



When Your Words Mean Business

18 Influential Phrases
for Professional Conversations

By Sharí Alexander

When Your Words Mean Business

Influential Phrases for Professional Conversations

Sharí Alexander



Elevated í
Publishing

When Your Words Mean Business

Copyright © 2023 by Shari Alexander

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law.

Published by Elevated í, LLC

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition: June, 2023

To My Parents. Always.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

7

Introduction

11

When You Want More Candid Conversations...

14

When You're Networking at Events...

17

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

20

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

23

When You Handle Objections...

26

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

29

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

32

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

34

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

37

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

40

When You Want More Negotiating Room...

43

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

45

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

48

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

51

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

53

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

55

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

57

When You Want to Talk Yourself Up...

60

Conclusion

62

About the Author

63

When Your Words Mean Business

Introduction

My career has been rooted by one central fascination - the power of words. In high school, I was that nerdy kid who would go to the park and sit by herself reading Shakespeare. Not for school. Just some me time.

It feels like a small miracle that I've been fortunate enough to have built a lifelong career out of helping industry thought leaders solve communication puzzles and resolve interesting challenges with wisely chosen words.

From day one, I've been behind-the-scenes coaching, wordsmithing, and occasionally ghostwriting speeches, pitches, keynotes, product demos, articles, books, and marketing campaigns - all ensuring that my clients' words mean business.

Most of the time, I'm translating and transforming someone's expertise into a message that catches the attention of their target audience, provides valuable information, and initiates sales conversations.

And now that I see my 20th anniversary in business not far around the corner, I've grown to consider many communication strategies to be "persuading with a net."

For example, when I'm leading a workshop or delivering a keynote, I have many "safety nets" around my message. I've had time to plan my remarks, I can have notes if I need them, there might be a slide deck accompanying me (which is something else I've also had time to consider and prepare). On top of that, unspoken social agreements provide further safety nets for speakers. Audiences will politely listen to full remarks, participate when asked to, and, heck!, they'll even applaud at the end, too! All of those things happen - at varying degrees of

enthusiasm - for just about any speaker. (And if they don't, it means that either something's went terribly wrong or you chose a very tough crowd.)

The same sentiment of "persuading with a net" applies to marketing campaigns and sales funnels. Words are deliberated over by at least one person - in some circumstances, a whole committee of people.

When it comes to most persuasive opportunities, I can do a lot of the heavy lifting for my clients.

But conversations are different.

No one can be in the middle of a conversation and say, "Hm, interesting point you bring up. Give me a moment to deliberate on that, create a slide deck, and return with my remarks on the subject. Back in a jiff!" Nope. In conversations, you need to be on top of your game. You need to be engaged, intentional, and empathic. So, if there's any time I feel most like a sports coach, nervously sitting on the sidelines and watching the athletes put the work to work, it's when one of my clients has an upcoming make-or-break conversation I'm helping them prepare for.

Whether it's to land a sale of exceptional size, sitting down with potential investors, or having potentially difficult conversation with an employee, conversations are persuading *without* a net.

It's just you. May the odds be ever in your favor.

Writing my first book on conversational influence has been tricky for that very reason. To be a positive influence in conversations, context is everything. Plus, the messenger matters. Your particular communication strengths and weaknesses are going to be wildly different from those of your next door neighbors', for instance. So how on earth was I going to write a book on conversational influence when I'm not privy to your particular context?

What you're reading is the solution I went with.

Inside these pages is a quick-reference conversations field guide - choose-your-own-adventure-style.

How to Read This Book

You're more than welcome to read this cover to cover, but you certainly don't have to.

Each chapter is entitled with common conversational situations and goals. When you find yourself in one of the described situations, hop over to that chapter and find helpful phrases that will enhance your influence.

Within each chapter, you'll also find a series of scenes that most people-driven professionals find themselves encountering. Following is a bulleted list of phrases from which you can choose from, along with some recommended dos and don'ts when utilizing the influential techniques and principles covered in the chapter.

This book is a curated collection of some of my favorite conversational phrases that my clients, my mentors, and I have found to be clutch in our careers.

