



CARY COMMUNICATIONS INSIGHTS

Alphabet Soup: Business Acronyms Defined

By Karen Bluestein

Business runs on acronyms, but they can be confusing if you don't speak the shorthand. This list breaks down the most common terms so you can follow the conversation and communicate with clarity.

If any acronyms are missing, please submit them to hello@carycomms.com.

The master list is alphabetical; you also can see the acronyms sorted by category.

- [Communications](#)
- [Finance](#)
- [Human Resources \(HR\)](#)
- [Information Technology \(IT\)](#)
- [Legal](#)
- [Marketing & Sales](#)
- [Operations](#)

ABM – Account-Based Marketing: A targeted strategy focused on specific high-value clients (Marketing)

ACAS – Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service: UK employment advice and mediation (HR)

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act: U.S. law prohibiting discrimination based on disability (Legal)

AHT – Average Handle Time: Call center/customer service metric for efficiency (Operations)

AI – Artificial Intelligence: Tech that simulates human intelligence (IT)

AMA – Ask Me Anything: Interactive Q&A format to engage an audience (Communications)

AOV – Average Order Value: Average amount spent per transaction (Marketing)

AP – Accounts Payable: Money a company owes to suppliers (Finance)

API – Application Programming Interface: Rules that let systems talk to each other (IT)

APR – Annual Percentage Rate: Annualized cost of credit (Finance)

AR – Accounts Receivable: Money owed to a company by customers (Finance)

ATS – Applicant Tracking System: Hiring workflow software (HR)

AWS – Amazon Web Services: Cloud computing platform (IT)

B2B – Business-to-Business: Selling to other companies (Sales)

B2C – Business-to-Consumer: Selling to individuals (Sales)

B Corp – Benefit Corporation: Company certified for social/environmental standards (Legal)

BCP – Business Continuity Plan: Keeping operations running during disruption (Operations)

BIK – Benefits in Kind: Non-cash employee benefits taxable in the UK (Finance)

BIE – Business Intelligence Engineer: Analytics-focused technical role (IT)

BOM – Bill of Materials: Component list for a product (Operations)

BPO – Business Process Outsourcing: Third-party operations (Operations)

BPM – Business Process Management: Optimizing business processes (Operations)

BSC – Balanced Scorecard: Strategy/performance framework (Operations)

BYOB – Bring Your Own Browser: Security/compliance approach (IT)

BYOD – Bring Your Own Device: Personal devices for work (IT)

CAC – Customer Acquisition Cost: Cost to gain a customer (Sales)

CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate: Mean annual growth (Finance)

CAO – Chief Accounting Officer: Oversees accounting operations and reporting (Finance)

CAPEX – Capital Expenditures: Spending on long-term assets (Finance)

CBO – Chief Business Officer: Manages business strategy and growth initiatives (Operations)

CCO – Chief Compliance Officer: Ensures regulatory compliance (Legal)/Chief Creative Officer: Leads creative and branding (Marketing)

CCPA – California Consumer Privacy Act: Consumer data privacy law (Legal)

CDO – Chief Data Officer: Manages data strategy and governance (IT)/Chief Diversity Officer: Leads DEI initiatives (HR)

CEO – Chief Executive Officer: Top executive responsible for company vision (Operations)

CFO – Chief Financial Officer: Manages financial strategy, budgeting, and reporting (Finance)

CHRO – Chief Human Resources Officer: Oversees HR strategy and culture (HR)

CHURN – Customer Churn Rate: Rate customers stop doing business (Sales)

CIO – Chief Information Officer: Oversees IT systems and infrastructure (IT)

CISO – Chief Information Security Officer: Protects data and systems via cybersecurity strategy (IT)

CKO – Chief Knowledge Officer: Manages organizational knowledge and learning (Operations)

CLO – Chief Legal Officer: Heads legal strategy and compliance (Legal)

CMO – Chief Marketing Officer: Leads marketing, branding, and engagement (Marketing)

COBRA – U.S. law allowing temporary continuation of health coverage (HR)

COGS – Cost of Goods Sold: Direct production costs (Finance)

COO – Chief Operating Officer: Oversees daily operations and execution (Operations)

