

Don't Stand So Close to Me

In this issue of *KB CommEntary*: Sociolinguistics for your Social Distancing.

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:

- Writing and editing numerous information products for a healthcare diagnostics manufacturer, including employee communications, customer presentations and letters, product marketing brochures and data sheets, and training materials
- Writing and editing marketing and employee communications for an academic research organization
- Formatting and revising technical reports and manufacturing standard operating procedures, work instructions, forms, logbooks, and batch records for a pharmaceutical company
- Revising and maintaining GMP facility drawings
- Drafting, reviewing, and editing for consistency and accuracy response documents and associated modules for electronic submission to health authorities on behalf of pharmaceutical companies

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

Loading Up the Lexicon

Talk of viruses has us thinking about things going viral—especially words and phrases like the now-ubiquitous “social distancing” or appeals to “flatten the curve.” How do brand new terms like these enter the lexicon?

Professor Allan Metcalf chronicles the fates of several words and phrases in his book *Predicting New Words: The Secrets of Their Success*, including “moonlighting,” “quark,” “Frankenfood,” and “trilemma.”

What all successful words have in common is a boost from the relevant media of the era. Five hundred years ago, Modern English took hold thanks to the language's first dictionary, written by Samuel Johnson. More recently, “brunch” entered turn-of-the-century vocabularies with the assistance of widely read London magazines like *Hunter's Weekly* and *Punch*.

The media landscape today is a little less quaint, meaning fresh phrases have more of a fighting chance than ever. A word might originate as a clever hashtag on Instagram and then be picked up by the “traditional” news media on TV. Or the opposite could happen—a televised quip, gaffe, or mic-drop moment spreads on social media, dramatically expanding its lifespan.

“Social distancing,” for what it's worth, has been public health jargon since at least 2003. In the current COVID-19 crisis the phrase spread as fast as the virus itself, as a result of countless local governments using it verbatim in official statements and declarations. “Flatten the curve,” meanwhile, began as a plea (in hashtag form) by public health experts and managed to catch on more broadly.

Wherever you are, we hope you're safe and planning to stay that way. We'll rely on a classic from the Canadian vernacular to sign off here: keep your stick on the ice.

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

Sincerely,

Kathy

Kathy Breuninger

KB COMM

kbcommllc.com

