13 Prison Slang Terms You Should Use With Co-Workers



You thought prison slang was reserved for hardened convicts and characters of ‘Orange is the New Black’?

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Prison life is hard. It requires its own language, a slang understood only by those who experience it. Do you know what else is hard? Your job. While you might not be confined to solitary, your cubicle might sometimes feel like a cell. Or sometimes, even a death sentence.

When you’re at your most pessimistic and your boss is being a dick, when the co-worker next to you is about to drive you to some heavy level manslaughter shit, you need the right slang to truly articulate how horrible life can be in the cubicle

cell in which you live (or, maybe it’s not so dramatic and you just want to have fun).

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Some of these prison slang can translate to everyday office life, which just might make your interactions with co-workers a little more enjoyable. You probably already have a lot of things you want to call some of the people you work with … but here are some suggestions straight from the prison yard.

1. Buck Rogers time: In prison, this is used to mean that your release date is so far into the distant future that it doesn’t even feel real. If you work one of those 9-to-5s where Friday feels like an eternity and even your one-hour cubicle-bound lunch break seems distant, then you’re livin’ Buck Rogers time.

2. Cowboy: Spell cowboy backward. What is it? “yobwoc.” This might sound like rubbish, but in prison, it means “young, obnoxious bastard we often con.” Basically, your unpaid intern.

3. Ear hustling: We all have that gossipy, nosy co-worker who spends more time listening in on your phone calls and butting into the Monday morning conversations you have with your work friends. He’s “ear hustling,” which in prison means eavesdropping without permission.

4. Dry snitching: In prison, dry snitching means to snitch indirectly by talking in an excessively loud voice or drawing attention from the guards, or offering some information but no names. Dry snitching is snitching for cowards. Instead of just telling on you outright, a dry snitcher in the workplace speaks loud enough so that your boss or supervisor can hear what he or she was going to tell on you for, and gets you in trouble anyway.

5. OG: An “original gangster.” In prison, this is a respectful term for someone has been in the joint for a long time. In the work world, this is someone who has been with your startup for more than three months.

6. Road Dawg: This is your homie. It’s the guy you walk with during rec, who you share your commissary with and the guy who has your back in a riot. He’s the one who doesn’t rat on you for staring at internet memes all day.

7. Wolf tickets: When an inmate sells wolf tickets, he’s talking shit without backing anything up. He’s just “selling wolf tickets.” Same thing in the office. This is the co-worker who says he’ll close the client or make the next big deal but spends his day scrolling through Facebook because he’s doing “market research.”

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8. Bug: In prison, this is an untrustworthy or unreliable prison staff member. You don’t want to get close to a bug. They’re untrustworthy and don’t have your back for a second. This is that person in the office who always looks through the stall door to see if you’re texting in the bathroom and then turns you in for it.

9. Cellie: In prison, this is the person you share your cell with. At work, it’s the guy or girl in the cubicle next door. They share your pain. You commiserate when work gets tough and your boss keeps threatening to take your stapler.

10. Fresh fish: In prison, the new inmates. At your workplace, the recent college grad with no work experience.

11. Holds the keys: Whoever holds the keys is the shot caller for that prison yard. At your office, it could be the janitor, who literally holds the keys. Or, it could be the IT guy, because let’s be real, he has all of your emails and therego

controls your life.

12. House mouse: In prison, this is the inmate who maintains communication between prisoners and the deputies. At work, it's your supervisor and general manager. Call em' a glorified house mouse with a higher paycheck than you.

13. Juice Card: Holding a "juice card" in prison can get you out of some real trouble. It means you have some sort of influence with guards or even other prisoners. This works in the office, too. It might be that you're tight with the CEO and your boss knows it. Or you could have a juice card because you're a legitimately good employee who actually knows how to work and you earned respect the old fashioned way.

Related: Ex-Convicts Make the Best Entrepreneurs. Here Are 3 Reasons Why.

Oh, I know you're on a new diet and are now using a standup desk for work, but how about you try out these prison slang terms and shake your day up even more. See how your co-workers or your manager reacts when you use a term usually reserved for prison gangs. Or watch how that higher up, who has a huge paycheck just for being persistently douchey, acts when you tell him to, "stop being a cowboy and quit all that ear hustling or I'll take the damn keys from you."

If you like the slang you see here, there's a lot more of that in my upcoming book, *Don't Drop the Soap: The Wildest $#*! About Prison You Can't Learn on Netflix.* You can find more names to call your co-workers, and you can discover a ton of other incredibly valuable stuff such as prison life hacks, prison food recipes (yum!) and prison workouts. Do you want to learn how to light a cigarette with a battery, or, how to make your own tattoo gun with a Walkman motor, guitar string and pen case? Well, then, my prison book is just for you! Go get it.

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