Experts Dictionary

On Terms, Definitions and the Internet

By Ken Dafoe

I n 1881 the American writer, Ambroise Bierce, began a series of definitions for a weekly paper that kept him going until 1913 - when he left for Mexico and was never heard wind of again. Years later the definitions were published in a book entitled *The Cynic's Word Book* (then years after that as *The Devil's Dictionary*), and these definitions became famous for their reduction of human values into greed, guilt, gripe - and a bunch of other base motivations not spelled with the letter G.

Yet Bierce could never have kept up with the slew of terms that Information Technology, or IT, concocts on a weekly basis. Some fade as quickly and thankfully, as they are conceived, like Webinar - a web based seminar. Others linger, until a newer technology or overuse renders them meaningless.

So it is in the spirit of Bierce that these wholesome definitions are offered - in no particular order. A nice, healthy dose of cynicism now and again places things in a light that would otherwise be shadowed by Dorothy types - ruby slippers often need more polishing than they are worth.

And I hear that Mexico is quite nice this time of year.

EBusiness / *n.* **1** A current term for avoiding long line-ups and human contact now, in favor of a long wait for purchased goods later. Contributes to the "Why go out now, when I can have things delivered later?" syndrome of the late 20c. **2** Short for Electronic Business. More appealing than ElectronicB or ElectronicC, which are meaningless compositions, too specific, and valid for only 26 uses. It became popular in the 1990's to place an E in front of any computer related concept. Ecash, Ecommerce, Ebook, EFuneral, EUniversity, Emusic. In time, all words beginning with E will be distrusted. A governing vowel society, EIEIO, will be created in the 21st century to regulate the creation of new e-prefixed words. When all the E's are gone, the business community will switch to I, then to EI and IE combinations.

VPN / *n.* **1** Acronym for Virtual Private Network. A way for companies to perform secure transactions, over an unsecured medium. It relies on encryption to exchange data, and trusts no one without the proper certificates - a little like customs officers. Replaced the line: "The check is in the mail," with "The bits are in the stream." Still no one believes it.

Internet / *n.* **1** A medium that brings people closer together, by allowing them to live further apart. **2** A destination that does not physically exist, and cannot be gotten to, except with a computer. Usually preceded by the word "The", both capitalized, to make users believe it is a real place. Like The Moon. The Sun. The Heavens. Sometimes it precedes other words like "love", where it is then is symbolically named "cyber". Both words then become equally non-existent, and immediately attractive to television and film. **3** A legal form of counterfeit when it precedes the word Stock.

Microsoft / *n.* **1** The Midas of the new world order. Capable of making more money in a day than some countries make in a year. It began life as an amoeba, but has recently been ordered to divide. Every two years the corporation will be ordered to divide again, making everything it does

The 5th Wave   By Rich Tennant

"Oh, that's Jack's area for his paper crafts. He's made some wonderful US Treasury Bonds, Certificates of Deposit, $20's, $50's, $100's, that sort of thing."

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divisible by two. In time it will be a swamp of two-celled organisms, waiting for the right time to procreate. **2** A dynasty of the late 20c., known for windows and not vases.

Intranet / *n*. **1** A make-work project within an organization that takes all the problems of the Internet, and duplicates them internally. Like the life of a dog, its years are measured in human terms where one Intranet year equals 6 human years. Most sites fizzle after 6 months (human). Budgeting, however, is always sought in 7-year segments (dog).

Email / *n*. **1** A late 20c. form of communication centered on avoidance. **2** Any form of communications that doesn't need an audible answer - ASL being the precursor. **3** A repository loaded with more junk than a closet. **4** A place where bad jokes breed. **5** First thought by women to be a new, highly enlightened breed of male - quickly dismissed, and sent to definition 4.

Chat / *n.v.* **1** Friendly, overtly sexual banter on a computer between people who have never met, but have the commonality of hormones. Often combined with the word *room*, and used as a virtual meeting place to chat about things you would never chat about with your significant other.

Virtual / *adj.* **1** Something that is not real but could be with the right venture capital. Always precedes another word that stands fine on its own.

IT Manager / *n*. **1** Any person in the unenviable position of supporting people who don't know what they want, but know when they don't have it. Not for people who actually cried during the movie *Bridges of Madison County*. **2** An individual responsible for everything that is wrong with the world. Includes misspellings, and the past-due date on a milk jug.

Business Intelligence / *n*. **1** Describing in text what makes one business work where another has failed. Always accurate in the abstract. Many software applications are reported to capture intelligence, but few know how to make anyone understand it.

Windows© / *n*. **1 a** An operating system that everyone uses but no one truly likes. Contrast with Linux, which everyone likes but no one uses. **1 b** The exponential result of keeping up with the Gates's. **2** An out-dated concept of layering multiple computer applications on a single screen, until performance and eyesight fail equally.

.com / *n*. **1** Any company that has no product, no sales prospects, and no financial projection - but is worth more than any tangible idea. Listen to Facades by Philip Glass. **2** A company whose financial statement has more zeros than any other number - a hint at its true worth.

AS/400 / *n. past tense*. **1** A computer with more flavors than Ben and Jerry. **2** A mid-level business computer that suffered from the fate of its own underexposure. Loved by all who used it - ignored by those who made it. Redesigned to look like a cereal box. **3** *adv.* A concept of success that is measured by the number of people not using a particular product. T◻G

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