Lastly, the end of each chapter offers a list of "Complementary Chapters" so that you can hop around the lessons and craft your personal strategy for all your future conversations.

In addition to giving a boost to your persuasiveness skills, my intention is that these phrases will also help you navigate an array of conversations with clarity, kindness, and connection, too.

The lessons in this book can be the beginnings of creating your personalized conversation roadmaps and hopefully, ultimately, help you find your influential voice.

Happy Adventuring Out There!

Shari Alexander

Honored to Be Your Communication Coach

When You Want More Candid Conversations...

Inside a busy and bright cafe in Los Angeles, two people sit across from each other. One is the second generation owner of a family business. The other is a consultant who helps small businesses, specifically family-owned small businesses.

The atmosphere of the cafe is filled with friendly chatter, but there's a distance, a hesitation at this table of two. Both are professional and polite, but the business owner is cautious. He knows that he and his business need help. Family dynamics have complicated an already fragile culture and it's starting to affect quality of work and customer satisfaction. Even though he sees how his business stands at a precipice, he's unsure of how much to reveal about these current challenges. He feels vulnerable because, like most entrepreneurs, his business is also personal.

Sitting on the other side, the consultant is patient. She's empathetic to these leadership and communication struggles. Before she can help him, he has to trust her first. Peppering him with questions will only feel like an interrogation. And so, she pivots and does something interesting.

"When you mentioned the tension among your family and employees, it reminds me of when I asked my sister for some administration help with my consulting business. Things got so busy with my work that I felt like I could barely keep my head above water. My sister, being the generous and highly organized person that she is, kindly offered to help with some back office needs. She saved my hide.

But, about nine months later, things had built up and it had taken a toll on our relationship. In hindsight, I learned that the strain between us stemmed from our lack of clarity in communicating expectations. Now, the good news is that, even though it took a few difficult conversations over several glasses of wine, we found solutions that worked for both the business and, more importantly, our

relationship. I have no doubt that we can accomplish the same result for you and your business. It's just going to take some time, clarity, and little bit of bravery."

Her coffee companion is visibly put at ease. He's comforted to know that he and his family are not the first people to make these kinds of mistakes. With some hope restored, he opens up. Her questions are now met with more candid responses as their conversation blends into the buzz of the busy cafe.

The Power Of Sharing, Instead of Asking

In Latin, 'quid pro quo' means 'something for something.' Quid pro quo is a societal (and sometimes subconscious) understanding that a favor is returned with a favor. In the context of our café scenario, it takes on a subtler form. It is not a transaction of tangible goods or explicit favors, but rather an exchange of trust, understanding, and openness.

Consider the last time someone shared a personal anecdote with you. Chances are, you felt inclined to respond with a story of your own. This is conversational quid pro quo. Reciprocity in action.

Consultative sales inherently involves asking potential clients a series of questions that help you match the right solution to any particular problem. But, if not done delicately, the onslaught of questions can feel like an interrogation, making answers more guarded. Quid pro quo is a way to bring balance to the conversation. It can steer conversations towards a path of openness and trust, encouraging the sharing of vital information without making one feel overpowered and another overly vulnerable.

Quid Pro Quo Phrases and Examples

You start using quid pro quo in conversations by sharing an anecdote, an experience, or a piece of information that is relevant to the conversation and in some way mirrors the listener and their situation. The aim is to create an environment of trust, to show the listener that you're willing to be open with them.

Here are a few phrases that you can use to introduce your own experiences or information into the conversation:

- "That reminds me of when..."
- "I had a similar experience where..."
- "I worked with a client who had a similar challenge..."

- "I have a friend who told me about his experience with a similar situation..."

Do:

Be Relevant. Share information and stories that are relevant to the conversation. Try to reflect back similar circumstances, people, or emotions.

Be Brief. Once you've shared, give the other person a chance to respond. Avoid monopolizing the conversation with stories.

Be Genuine. Share real experiences and genuine insights.

Don't:

Overdo It. This isn't the time to make the conversation about you - or even your services and solutions. Quid pro quo is an invitation for the other person to mirror your openness.

Expect Immediate Reciprocity. Give the other person time to process the information and respond in their own time. It might not even reciprocate until your next conversation.

