Taking things for granted

When you are surrounded by something, you assume everyone else is as well. You are taking for granted that everyone has the same experience. But, this is simply not so. And taking things for granted results in bad communication, for sure.

How many times have you tried to talk to a real tech-y person? Chances are you ended up nodding your head because it was easier than asking what each word meant or gadget or program did. This happens whenever you try to communicate with someone who is immersed in a world, and does not realize you aren't.

On Saturday, I was at a talk about research on the Internet. Some terms came up like "delicious" or "brand reputation," which did not strike a chord amongst the attendees. You have to know who your audience is and adjust your explanations accordingly. If you are tweeting on Twitter, you don't have to explain what a tweet up is. If you are in a room where people feel very cutting edge because they finally put up a picture of their dog on Facebook, you will have to explain, and it will not be as obvious as you think.

A rule for good communication is not to take things for granted. Explain what you mean using common terms. Avoid jargon. Jargon is the ultimate insider language, and it takes for granted that you understand it. Remember, just because it is obvious to you does not mean it is obvious to everyone else.