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Words are more than words

They are tools, weapons, and more

February 21, 2014 | By [Debra Lins](#) | Comments: [0 Comments](#)



I remember as a child a saying that went something like this: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”



As I reflect on this today, I know that this is certainly not true, as words can cut very deeply and hurt as much as a broken bone in so many respects. They also can be misinterpreted, or leave one with an incomplete feeling of what was spoken.

More helpfully, growing up, I also remember my parents giving the stellar advice of, “Choose your words carefully” and “Remember you may have to eat your

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words someday.” Both idioms of advice provided virtuous guidance, yet at the time they were more introspective than a young child might comprehend. Today, I know their value.

Why am I bringing this up? Because words uttered in the office are more than just words!

Day in, day out, we use words for so many things. We need to take them quite seriously.

How speech can affect the workplace

Words create pictures in one’s mind, which may or may not correspond to what is being shared.

I recall a time when I was conversing with my bank’s computer vendor . . .

Have you ever communicated with a computer geek who is really excited about the newest and greatest technology, and felt like they were talking in a foreign language? I have!

One example that comes to mind was when making a presentation on the concept of a “virtual server.” I thought I understood his words, yet he realized that I didn’t. After about 10 minutes of conversation, he drew me a picture.

This certainly assisted with matching his words with the concept, and allowed me to focus on the benefits to the bank versus the technology workings.

Words carry emotion; they can build up as well as destroy someone’s self esteem. Words carry momentum.

They can create a reaction.

Or convey a call to action.

Can you recollect a great speaker you have heard? Reflect on how easily he or she earned the trust of the audience, their willing belief. Were you ready to follow them too? Or buy their goods or services?

Words of misunderstanding

Have you ever had a customer call you upset, because they misunderstood one of your lender’s recommendations (more words) for their loan structure?

Communications is an art and as the leaders of your organization you want to choose the words you share with your employees, customers, vendors judiciously. We all have had regrets at one time or another on words we have spoken, or how they have been perceived . . .

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Mindset behind the words

When sharing your bank's vision, goals, or need for organizational change, you may find it challenging to insure you are in the right frame of mind when you are speaking with your team members, due to all the balls your are juggling every day.

We hear that actions speak louder than words, but words speak pretty darn loudly—and not always as we'd hope.

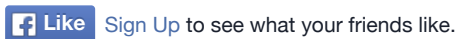
I remember a time when I had a sinus infection and was feeling really drained. Yet I needed to facilitate a planning session with my officer team. You guessed it—I was not as sharp as normal and several matters I covered were misinterpreted. Luckily, when we resumed the next day I was feeling better and the questions raised by the words chosen the night before were clarified.

Words of trust, or those lacking it

When employees do not believe what is being said, and your bank team does not experience sincere followthrough, there will be a disconnect and cause for discord. Careful consideration of your words will convey to your banking team the desired message to instill the desired outcome.

I will conclude with a quotation one of my favorite poets Emily Dickinson to bring home the theme of this essay, "I know nothing in the world that has as much power as a word."

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Debra Lins

Debra Lins, a frequent book reviewer for [ababj.com](#), is CEO and president, [Lins Business Consulting](#). Lins is a veteran community banker and a former member of the ABA's Community Bankers Council. She has also written for [ABABJ.com](#)'s Boardroom and [UNconventional Wisdom](#) guest blogs. Lins is a Governor's appointee to the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions Banking Review Board.

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