CPC – Cost Per Click: Ad pricing per click (Marketing)

CPL – Cost Per Lead: Cost to acquire a lead (Marketing)

CPM – Cost Per Mille/Thousand: Ad cost per 1,000 impressions (Marketing)

CPO – Chief Product Officer: Leads product development and lifecycle (Operations)

CRM – Customer Relationship Management: Manage client interactions (Sales)

CRO – Chief Revenue Officer: Focuses on revenue growth (Sales)

CR – Conversion Rate: % of users completing a desired action (Marketing)

CSR – Customer Service Representative: Role handling customer support (Operations)

CSO – Chief Strategy Officer: Shapes long-term strategy (Operations)/Chief Sustainability Officer: Leads ESG initiatives (Operations)

CTO – Chief Technology Officer: Leads technology innovation (IT)

CTA – Call to Action: Prompt to drive response (Marketing)

CTR – Click-Through Rate: % of clicks per view (Marketing)

CX – Customer Experience: Overall customer perception (Communications)

CXO – Chief Experience Officer: Enhances customer or user experience (Marketing)

DAU – Daily Active Users: Daily unique users (Sales)

DEI – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion: Workplace programs (HR)

DevOps – Development & Operations: Integrating software dev and IT ops (IT)

DMZ – Demilitarized Zone: Segregated security subnet (IT)

DMP – Data Management Platform: Audience data for ad targeting (Marketing)

DPA – Data Processing Agreement: Contract for handling personal data (Legal)

DPO – Days Payable Outstanding: Avg. days to pay suppliers (Finance)

DSO – Days Sales Outstanding: Avg. days to collect receivables (Finance)

DSP – Demand-Side Platform: Programmatic ad buying (Marketing)

DTC – Direct-to-Consumer: Selling without intermediaries (Sales)

EFTA – European Free Trade Association: Trade bloc with tariff-free trade (Trade)

EB IB / MM IB – Elite Boutique / Middle Market Investment Banks (Finance)

EBIT – Earnings Before Interest and Taxes: Operating profit (Finance)

EBITDA – Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation & Amortization (Finance)

EBT – Earnings Before Taxes: Profit pre-tax (Finance)

EBR – Executive Business Review: Strategic performance meeting (Operations)

EOD / COB – End of Day / Close of Business: Deadline shorthand (Communications)

EOM – End of Message: Indicates no further text (Communications)

EPC – Earnings Per Click: Revenue per ad click (Marketing)

EPS – Earnings Per Share: Profit per share (Finance)

ERP – Enterprise Resource Planning: Integrates core processes (IT)

ESG – Environmental, Social, Governance: Sustainability standards (Legal)

ESOP – Employee Stock Ownership Plan: Employees receive company shares (HR)

ETA – Estimated Time of Arrival (Communications)

ETD – Estimated Time of Departure (Communications)

ETF – Exchange-Traded Fund: Investment fund traded on exchanges (Finance)

EVP – Employee Value Proposition: Value offered to employees (HR)

FAANG – Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google (Finance)

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions (Communications)

FCFF – Free Cash Flow to Firm: Cash available to all investors (Finance)

FCR – First Call Resolution: Resolved on first contact (Operations)

FDIC – Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation: U.S. agency insuring bank deposits (Finance)

FIFO / LIFO – First-In First-Out / Last-In First-Out: Inventory valuation (Finance)

FIRE – Financial Independence / Retire Early (Finance)

FMLA – Family and Medical Leave Act (HR)

FOMO – Fear of Missing Out: Urgency tactic (Marketing)

FTE – Full-Time Employee: Designation in HR and job postings (HR)

FYI – For Your Information (Communications)

GA – Google Analytics: Web traffic and user behavior tracking tool (Marketing)

GAAP – Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (Finance)

GMB – Google My Business: Manage Google presence (Marketing)

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation (Legal)

GRC – Governance, Risk & Compliance: Risk and compliance framework (Legal)

GPT – Generative Pre-trained Transformer: AI model for generating human-like text (IT)

HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (Legal)

HR – Human Resources (HR)

HRIS – Human Resources Information System (HR)

IAM – Identity & Access Management (IT)

IB – Investment Banking (Finance)

