



The Weight of Words in the Workplace

You can choose how you use words. Reap the benefits of this free, easy, powerful shift.

By Jennifer Powers

You can create an awesome shift in yourself, your colleagues, and your entire organization right now. One of the easiest ways to do that is with your words. Yes. Words.

Your words have a direct influence over your results. All. The. Time.

Tell yourself ***you'll never finish the project on time.*** Done.

Tell yourself ***you'll make mistakes in your proposal*** and you will.

Tell yourself ***you won't win the grant.*** That's right.

Curious about how this works?

What you say will influence what you ***think.***

What you think will influence how you ***feel.***

How you feel will influence what you ***do.***

What you do will influence your ***results.***

Every time.

“It's amazing how much difference your tone makes.”

You may already know this. Yet it's possible that you rarely give enough attention or credit to the effect your words have every day.

Think about it this way: You're given a blank canvas each morning. Your words are your paint. For example, if you say, “This is going to be a difficult day,” then chances are, it will be. However, if you say, “This day will bring me lots of opportunities for growth,” you're one step closer to manifesting *that* reality. When you choose words that are in alignment with what you want to create, you're standing in your power and taking greater control over your desired outcome.

“Positive words change people.”

Words give you power and control. Are you using them in ways that serve you or defeat you?

Here are a few ways to use your words to get you more of what you want.

Eradicate & replace

Take stock. Examine the words you use when talking about your organization. Or look at the supporters you're attracting (or not attracting) and consider how your words played a part in that reality. Because they did.

Next, commit to eradicating non-productive words from your vocabulary and choose words to use in their place. For example, maybe you respond to the question, "How are things going?" with words like "Slow" or "Way too much to do" or "It's not like it used to be." Doing so will create more of that reality for yourself. Consider replacing those responses with words like "Great, thanks!" or "Getting better every day!" and watch what happens.

Remember, you have the ability to attract more of what you want by choosing your words with thought and intention.

Watch your tone

Your tone can hide the true meaning of your words if you're not careful. Studies show that only 7% of any spoken message is conveyed through words. In contrast, 38% of your message is delivered through vocal elements (such as pitch, pace, and volume) and 55% through nonverbal elements (facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.).

Here's a quick exercise to examine the dramatic differences. Try saying the following statements in three different tones: enthusiastic, neutral, and angry.

- "I don't know."
- "It's no big deal."
- "You're unbelievable."

Isn't it amazing how much difference your tone makes? How often do you focus on the effects your tone is having on the person hearing your words? It's too important to ignore.



Share the love

As a leader and professional, you know that your words can affect people's outlook, job performance, creativity, and efficacy. Why not use that to your advantage and theirs?

There are dozens of opportunities each day for you to offer a word of praise, a compliment, a congratulations, or a thank you. You know how easy it is yet you're probably not doing it as often as you could.

Taking time to share positive words with people will change them, change you, and change the dynamic of your relationship. This has immediate payoffs. Here's a list of things you might say to someone to share the love:

- Nice job!
- I appreciate what you do here.
- I believe in you.
- Thanks for your hard work.
- You make a difference here.

If this feels awkward at first, that's natural. But if you can step out of your comfort zone and make the effort, the results will blow you away. Best part? Words are free, accessible, and abundant. Use them to help others be their best and build relationships that grow. 

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Words Work Wonders

Using your words to enrich people's lives is a choice. Tips to help you learn more about powerful communications are at the ready (NonprofitWorld.org):

Cynicism Rx: Authentic Communication (Vol. 24, No. 6)

Beware These Words (Vol. 37, No. 3)

How Jargon Undermines Communication (Vol. 27, No. 2)

What the Heck Are You Trying to Say? (Vol. 34, No. 2)

Fear of Feelings: Dealing with Emotions in Public Speaking (Vol. 17, No. 2)

To Make an Impact, Improve Your Non-Verbal Skills (Vol. 38, No. 3)

What are the Three Most Boring Words in Fundraising Appeals? (Vol. 36, No. 2)

How to Fix Communication Breakdowns (Vol. 29, No. 1)

Can We Call a Truce? Tips for Negotiating Workplace Conflicts (Vol. 27, No. 6)