How to Have the Access, Impact, and Influence You Deserve

Stop being boring, dull, unimportant, and irrelevant

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Introduction

What sets an advisor apart so that they’re listened to more than you are, they have better access than you do, and they clearly have more impact than you do?

The answer is powerful communication, word power, idea power, powerful language choices, and avoiding negativity, especially through language choice.

Can it really be this simple? The answer is powerful communication techniques, word power, idea power, powerful language choices, and avoiding negativity especially through language choice. Absolutely yes. But, you have to work at it and develop and practice your impact, influence, and access techniques.

Power Word and Phrasing techniques have the magical ability to get or keep you out of trouble and to move you and others in positive, constructive directions. These words counteract and detoxify the sticky, corrosive, destructive power of negative words and concepts.

The need for Power Words is essential, especially when we find ourselves in difficult, challenging and often murky, negative situations. The tendency upon hearing negative, emotional or accusatory language is to repeat and then respond. Power Words enable you to avoid repeating negative words and inflammable phrases, and to move in very constructive directions from the beginning. Some examples:

**Technique 1 – Contrast Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative, Emotional, Accusatory Language</th>
<th>Power Word Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. So you admit you bungled the chance to do this properly...</td>
<td>1. What we did was essential and important to resolving the issues these individuals faced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Many thought your behavior was simply weird and uncalled for.</td>
<td>2. We first identified the crucial issues we felt needed discussion and proceeded to empathetically and powerfully work to resolve the questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do you respond to this aggravating and unfortunate situation?</td>
<td>3. Three actions: detect the issues; deter future negative actions; and provide essential and critical advice to move beyond the existing problem and situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Even some Wall Street analysts say your company should be ashamed</td>
<td>4. The significant facts are these: first, we always acted with empathy and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of what it did. How humiliating is this for your company?

- responsibility; second, our culture has a strong sense of what is right and what to avoid. Our actions, as well as our words, demonstrate our commitment to these concepts. Finally, the most crucial information is that provided by victims and survivors. They uniformly praise our simple, sincere, sensible and responsible approach to their problems.

5. You stand accused of being callous, careless, arrogant, and insensitive. How many of these allegations are true?

- Three things about our behavior and intentions are true: Everything we’ve been doing has been preauthorized by those most directly affected; our actions and intentions have been clear, we have been candid, and we have been truthful in every instance; lastly, as events unfold, responsible and knowledgeable commentary will prevail, but there will always be a handful of critics who remain to be convinced. We are being as direct and forceful with these individuals and organizations as we can be, telling our story and listening carefully for the views and comments they’re expressing.

**Technique 2 – Power Words**

Power Words are the words of tomorrow and have the energy and the punch to get attention and help surge beyond the negative and the emotional. Power Words provide a sense of constructive positivity that can move your conversation, issues and ideas to much more constructive, helpful and successful territory. Power Words add the simple, sensible, positive, constructive and forceful ingredients to power up your language and intentions. Words like:
1. Aggressive  
2. Attack  
3. Authorize  
4. Avoid  
5. Candid  
6. Clear  
7. Crucial  
8. Critical  
9. Defend  
10. Detect  
11. Deter  
12. Different  
13. Direct  
14. Emphasize  
15. Empathize  
16. Energize  
17. Essential  
18. Exciting  
19. Fascinating  
20. Forceful  
21. Important  
22. Intentional  
23. Legitimize  
24. Necessary  
25. Needed  
26. New  
27. Powerful  
28. Prevent  
29. Prioritize  
30. Protect  
31. Purposeful  
32. Responsible  
33. Seasoned  
34. Sensible  
35. Significant  
36. Simple  
37. Sincere  
38. Steady  
39. Strip  
40. Strong  
41. Surge  
42. Surprised  
43. Tender  
44. Tough  
45. Truthful  
46. Unique  
47. Unusual  
48. Urgent  
49. Valuable

**Technique 3 – Power Phrases**

Power Phrases consist mainly of numbered bundles of adjectives. The use of this technique in speaking and writing is extremely powerful. In both of these instances, speaking and writing, if you use the technique you will literally force people to write things down or take better notes than they might have otherwise.

**Rule 1 for Power Packages:**

Keep the number of ingredients or components low, generally four or fewer. Three seems to be an optimal number. We’re talking about:

- Three Angles
- Three Attempts
- Three Decisions
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- Three Elements
- Three Increments
- Three Ingredients
- Three Opinions
- Three Options
- Three Parts
- Three Perspectives
- Three Phases
- Three Stages
- Three Steps
- Three Units

Some other examples could include the use of a single, powerful circumstance, such as, “The single, most important ingredient in this formula is...” or, “The most urgent issue we currently face is...”

The smaller the number, the more powerful the statement.

**Some examples of two component phrases include,**

- “Your choice is between action and inaction.”
- “Let’s just start with the two worst circumstances you face and see what we can generate from there.”
- “A couple of things are on my mind.”

These power phrases make you more important, more influential, more memorable, and share those enhanced attributes and skills with those around you. Most of all, this technique forces people to write down what you’re talking about, which is one of the most important actions you can create in someone you’re trying to help, guide, direct, coach or counsel.