Share Sensitive Information. Be mindful of the information you share. Don't share other's confidential or sensitive information.

Complementary Chapters...

When You're Networking at Events...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You're Networking at Events...

We've all been there: an industry conference, a networking event, a convention - all with the potential for connecting with new clients or maybe even meeting a new friend or two. But at these events, even though everyone is kind and well-intentioned, conversations are repetitive and unfortunately verge on boring. "What do you do?" "Where did you come in from today?" "How are you liking the conference?"

By lunchtime, you and your fellow attendees only half-engage with auto-pilot responses to the same questions, giving the same answers. Multiply that experience by hundreds of people over a 3-day event, and it's easy to see how industry events leave behind so many missed opportunities. Meaningful conversations and connections are seemingly hard to come by.

But Phil takes a different approach to these situations. A light-hearted home-services business owner and a seasoned networker, Phil knows how to cut through the humdrum of these encounters. Even though his 6'4" frame can be intimidating, his easy-going smile makes him easy to engage with. And if you ever met Phil at one of these events, he'll skip right past the typical "hi's and how are you's" and instead ask, "What part of your job would you still do even if you won the lottery?" or "In your line of work, what's something you look forward to each week?"

By doing so, Phil eliminates the potential for surface-level conversations and boring events. Even better, people remember Phil because of it.

Novelty Focuses Attention: Disrupt the Pattern to Elicit Genuine Interactions

The human mind is a pattern-seeking machine. Pattern recognition expedites our ability to solve problems and puzzles - both big and small. However, the yin to our pattern-recognition yang is our tendency to fall into automatic, half-present behaviors and responses. Industry chit-chat being a quintessential example.

However, any disruptions or interruptions to these patterns also become instantly intriguing - a new puzzle for the mind to solve. Conversational pattern interrupts - saying something just outside of the ordinary - can quickly capture someone's attention, get them curious, and be an invitation to a genuine interaction. When used well, pattern interrupts will elicit a slight chuckle from most people, a sign that, for the moment, they've snapped out of autopilot.

Pattern interrupts are also a wonderful way of demonstrating your interest in another person as an individual, rather than just a job title on a name tag.

Example Phrases for Pattern Interrupts:

- "In your job, what's one thing you wish more people understood?"
- "Tell me about a moment in your career that you're really proud of."
- "I'd love to hear about an 'a-ha!' moment you've recently had. Or even something that made you laugh recently."
- "What's a goal you're excited about right now?"
- "In your work, what's something you look forward to each week?"
- "What's a common misconception people have about your line of work?"

These phrases aren't your standard networking fare. They demonstrate interest and curiosity. They show that you're not just there to make a sale or get a referral – you're there to connect.

DO:

Stay professional and respectful. Your goal is to be interesting, not inappropriate.

Tailor your tone. Be in sync with the person and the environment.

Actively listen to the responses. An unconventional question deserves full attention to the answer.

Be ok to transition away. Feel comfortable to go back to a more traditional conversation if the other person seems taken aback.

DON'T:

Push. Don't be too persistent if the other person seems uncomfortable or not interested.

Be invasive. Avoid sensitive or personal topics. Stick to questions that respect boundaries and maintain professionalism.

Dominate the conversation. After asking your question, allow them to speak and show genuine interest in their response.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want More Negotiating Room...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

Colter sits in his office, a dual monitor setup hovering over his desk. On one screen he has his meeting notes, slide deck, and his cyber security software's live demo ready. On the other screen, five executives who will determine if his product will be implemented across their locations nationwide.

Discovery calls used to take at least 2-3 hours. Now, Colter has it down to a cool 45 minutes.

“The problem-assessment part of the conversation always took the most amount of time. We'd start with general organizational issues and goals, then would drill down and discuss the specifics. It was a lengthy process.”

These days Colter has found a seamless and organic way to expedite his discovery calls, without sacrificing his ability to match the right solutions to a bank's particular challenges.

