Understanding common workplace phrases or jargon

What is workplace jargon?

Jargon is the use of certain words and phrases in the workplace that are difficult for others outside of the industry to understand. Jargon in the workplace can be especially difficult for non-native speakers of English, as they often do not directly translate into other languages or settings. Being able to recognize these words and phrases will help in the transition to the American workplace.

Action items
To do list

Best practices
A set of procedures or methods that are considered standard within an organization that deliver the best results

Benchmarking
Measuring performance by comparing work to a similar competitor and/or industry leader

Buy-in
Having the agreement of another person on an idea or solution to a problem

Leverage
To use something (resources or relationships) to accomplish goals

Key player or stakeholder
Important participant

Onboarding
The process where new employees learn the necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors for their position

Out of the loop
Being left out of the line of communication and decision-making

Pitch In
To help as needed

Point of Contact
A person or department that can be approached for information or assistance on a specific topic

Reach out
Start a conversation or make contact with someone

Think outside the box
Nontraditional and/or creative ideas or suggestions

Value-add
To make something better and increase its benefit or impact

Tips for success

1. Rehearse presentations beforehand. If you aren't sure you are using a word correctly, ask for assistance from a colleague.

2. Bring a notebook to meetings and jot down words or phrases you don't understand so that you can look them up afterwards.

3. Don't be afraid to ask a speaker to clarify what they mean or to repeat themselves.