**Technique 4 – Avoiding Color Words**

These words always create bad news. Avoid them. Power your way past them with Power Words and Power Phrases.

Crucial negative attributes of color words that make them toxic to your communications:

1. Always emotional. Just seeing these words on the list can grab your guts and make them feel bad. This is why reporters, opponents and angry people use
them.

2. In many cultures we are taught that failing to answer directly the question asked damages our credibility. Forget that rule and always counter color words with power words.

3. Review the previous section on contrast analysis to see how power words can be used to diffuse color words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afraid</th>
<th>Delinquent</th>
<th>Harmful</th>
<th>Sad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agitated</td>
<td>Demean</td>
<td>Hateful</td>
<td>Sarcastic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggravate</td>
<td>Deny</td>
<td>Hopeless</td>
<td>Scared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alarmed</td>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>Hostile</td>
<td>Scum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alleged</td>
<td>Desperation</td>
<td>Humiliated</td>
<td>Self-pity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Despicable</td>
<td>Hurt</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Destroy</td>
<td>Icky</td>
<td>Sellout</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anguish</td>
<td>Destructive</td>
<td>Idiot</td>
<td>Sham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonize</td>
<td>Deteriorate</td>
<td>Ignorant</td>
<td>Shame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious</td>
<td>Disappointed</td>
<td>Immature</td>
<td>Shameful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathetic</td>
<td>Disarray</td>
<td>Incompetent</td>
<td>Shatter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appalled</td>
<td>Discontented</td>
<td>Inept</td>
<td>Sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
<td>Discouraged</td>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
<td>Silly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argue</td>
<td>Discriminate</td>
<td>Irritated</td>
<td>Sissy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>Disdain</td>
<td>Lies</td>
<td>Skunk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashamed</td>
<td>Disgusted</td>
<td>Litigate</td>
<td>Slander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assassinate</td>
<td>Dismiss</td>
<td>Lousy</td>
<td>Slash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack</td>
<td>Disrespect</td>
<td>Mad</td>
<td>Sloppy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awful</td>
<td>Distorted</td>
<td>Mangled</td>
<td>Stinky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>Distraught</td>
<td>Mangy</td>
<td>Struggle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betrayed</td>
<td>Disturbed</td>
<td>Manipulate</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blame</td>
<td>Dopey</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blasted</td>
<td>Doubtful</td>
<td>Meek</td>
<td>Tampering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bombs</td>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>Messy</td>
<td>Tarnish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored</td>
<td>Duplicity</td>
<td>Minimize</td>
<td>Tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botched</td>
<td>Ecottage</td>
<td>Miserable</td>
<td>Terrible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainwashed</td>
<td>Embarrassed</td>
<td>Monopoly</td>
<td>Terrified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bungled</td>
<td>Embattled</td>
<td>Nag</td>
<td>Terror-stricken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buried</td>
<td>Endanger</td>
<td>Negligent</td>
<td>Terrorized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitulate</td>
<td>Enraged</td>
<td>Out-of-touch</td>
<td>Threatened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catastrophic</td>
<td>Evil</td>
<td>Overwhelmed</td>
<td>Toxic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collusion</td>
<td>Eviscerate</td>
<td>Overzealous</td>
<td>Tragic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceal</td>
<td>Excessive</td>
<td>Outrageous</td>
<td>Traitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confused</td>
<td>Exaggerate</td>
<td>Painful</td>
<td>Tumultuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conspire</td>
<td>Exposed</td>
<td>Panicky</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contempt</td>
<td>Face-saving</td>
<td>Petrified</td>
<td>Unbelievable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technique 5 – Love Working on This Stuff!

Getting good at contrast analysis and using power words makes you a better more persuasive and memorable spokesperson, speaker or representative. These are really cool problems to resolve. If you’ve got a particularly sticky circumstance or troublesome set of colorful accusations, send them to me and we can quickly detoxify them together.

A note about the concept of packaging and numbering adjectives. This is the most powerful verbal tool you can use. It works on happy people, sad people, angry people, agitated people, confused people and people you need to convince. Some simple examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bland Generalities</th>
<th>Meaningfully Specific Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “We’re a great company.”</td>
<td>1. “We are a powerful company, leading three important business sectors, digitalization, transmission efficiency and end user acceptance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Everybody loves our company.”</td>
<td>2. “We use three techniques every month to test our customer acceptance: direct contact with key users; short, direct questionnaires; and seeking testimonials.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. “We’ve successfully dealt with this problem in the past.”</td>
<td>3. “We made three crucial improvements in this process four years ago: first, we significantly reduced defects, second, we began more careful education of our customers, and third, we introduced a monitoring program to catch defects earlier.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technique 6 – Your Most Crucial Goal: Be Intentionally Memorable

What’s the point of having a good set of slides and sensible word choices, yet you fail to pass the memorability and relevance test? Here are the elements of memorability. These need to be practiced as well. Although, I think you’ll notice almost immediately positive reactions to these techniques. They’re simple and you can do them while standing on your feet. I recommend a constant regimen of rehearsal for any kind of presentation, even informal ones. Here are the elements of memorability, alphabetized:

1. **Alphabetize:** lists of names, ideas, concepts should have an immediate sense of organization to the observer or participant. So often we seem to list ideas at random, which seems to raise all kinds of questions in the audience rather than paying attention to what you’re talking about. Simple technique: alphabetize everything. Especially names. The way names are displayed has lots of different messages. Most of these messages are distractions and will go away if you simply put them in alphabetical order, even the president of the company or organization.

