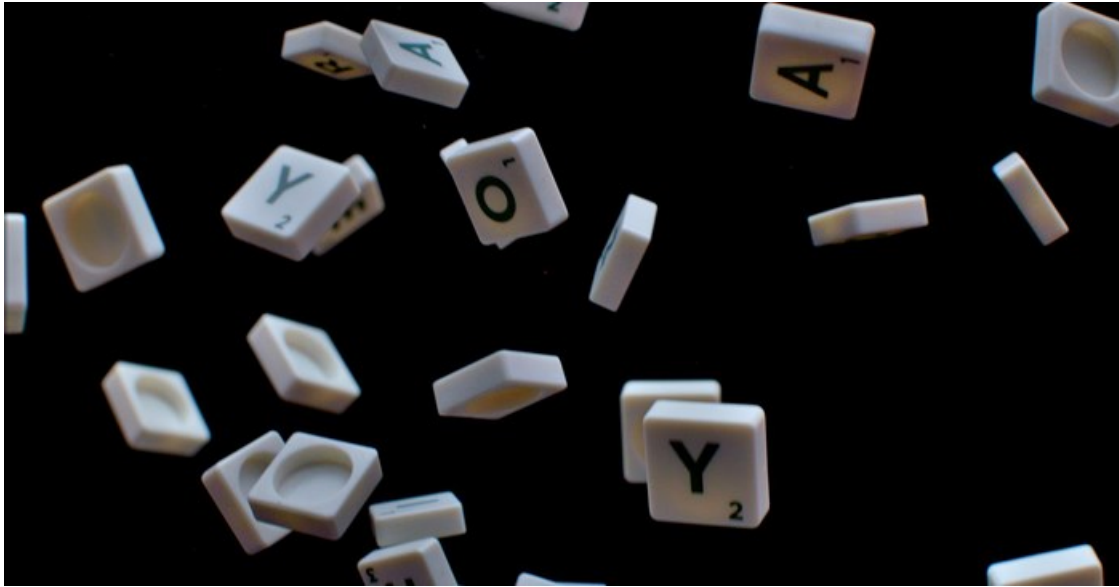


Words of the year

By  Michael Shapiro

7 Dec 2021

The word of the year in 1999 was 'Y2K'. In 2007 it was 'subprime'.



Source: www.unsplash.com

And then in 2016, it was 'Brexit'. 2017 saw the emergence of 'fake news', and in 2019 it was 'climate emergency'.

And then the world changed. In 2020 the word of the year was 'pandemic' and this year, 2021, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* the word of the year is 'vax'.

The *Collin English Dictionary* took a slightly different angle. Their word of the year was 'NFT'. The abbreviation for non-fungible tokens, or as *Collins* defines it: "unique digital certificate, registered in a blockchain, that is used to record ownership of an asset such as an artwork or a collectible, shot to prominence as the market for NFT's soared, aided by high-profile celebrities stirring up the hype."

According to *Collins* managing director Alex Beecroft, "It's unusual for an abbreviation to experience such a meteoric rise in usage, but the data we have from the Collins Corpus reflects the remarkable ascendancy of the NFT in 2021."



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Other words that made the shortlist are also somewhat unsurprising. 'Metaverse', 'crypto', whilst 'hybrid working' and 'double-vaxxed' also made the shortlist.

Our use of specific words reflects not only what dominates our language but reflects our thoughts, and perhaps, obsessions. It can also denote our mental and emotional state as well as the desired outputs we would like to progress. This is indicated by 'pandemic' being last year's word and then 'vax' being the word of the year for 2021.

What is worth noting is that almost all the words of the year concerned one of two things: either the Covid-19 pandemic and technological developments. The world, it would seem, is myopically focused on these two areas.

Acknowledgement in the changing working world

That said, I believe that there is a missing word in 2021 - 'gratitude'. There is so much that we have to be grateful for. With the vaccine, the world is moving back to health, economies are starting to recover - and if I look at our company, we have not only 'survived' the last few years, but we have thankfully thrived.

Globally enterprises are acclimatised to and comfortable with remote development. It means a whole range of international opportunities is accessible to South African companies.

With remote working, companies also need to acknowledge the partners and families of their employees. Whereas in the past we might have been grateful to our team and our people, the shift to distanced working has made partners very much part of the team. Managers need to acknowledge and recognise partners and families who have endured an untold number of MS Teams or Zoom meetings - and who through no choice of theirs became part of their partners' work environment. Children, pets and vacuum cleaners as well as hadedas might also have made countless appearances, but I am not sure that gratitude needs to extend to them.



Leadership now: Lessons from 2021 and preparing for the future

Brian Eagar, MANGO-OMC 7 Dec 2021



We have no idea what the next year will bring. But I am greatly looking forward to 2022. It is time to bid farewell to a year that challenged us and welcome in the new. We use words over and over. The *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Collins* and others reflect what we speak about as humans across the globe. My wish to us all is that in 2022 the word of the year will be 'fulfilment' as we all strive and reach our potential.

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= Words of the year - 7 Dec 2021

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