes words and phrases that sound right but really aren't. They (regrettably) come up in conversation every now and again, but should be avoided in writing at all costs.

*Irregardless* is the poster boy for this category. It's not a word in the proper English vernacular—but *regardless* is, and it works just fine.

*Allot* is not a word, it's two (*a lot*). And be careful: *allot* is a word, but it's a verb that means to distribute and shouldn't be confused with *a lot*.

*Suppose to* and *use to* are incorrect. Don't omit the *d*! It's supposed to be *supposed to* and *used to*. Similarly, it's *supposedly*, not *supposably*.

*Anyways* and *towards* are also incorrect—ending either word in "s" is nonstandard. These are especially tricky because they're common and accepted in conversational use, but they should never be used in professional writing.

*Should of, could of, and would of* should, could, and would be *should have, could have, and would have* in a world without grammar and syntax errors. Same goes for *must of*—it's *must have*.

*All of the sudden* and *all the sudden* are incorrect. The proper phrase is *all of a sudden*. Even better is just using *suddenly*—it's shorter and less idiomatic.

*Could care less* is theoretically a more efficient way of saying *couldn't care less*, but the two mean completely different things. Keep the "not," because without it you imply that there are things out there that you *could* actually care less about, and the phrase loses its meaning.

### Homonyms and Similar-Sounding Words

The victims of heuristics, these words are often confused or used incorrectly because they sound similar to one another.

**Note:** For those of you just waking up, *the former* is the word that comes first in the sequence and *the latter* is the one that comes last. Just thought we'd remind you so as to avoid any confusion.

*Alternately* versus *alternatively*: the former means in turn (one *after* the other); the latter means on the other hand (one *rather than* the other).

*Continually* versus *continuously*: the former means repeatedly, with breaks in between; the latter means without interruption. For example, you must *continually* wind a clock to keep it running *continuously*.

*Disinterested* versus *uninterested*: the former means that one is not biased; the latter means that one does not care.

*Economic* versus *economical*: the former means related to the economy; the latter means frugal or financially prudent.

*Ensure* versus *insure*: the former means to make certain of; the latter is used when discussing the purchase of insurance.

*Farther* versus *further*: the two words have the same meaning but are used in different contexts—*farther* (with an *a*) is best used when referring to physical distance, while *further* (with a *u*) is preferable for distinctions of time, quantity, or some sort of abstract distance. So one horse could be *farther* down the track than another, but one employee would be *further* along on a project than another.

*Formerly* versus *formally*: the former (hah) means previously or in time past; the latter is the adverb version of *formal* and thus means with a formal air.

*Lose* versus *loose*: the former is a verb that either means the opposite of *to win* or the opposite of *to find*. The latter is most often an adjective that means the opposite of *tight*, but it can also be used as a verb that means the same as *loosen*; i.e., the opposite of *to tighten*.

*Perspective* versus *prospective*: the former most often means point of view; the latter is used to refer to a future possibility.

The list, of course, goes on and on, but we prefer to keep things short and relevant. Masochistic readers may consult the more complete inventory curated by our friends Messrs. Strunk and White. Know that the lines at KB COMM are always open to answer your style questions—as long as they're about conjunctions and commas, not cardigans and corduroy.

And please remember, *when it has to be right*, KB COMM is here to help.

Sincerely,

*Kathy*

Kathy Breuninger

**KB COMM**

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