Talk the talk: How to teach your coworkers to speak IT

Wednesday, April 4, 2018   6:08 PM

Clipped from: https://www.tektonikamag.com/index.php/2016/08/17/talk-the-talk-how-to-teach-your-coworkers-to-speak-it/

TEKTONIKA

Tech is a shifting landscape. Know the terrain.

Collaboration   Security   Productivity   Mobility   Culture   Innovation   Asset Library

Culture   Rose de Fremery

# Talk the talk: How to teach your coworkers to speak IT

August 17, 2016   3 Minute Read

Select article text below to share directly to Twitter!   Dismiss

Tech professionals have a well-earned reputation for using IT jargon without realizing that their non-tech coworkers have no idea what they're talking about. This can lead to miscommunication and mistakes. Because IT and business are more intertwined than ever, a solid understanding of IT vernacular isn't just nice to have—it's essential. When communication breakdowns happen between IT and the line of business, the company can take a hit from lost productivity or a missed opportunity. With the consumerization of IT, where staff from all parts of the business are helping shape tech decisions, a shared understanding of tech language is more important than ever. Here's how you can teach your business colleagues how to speak IT.

Tell them there's no such thing as a
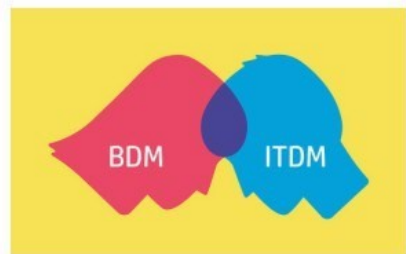
Tell them there's no such thing as a dumb IT question (even though there is)

We had to ask plenty of questions and engage in a lot of trial and error to develop our technical expertise. Let your coworkers know that dumb IT questions don't exist (even though obviously they do and you get a lot of them), and that you're not judgmental about their ignorance of IT jargon (even though you totally are). It will go a long way toward deepening their knowledge and helping them build better relationships with the IT team.

And let's admit it: We appreciate when someone who's not in our team wants to geek out with us. I used to call them 'stealth geeks' and sought out their opinions when considering a new tech initiative because I knew we'd be able to collaborate well—and the same might be true at your company.

Encourage their interest in technology

Tech people tend to get amped up when talking about tech, but people on the business side of the business might not get it. Include them in the conversations. Ask what types of tech they use and why they think it's cool or useful. You might be surprised by how these conversations impact your working relationships. We love having conversations that transcend simple buzzwords and get to the heart of how tech can make a difference for the business—this is a great way to make that happen.

Through ongoing discussions about IT, your colleagues may learn what it means to manage technology in a business context, and how different it is from handling individual consumer technology in their day-to-day lives. This also gives you greater insight into how they use tech now and what needs they have for the future. This mutual understanding will help you both partner more effectively on projects down the line, and may even shed some light on what tech investments your company would benefit most from.

Propose a language exchange

Business and IT can find common ground when they talk about tech's business value. Propose a language exchange where you coach a coworker in IT jargon in return for a tutorial on business vernacular. Many IT people, particularly when they're new to a company, struggle with department-specific vocabulary like you find in accounting or HR.

In the nonprofit world, where I was once an IT director, we had even more subject matter specific language, some of it very jargony, related

more subject matter-specific language, some of it very jargony, related to human rights and international development. Consider it a study in a foreign language: You might want to consider giving tutorials on geek speak to a business colleague in exchange for lessons on business language. Along the way, your coworkers will learn about technology and how it's delivered.

Build strong relationships

Creating a good relationship with your business coworkers that are more than transactional—not just about whatever tech support issue or need they may have at the moment—is a smart way to build the foundation for future partnerships. Supporting them in their quest to learn more about IT and the language behind it is a great way to start.

So do you feel ready to start teaching geek? With a few expert consultations, your colleagues will be ready to banter skillfully in no time. What's better, you'll be able to collaborate more effectively with them thanks to an improved working relationship—and that's something that will come in handy for any tech project you have on the horizon.
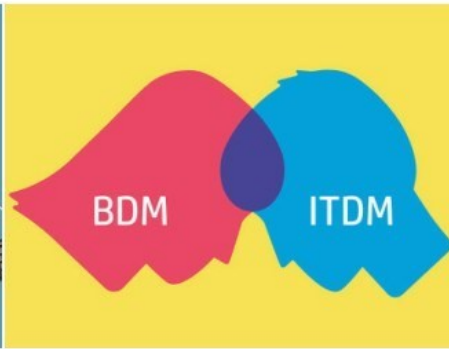
SHARE THIS STORY

RECOMMENDED for You

Robert Palmer 02/03/2017

Print security—it's about protecting devices, data, and documents

Consider using the following tactics to keep your business secure. Protect your devices Apply administrative passwords to prevent changes to print device settings and functions. Purchase print devices...

Tektonika Staff 12/14/2017

Printing solutions and IT decisions everyone will love

Business decision-makers (BDMs) and IT decision-makers (ITDMs) don't always see eye to eye. It's like expecting cats and dogs to get along or Republicans and Democrats to agree on the same issues—each...

Rose de Fremery 12/20/2017

Achieve IT sustainability with green printing

You don't have to be Al Gore to see that sustainability is taking off in big ways—especially in tech. From talk of exciting trends, like rapid urbanization, to much more depressing realities, like Tra...