

# If PR is Looking for News, Listen for Frothy Words

By Frank Strong, Founder & President of  
[Sword and the Script Media](#)



Words matter, and his word was *frothy*.

Every time financial news broke, I'd ask him a question or two in reaction. His responses were usually pretty insightful, concise, and often became a source of a trend pitch we'd send to media covering the story – the components proactive media relations.

He was a venture capitalist, a responsive client, and had a good sense for news. The news likes new words that haven't yet grown tired.

In the financial media at that time, frothy was one of those words. It went right along with the phrase, *irrational exuberance*.

Following irrational exuberance, VC firms had a lot of money they had collected from limited partners but hadn't invested in startups. It was called *overhang*, which was another one of those catchy words of the day.

Overhang meant too much money was chasing too few deals. Or at least too few good deals. Everything looked interesting, but not too interesting, my client used to say in some interviews.

Sometimes that also wound up in print, but it was frothy that

earned the interview.

As the saying goes, words and even phrases, matter. Not just any word or phrase – but those that sum up the essence of changing times.

Financial phrases tend to stick because finance is a complicated topic that's hard to explain.

Consider *trickle down* economics, *Brexit* or *sequestration*. These all became shorthand for describing complicated concepts.

But it's not just finance that yields the million dollar words. It can be a rallying cry, like *Lean in* or *Occupy*.

It happens in scandal too and approaches something akin to news media's version of branding: Watergate, Bridgegate and Deflategate, among many other *gates*.

We see it in weather, where a pattern, like a *Polar Vortex*, becomes the trend for a season or brings storms like *El Niño*. When I was young, *acid rain* was the weather trend of the day and it left me with a lifetime impression.

But those words can also be a sign of the times, like Y2K or the generation that followed in *Millennials*.

Sometimes too these words are slang – like *selfie* and *bestie* – and find their way into the popular lexicon, including the news. Other times they are acronyms that become words of their own – *IRL* and *YOLO* – which fortunately or unfortunately, find a way into the dictionary.

*Agile* was such a word for a fleeting moment, but it got old and tired, like *innovative* and *innovation*, from overuse. So too has its brethren *lean*.

You don't have to be the first to use a word or phrase, but you can't be the last, or even the latest. Sometimes you can

re-invent, or re-define a word.

Making the news is usually more about ideas than it is products – that's why good PR pros pitch a story, not a product. Words and phrases that simplify the complex or help a reporter tell a story, go a long way towards a headline.

If you're looking for news, listen for frothy words.

***About the Author:** Frank Strong is the founder and president of Sword and the Script Media, LLC, a veteran-owned PR, content marketing and social media agency in greater Atlanta.*