IC – Individual Contributor: Non-manager role (HR)

ICP – Ideal Customer Profile: Description of best-fit customer (Sales)

IFRS – International Financial Reporting Standards (Finance)

IPO – Initial Public Offering (Finance)

IRR – Internal Rate of Return (Finance)

ISO – International Organization for Standardization (Legal)

IoT – Internet of Things: Connected devices (IT)

IT – Information Technology (IT)

JIT – Just-In-Time inventory (Operations)

KOL – Key Opinion Leader: Influential expert (Marketing)

KPI – Key Performance Indicator: Performance metric (Operations)

KYC – Know Your Customer (Legal)

L&D – Learning & Development (HR)

LBO – Leveraged Buyout (Finance)

LEAN – Lean Manufacturing (Operations)

LLC – Limited Liability Company: Structure that protects owners from personal liability (Legal)

LLM – Large Language Model: AI model trained on vast text datasets (IT)

LMS – Learning Management System (HR)

LLP – Limited Liability Partnership: UK business structure (Legal)

Ltd – Limited Company: UK private company form (Legal)

M&A – Mergers & Acquisitions (Finance)

MAU – Monthly Active Users: Engagement metric (Sales)

ML – Machine Learning: A subset of AI enables learning from data without explicit programming (IT)

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding (Legal)

ML – Marketing Qualified Lead (Sales)

MRR – Monthly Recurring Revenue (Finance)

MSP – Managed Service Provider (IT)

MVP – Minimum Viable Product: Earliest product to test fit (Operations)

NDA – Non-Disclosure Agreement (Legal)

NLP – Natural Language Processing: AI field focused on language (IT)

NPS – Net Promoter Score: Customer loyalty metric (Marketing)

NPV – Net Present Value: Discounted cash flow metric (Finance)

OKR – Objectives & Key Results: Goal-setting framework (Operations)

OKTA – Identity & access management platform (IT)

OOO – Out of Office (Communications)

OPEX – Operating Expenses: Day-to-day costs (Finance)

OP – Original Poster: Online shorthand (Communications)

P&L – Profit and Loss: Revenues, expenses, profit (Finance)

PAYE – Pay As You Earn: UK payroll/tax deduction system (Finance)

PCI DSS – Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (Legal)

PE – Private Equity: Investment firms acquiring equity stakes (Finance)

PIP – Performance Improvement Plan (HR)

Plc – Public Limited Company: UK public company form (Legal)

PM – Project Manager: Oversees project execution (Operations)

PMO – Project Management Office (Operations)

PO – Purchase Order (Finance)

POS – Point of Sale (Sales)

PPC – Pay Per Click (Marketing)

PQL – Product Qualified Lead (Sales)

PTO – Paid Time Off (HR)

QA – Quality Assurance (Operations)

QC – Quality Control (Operations)

R&D – Research & Development (Operations)

RACI – Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed (Operations)

RFP – Request for Proposal (Operations)

RFQ – Request for Quotation (Operations)

RFI – Request for Information (Operations)

ROA – Return on Assets (Finance)

ROAS – Return on Ad Spend (Marketing)

ROCE – Return on Capital Employed (Finance)

ROE – Return on Equity (Finance)

ROI – Return on Investment (Finance)

RPC – Revenue Per Customer: SaaS revenue metric (Finance)

RPA – Robotic Process Automation (IT)

RPO – Recovery Point Objective: Max acceptable data loss in DR plan (IT)

RSU – Restricted Stock Units: Equity compensation (HR)

RSS – Really Simple Syndication: Subscribe to content updates (Communications)

RTO – Return to Office: Transition back from remote work (HR)

SaaS – Software as a Service (IT)

SaaSOps – SaaS Operations (IT)

SCM – Supply Chain Management (Operations)

SEC – Securities and Exchange Commission (Legal)

SEM – Search Engine Marketing (Marketing)

SEO – Search Engine Optimization (Marketing)

SERP – Search Engine Results Page (Marketing)

Six Sigma – Quality methodology reducing defects (Operations)

SLA – Service Level Agreement (Operations)

SMM – Social Media Marketing (Marketing)

SMB – Small and Medium Business (Sales)