2. **Chronology:** complicated ideas are more easily explained if the events or ideas are presented in some kind of chronological order or sequence of events. These are self-evidently helpful to the audience and you don’t necessarily have to explain using them. Dramatic examples tell brief but powerful stories, have punchlines or lessons. If you’re just wandering through an example and there’s no purpose for it, it’s going to be boring.

3. **Packaging and Bundling:** this is the idea of using small numbers which I explained earlier in this document. This is one of the most powerful attention-getting strategies you can use: using small numbers that are relevant to each other.

4. **Repetition:** when communicating important ideas you need to forget your 8th grade English teacher’s rule of not repeating anything or saying or only indicating something once. Studies show that the most powerful teaching factor in learning materials is repetition. Generally, try saying things three times.

5. **Tell Them What’s Important:** rather than let them try to figure it out themselves. Say something like, “this is a very important concept,” or “this is the most important concept,” or “this is the most powerful concept.”

6. **Use Power Words:** as I described earlier in this paper; positive language and power words are what help you get attention, even for the most boring material.

7. **Verbal Cueing:** is something you’re about to say more important than the last thing you said? Give them a warning by saying, “what I am about to tell you is much more important than all the things we’ve been talking about,” or something similar. The more
clues and cues you can an audience in writing and in speaking, but especially in presenting, make you a more important speaker, more important to be understood, and this sense of urgency that the cuing technique builds gives you that feeling of relevance which is so often missing from what’s being talked about, reported on, or discussed.

**Technique 7 – Giving Powerful Advice: The Three Minute Drill**

One crucial reality of being a trusted advisor is that the best and most useful advice is often needed in a brief period of time (on-the-spot) under the pressure of events. The Three Minute Drill is a compact, direct process for giving those you help focused, accurate, and complete information – framed in a strategic way – from which they can choose (through the options process, step 4) a course of action.

The discipline is to use this highly focused, structured, time-sensitive approach to get your recommendations promptly put forward. This allows the balance of discussion time, meeting time, or face time with those you advise to be productive and directed toward helping them make better decisions promptly. The six elements of the process are described below.

**Step 1: Situation description (60 words):** Briefly describe the nature of the issue, problem, or situation. This is the factual basis for “what we know now,” “why we need to take your time, now, to discuss this,” or “This is a new and important topic we need to talk about, now.”

**Step 2. Analysis (60 words):** Briefly describe what the situation means, its implications, and perhaps, how it threatens or presents opportunities. Include one or two key assumptions that validate the analysis. Managers always need to know why, but not in great detail. They’re also interested in the intelligence you’ve gathered or know about that supports your analysis, assumptions, and recommendations.

**Step 3: The goal (60 words):** The clear, concise statement of the task to be accomplished. Goals keep everyone focused forward. The goal should be stated as the behavioral, emotional, or intellectual change in your target constituencies. Useful goals are understandable, brief, achievable, positive, and time/deadline sensitive.

**Step 4. Options (150 words):** Always present at least three options for action. You can suggest more, but three is optimal for management to choose from. The goals you suggest are to “do something” (100% response), “do something more” (125% response), or “do nothing” (0% response). Having multiple options keeps you at the table and avoids the “death by question” syndrome that often strikes should you have only one recommendation. Lose that single recommendation through a crucial unanticipated question, and you’ll be out of the discussion for the duration. Keep the three option approach and you give the manager or leader what they want, making the decision themselves and owning the solution.

**Step 5. Recommendation (60 words):** Be ready to say what you would do if you were in your boss’ shoes, and why. You’ll always get one or both of two questions at this stage: 1. “Which option would you choose if you were me?” or 2. “What’s the first thing we have to do?” The recommendation is usually selected on the basis of which option will cause the least number
of negative unintended consequences. Many advisors stumble at this point, having failed to prepare for these two very logical questions.

This is where you earn your paycheck and keep your place at the table. The boss always wants to know what you would do if you were in his/her shoes. Be ready to walk through a similar sort of analysis for each of the options proposed.

**Step 6. Justification (60 words):** Identify the negative unintended – but fully predictable – consequences of each option, including the option to do nothing. These are the reactions or circumstances that could arise resulting from the options you suggest (including to do nothing). Every management decision or action has consequences that can be forecast. Each also has unintended consequences that can also be forecast. Inadequate provision for consequences is what can sabotage an otherwise useful strategy.

Striving to provide advice in this 450-word format (three minutes, 150 words per minute) is powerful, conserves management time, and coupled with the discipline of suggesting three action options every time, will get you invited back to the table earlier, again and again.