

Content marketers: It's time to kill adverbs. Literally.

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There are certain words and phrases that pass from person to person like some terrible linguistic virus. The only known cure is **awareness**.

Content marketers take heed: **Adverbs** have infiltrated our language and are proliferating at an alarming rate.

“Literally” is now not such a literal term. “Literally” has become a description for literally anything that has just happened. No sentence is complete without tacking on “literally” for emphasis. Basically, the word has become the equivalent of an **exclamation point**.

Which leads us to the next devastating adverb: “basically.” Basically has become the root of every sentence that involves an explanation. Even if the description is complex, it begins with “basically.” The word “basically” will not be denied when it comes to summaries.

I know what you’re thinking: “Seriously?” This is now the question of questions. The incredulous “seriously” has run rampant replacing the “For real?” and the more niche “What’s your static?”

“Seriously” is very versatile. It can also be used to make a somber point. If you want someone to know that what you are saying is important, add a “seriously,” and the point is made.

Such turns of the **phrase surface and retreat** from generation to generation, but typically the words that rise to colloquial critical mass were adjectives like “mint,” “radical,” “aces,” “hot” and the ever-popular “cool.” Never before has the adverb received so much glory. It has laid in wait: the ultimate verbal sleeper cell within the **English** language.

The adverb has taken over the **American** vocabulary with such force that one wonders if it will leave an indelible mark like, well, the word “like.” There has been no greater virus thrust upon the English language than the word “like.” Everything has become a simile. No sentence is immune.

I went on a verbal tirade with an associate of mine about the ills of the words “like” and “literally.” Once I was done, he said, “**You were joking, right?**”

“Why?” I asked.

“You used the word ‘like’ no less than four times and even threw in a ‘literally.’”

I wasn’t even aware. Scary. As we look to express ourselves in our **marketing communications** to our customers, we need to be careful. Because basically, the Internet has literally spread adverbs like wildfire.

Seriously.

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