SME – Subject Matter Expert (Operations)

SOX – Sarbanes-Oxley Act (Legal)
SOP – Standard Operating Procedure (Operations)
SOW – Statement of Work (Operations)
SRE – Site Reliability Engineer (IT)
SSL – Secure Sockets Layer (IT)
SQL – Structured Query Language: Database management language (IT)
SKU – Stock Keeping Unit (Operations)
SSP – Supply-Side Platform (Marketing)
SWE – Software Engineer (IT)
SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (Operations)
TBA – To Be Announced (Communications)
TBD – To Be Determined (Communications)
TC – Total Compensation: Salary + bonus + stock (HR)
TCO – Total Cost of Ownership (Finance)
TQM – Total Quality Management (Operations)
TUPE – Transfer of Undertakings (HR): UK rules protecting employees during transfers/mergers (HR)
UI/UX – User Interface / User Experience (IT)
UGC – User-Generated Content (Marketing)
USP – Unique Selling Proposition (Marketing)
VC – Venture Capital (Finance)
VCP – Value Chain Planning (Operations)
VCS – Version Control System (IT)
VPN – Virtual Private Network (IT)
VTR – View-Through Rate: Ad effectiveness metric (Marketing)
VAT – Value Added Tax: UK consumption tax (Finance)
WFH – Work From Home: Remote work arrangements (HR)
WACC – Weighted Average Cost of Capital (Finance)
WIP – Work in Progress (Operations)
YOE – Years of Experience: Career benchmarking metric (HR)

Communications

AMA – Ask Me Anything: Interactive Q&A format to engage an audience
CX – Customer Experience: Overall customer perception
EOD / COB – End of Day / Close of Business: Deadline shorthand
EOM – End of Message: Indicates no further text

FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions

FYI – For Your Information

OP – Original Poster: Online shorthand

OOO – Out of Office: Automatic absence notice

RSS – Really Simple Syndication: Subscribe to content updates

TBA – To Be Announced

TBD – To Be Determined

Finance

AP – Accounts Payable: Money owed to suppliers

AR – Accounts Receivable: Money owed by customers

BIK – Benefits in Kind: Non-cash taxable employee benefits (UK)

CAO – Chief Accounting Officer: Oversees accounting operations

CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate: Mean annual growth

CAPEX – Capital Expenditures: Spending on long-term assets

CFO – Chief Financial Officer: Oversees financial strategy

EB IB / MM IB – Elite Boutique / Middle Market Investment Banks

EBIT – Earnings Before Interest and Taxes

EBITDA – Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation & Amortization

EBT – Earnings Before Taxes

EPS – Earnings Per Share

ETF – Exchange-Traded Fund: Traded investment fund

FCFF – Free Cash Flow to Firm

FDIC – Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation: Insures deposits

FIFO / LIFO – First-In First-Out / Last-In First-Out: Inventory valuation

NPV – Net Present Value

P&L – Profit and Loss statement

PAYE – Pay As You Earn: UK payroll tax system

PE – Private Equity: Investment in companies

PO – Purchase Order

ROA – Return on Assets

ROCE – Return on Capital Employed

ROE – Return on Equity

ROI – Return on Investment

RPC – Revenue Per Customer: SaaS revenue metric

VAT – Value Added Tax (UK)

VC – Venture Capital

WACC – Weighted Average Cost of Capital

Human Resources (HR)

ACAS – Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (UK)

ATS – Applicant Tracking System: Hiring workflow tool

CDO – Chief Diversity Officer: Leads DEI strategy

CHRO – Chief Human Resources Officer

DEI – Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

ESOP – Employee Stock Ownership Plan

EVP – Employee Value Proposition

FMLA – Family and Medical Leave Act

FTE – Full-Time Employee

HR – Human Resources

HRIS – Human Resources Information System

IC – Individual Contributor: Non-manager role

L&D – Learning & Development

LMS – Learning Management System

PIP – Performance Improvement Plan

PTO – Paid Time Off

RSU – Restricted Stock Units: Equity compensation

RTO – Return to Office: Transition from remote work

TUPE – Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment, UK)

YOE – Years of Experience

Information Technology (IT)

