

Microspeak: planful

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Raymond Chen

Every year, Microsoft invites its employees to fill out a poll which asks questions regarding all sorts of things. One of the things Microsoft employees are asked to evaluate is whether they think that their vice president is acting *planfully*. The tricky part about that question is that nobody knows exactly what the word *planfully* means. Merriam-Webster defines *planful* as “full of plans : RESOURCEFUL, SCHEMING.” Is that what they’re asking us? Whether our vice president is resourceful and scheming? Is that a good thing or a bad thing? The OED, on the other hand, defines it as “Full or rich in plans; characterized by planning; organized, systematic.” It’s not clear whether this means that the person goes into a situation with a plan ahead of time, or that once they get into a situation, they develop a plan for getting out. (Maybe both?) I caught a vice president using the word *planful* during a meeting, so I raised my hand and asked, “What does *planful* mean?” (Most people don’t have the nerve to raise their hand during a meeting and ask, “Um, what does that word mean?”) The vice president replied, “Actually, I don’t think it’s a real word. I think [name of a senior manager] made it up.” I followed up: “Well, in that case, why are we asked to evaluate you every year on whether your actions are planful? How can we answer a question that uses a made-up word nobody knows the definition of?” **Obligatory xpclient example:** “Was it a planful decision to introduce the auto-sorting problem?”

Reminder: Microspeak is not merely terms unique to Microsoft, but also terms used at Microsoft more often than in general.

[Raymond Chen](#)

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