

# Microspeak: pivot



Raymond Chen

A great word to use at Microsoft to make it sound like you're one of the cool insiders is *pivot*. Mostly because the meaning of the word varies from place to place, so you can use it to mean whatever you like while still sounding hip and jargony.

In Windows Phone, the term *pivot* is a technical term which refers to a type of control that lets users switch easily from page to page. The term is used metonymically to mean the pages themselves.

| In the Calendar, on the To-Do *pivot*, you can press and hold on a to-do item and select *postpone a day*.

In Excel, the term *pivot* refers to a type of table or chart that summarizes data.

In Windows Live Search (as it was known back then), the term *pivot* referred to the category selectors at the top of the page (Images, Videos, News, *etc.*)

But once you go beyond specific technical definitions, things get vague quickly.

The most general sense of the term is just that a pivot is way of visualizing data. No summarization required.

Old and busted	New hotness
Calendar view	Pivot by time
Group by type	Pivot by type

Use the new hotness to gain instant credibility.

Here are some other citations which seem to be even more vague.

| We will focus v-teams along client/server pivots across workloads.

Is there a way to write a program that does Q whenever Z happens? Another pivot on this question would be to add this as a feature in the XYZ product.

Over time, we will adjust this diagram to pivot by process rather than organizational unit, but for the moment, the organizational unit serves as a rough proxy for process.

The new model will be a significant change to the organization, and it will take focused effort to reorient the organization to this alignment. Initially in this new pivot, there may be challenges in learning new roles, accountabilities and responsibilities from role to role in the overall project structure.

That last one is today's winner for muddled management-speak.

When in doubt, toss in the word *pivot*. Nobody will know what you mean, but that's okay, because you don't know what it means either. It just sounds cool.

Raymond Chen

**Follow**

