Words I'd like to ban in 2004

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It seems to be fashionable to do a "top words" list this time of year. We have Google 2003 Zeitgeist, Top Yahoo! Searches 2003, Merriam-Webster's Words of the Year for 2003, YourDictionary.com's Top Ten Words of 2003, Lake Superior State University's Banished Words List for 2004; still waiting for the American Dialect Society's choice for Word of the Year for 2003.

I like LSSU's approach, so here's my list of words I'd like to ban.

Best-of-Breed
Thank goodness this has faded, but there are still some citations out there. Please don't use it to describe my work. It makes me sound like a dog in a show. (No offense to dogs in shows!)

Leading
Everybody is "the leading this" or "the leading that". Here's my rule: If you say you're the leading XYZ or (even dodgier) "among the leading XYZs", then have to list at least three companies that are *not* leaders in the XYZ market. Because if nobody is following you, then you're not really "leading", now, are you.

And the word I most would like to banish from the English language:

Ask (as a noun)
This has taken over Microsoft-speak in the past year or so and it drives me batty. "What are our key asks here?", you might hear in a meeting. Language tip: The thing you are asking for is called a "request". Plus, of course, the thing that is an "ask" is usually more of a "demand" or "requirement". But those are such unfriendly words, aren't they? Why not use a warm, fuzzy word like "ask" to take the edge off?

Answer: Because it's not a word.

I have yet to find any dictionary which sanctions this usage. Indeed, the only definition for "ask" as a noun is A water newt [Scot. & North of Eng.], and that was from 1913!

Answer 2: Because it's passive-aggressive.

These "asks" are really "demands". So don't guilt-trip me with "Oh, you didn't meet our ask. We had to cut half our features. But that's okay. We'll just suffer quietly, you go do your thing, don't mind us."

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