AI – Artificial Intelligence

API – Application Programming Interface

AWS – Amazon Web Services

BIE – Business Intelligence Engineer

BYOB – Bring Your Own Browser

BYOD – Bring Your Own Device

CIO – Chief Information Officer

CISO – Chief Information Security Officer

CTO – Chief Technology Officer
DevOps – Development & Operations
DMZ – Demilitarized Zone (security subnet)
ERP – Enterprise Resource Planning
GPT – Generative Pre-trained Transformer: AI model
IAM – Identity & Access Management
IoT – Internet of Things
IT – Information Technology
LLM – Large Language Model: AI model trained on text datasets
ML – Machine Learning: AI subset that enables systems to learn from data
MSP – Managed Service Provider
NLP – Natural Language Processing
OKTA – Identity & access management platform
RPA – Robotic Process Automation
RPO – Recovery Point Objective: Max acceptable data loss
SaaS – Software as a Service
SaaSOps – SaaS Operations
SRE – Site Reliability Engineer
SQL – Structured Query Language
SSL – Secure Sockets Layer
SWE – Software Engineer
UI/UX – User Interface / User Experience
VCS – Version Control System
VPN – Virtual Private Network

Legal

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act
CCO – Chief Compliance Officer
CIS – Construction Industry Scheme (UK tax for contractors)
CLO – Chief Legal Officer
GDPR – General Data Protection Regulation
GRC – Governance, Risk & Compliance
HIPAA – Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
IFRS – International Financial Reporting Standards
ISO – International Organization for Standardization

LLC – Limited Liability Company: U.S. business structure with liability protection

LLP – Limited Liability Partnership (UK)

Ltd – Limited Company (UK)

MOU – Memorandum of Understanding

NDA – Non-Disclosure Agreement

PCI DSS – Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard

Plc – Public Limited Company (UK)

SEC – Securities and Exchange Commission

SOX – Sarbanes-Oxley Act

Marketing & Sales

ABM – Account-Based Marketing

AOV – Average Order Value

CAC – Customer Acquisition Cost

CCO – Chief Creative Officer

CMO – Chief Marketing Officer

CPM – Cost Per Mille/Thousand

CPL – Cost Per Lead

CRO – Chief Revenue Officer

CR – Conversion Rate

CTR – Click-Through Rate

CXO – Chief Experience Officer

DMP – Data Management Platform

DSP – Demand-Side Platform

GMB – Google My Business

KOL – Key Opinion Leader

ML – Marketing Qualified Lead

NPS – Net Promoter Score

PPC – Pay Per Click

PQL – Product Qualified Lead

ROAS – Return on Ad Spend

SEM – Search Engine Marketing

SEO – Search Engine Optimization

SERP – Search Engine Results Page

SMM – Social Media Marketing

SMB – Small and Medium Business

UGC – User-Generated Content

USP – Unique Selling Proposition

VTR – View-Through Rate

Operations

AHT – Average Handle Time

BCP – Business Continuity Plan

BOM – Bill of Materials

BPO – Business Process Outsourcing

BPM – Business Process Management

BSC – Balanced Scorecard

CBO – Chief Business Officer

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CKO – Chief Knowledge Officer

COO – Chief Operating Officer

CPO – Chief Product Officer

CSO – Chief Strategy Officer / Chief Sustainability Officer

EBR – Executive Business Review

JIT – Just-In-Time

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

LEAN – Lean Manufacturing

MVP – Minimum Viable Product

QA – Quality Assurance

QC – Quality Control

R&D – Research & Development

RACI – Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed

RFP – Request for Proposal

RFQ – Request for Quotation

RFI – Request for Information

SCM – Supply Chain Management

Six Sigma – Quality methodology reducing defects

SLA – Service Level Agreement

SME – Subject Matter Expert

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure

SOW – Statement of Work

SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

TQM – Total Quality Management

VCP – Value Chain Planning

WIP – Work in Progress

Need help improving your communication skills? [Let's talk.](#)

[Cary Communications](#) | hello@carycomms.com | (919) 578-2666 | [Portfolio](#) | [Contact Us](#)

Career Services | Corporate Communications | Creative Services

Personal Branding | Executive Resumes | Messaging | Presentations | Graphics Design