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## Losing the L-Word

Posted on April 1, 2011 by [Steve Baird](#)



Okay, nobody wants to be a "[loser](#)," unless, of course, you happen to be the [biggest one](#), but that's beside the point, because that's not the *L-word* I'm talking about today.

No, I'm talking about a much more traditionally positive *L-word*, as in "*leader*," but as I *learned* earlier this week, at an [excellent breakfast seminar](#) hosted at [Padilla Speer Beardsley](#) (PSB) headquarters in Minneapolis, entitled "*Thinking Local in EMEA: The Next Wave in European Program Execution*," if you're a U.S. company doing or wanting to do business in the EMEA, and if you want to succeed or have a winning strategy there, you should strongly consider losing the "leader" word in your branding and corporate communications. It just doesn't sell well there, especially coming from a U.S. company.

Apparently just about everyone purports to be *the leader*, of at least something. It is apparently perceived as a very over-used and tired term there -- one that offers no differentiation, and perhaps, even a bit of alienation of those you might be trying to reach.

It kind of reminds me of Duets GuestBlogger Nancy Friedman's previous recommendation to [avoid the tired and meaningless P-word in branding communications](#). And, don't forget to [avoid the D-word](#) for entirely another, yet important reason.

Another take away for me from the seminar was the importance of not ignoring or *losing* a "[local](#)" touch, when it comes to refining a U.S. company's communications in the EMEA.



Probably the most *laughter* during the seminar came during Patrik Schober's answer to my question about what pitfalls exist for those in regulated industries who want to use social media in the EMEA, when he revealed that "lawyers are not social!" Corinna Voss confirmed that the legal community is highly regulated and unable to advertise or promote themselves, so they generally avoid the use of social media.

She also offered that medical device and pharmaceutical companies will typically avoid regulatory problems in using social media by focusing their communications on non-product information of interest to their targets, and she agreed with Matt Kucharski's comment that they seem to focus on topics that demonstrate "*thought leadership*" -- presumably on the theory that this kind of *leader* is accepted there.

Many thanks to [Matt Kucharski](#), Senior Vice President of PSB, who did a very nice job of "*leading*" and moderating a dynamic panel discussion with Corinna Voss (of Munich-based [HBI Helga Bailey GmbH](#), Imma Folch Lazaro (of Barcelona-based [LF Channel S.L.](#)), and Patrik Schober (of Prague-based [PRAM Consulting](#)).

Come to think of it, I'm not sure this *L-word* is any more differentiating in the U.S., with more than 800 live trademark applications and registrations containing the term.

How would you communicate leadership without using the L-word?

