Parking Lot Is Not A Verb

"That's a good question. I don't know the answer, but I'll parking lot it."

-Too many corporate trainers

The first time I heard the phrase "parking lot" in a corporate environment, I was in training to work for a large financial institution. One of my colleagues had asked a question, and the trainer didn't have an immediate answer. Her response was, "That's a good question. Let's parking lot it."

At the time, I was transitioning from journalism to corporate communications. The reporter in me burst out laughing. I quickly remembered, I wasn't in a newsroom anymore. I also noticed no one else was laughing. It was not my finest moment. I decided I would have to speak differently, write differently and think differently, if I were to make this mid-life transition successfully.

Evidently, it worked, because I came to be known as an "early adopter". I learned this meant I picked up on the company's language and messaging and was able to communicate successfully. I was way too new in a new field to color outside the lines.

It was only years later, after I had established myself as a corporate communicator and executive coach, that I felt comfortable enough to advocate for plain language. Now, I encourage leaders to say "training", if that's what they're talking about. (It's "on-boarding", if your new hire is filling out paperwork and signing forms).

It occurred to me that we often fall back on these corporate buzzwords and phrases, when we're trying to sound smarter than we are. When we're writing to impress, not express. When I'm working with someone struggling to find the right words and getting all tangled up, I ask them the same question my mom always asked me when I got stuck in the middle of a term paper:

"What are you trying to say?"

What follows is usually a clear, concise sentence that communicates exactly what they want it to. Sometimes we focus so much on **how** to say something, that we lose sight of what we **want** to say.

The next time you can't figure out how to say something, you might ask yourself that question. What are you TRYING to say?