“I simply say on the call that, when it comes to the problems we solve, there are essentially 3 types of companies- 1) those that want to do just enough to please regulators, 2) those that want to take ultimate security measures, and 3) those that are somewhere in between. Then the committee on the call can quickly self-selects which option sounds most like them and I'm able to adjust the sales conversation right away to match those needs and expectations.

“As soon as they select the option that's most like them, it's pretty much smooth sailing from there.”

Colter's secret conversational tool here is the simple technique known as: The Bucket Technique.

Simplify Choices, Improve Understanding

The principle behind the Bucket Technique is rooted in the understanding that people tend to become overwhelmed when faced with too many options. By categorizing options into clearly defined groups, or "buckets", we can help our conversation partner more easily process and evaluate their choices.

For discovery calls, the Bucket Technique works by offering your conversation partner a limited number of broad categories that their problems or needs could fall into. By inviting them to choose the category that resonates most with their situation, you're framing the conversation, simplifying their thought process, and making it easier to guide them towards the best solution.

Bucket Technique Phrases and Examples

- "In my experience, clients usually fall into one of three categories when it comes to this issue..."
- "Which one of these descriptions best matches your situation...?"
- "Let me know which one of these resonates with you the most..."
- "Based on what you've told me so far, I think we can categorize your needs into three areas..."

Do:

Limit the choices. Stick to three categories - too many options will overwhelm the listener.

Be specific and brief. Clear, concise descriptions help listeners identify with a category.

Tell a story. Include specific challenges and goals in each description to make each category more relatable.

Observe and listen. Pay attention to their reactions and responses to understand what aspects of the descriptions resonate most.

Use Labels. When relevant, use simple labels or even fun titles for each option, which becomes a shorthand for referring to their particular problem and potential solutions.

Be Flexible. It's ok if your prospect identifies with a blend of two options. That's still helpful information that invites further conversation and collaboration.

Don't:

Overcomplicate. Avoid giving overly detailed descriptions that turn the conversation into a monologue.

Pressure the listener. Don't force a decision or rush the listener. Give them time to process the information.

Neglect the follow-up. After the listener has chosen a bucket, make sure to delve deeper into why they chose it. This will provide you with more insight into their needs and challenges.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

Sitting across from Victoria's desk in her 25th floor corner office is her new executive coach. Victoria's company, a multinational energy company based in Houston, has high hopes for her career - grooming her to one day become COO. Part of this masterplan is providing her with an executive coach to help level up her communication skills - specifically when presenting to stakeholders. Victoria's skills certainly aren't lacking, but there's room for polishing. And that's why her new executive coach, a petite woman with wild, curly hair and an impressive track record, is now sitting in her office.

The coach isn't surprised by Victoria's nervousness. Her boss signed her up for this comprehensive six-month program, but she's not entirely sure what to expect. And a lot is on the line.

Since the coach is no stranger to this post-decision apprehension, she says, "It's pretty common that at this point new clients feel a mix of excitement and uncertainty. It's quite normal. I've found it most helpful to start by talking through your vision and the challenges you'd like to resolve when it comes to these stakeholder meetings."

At that moment, Victoria's anxieties drop by a few notches. She has a better sense of her coach's experience and expertise.

Trusting The Tribe

Our human tribal instincts tell us to **go with the group**. And so, providing "social proof" comes in handy when you want to lead others towards a preferred direction. Robert Cialdini coined the term "social proof" in his book **Influence**. And since then, most people are familiar with social proof being utilized in ways like:

- Testimonials on promotional materials

- Listing the number of customers/users/subscribers that have bought a product or service
- Showcasing company logos of current clients or media outlets a brand has been featured in

But of course, it would be quite awkward and potentially braggadocious to quote testimonials and list media outlets in casual conversation. Thankfully, there are a few phrases that can help you seamlessly slip social proof into conversations in ways that can be just as effective in communicating your experience and expertise.

Applying Social Proof in Conversations

- “Typically,....”
- “In my experience...”
- "I've seen a number of businesses at your stage exploring the same options..."
- "Just last week, I was discussing a similar challenge with a colleague, and we concluded that..."
- "Several of my peers would agree that..."
- “The industry consensus is that...”
- "Most people in your position are thinking about..."
- “You’re not alone in this. It’s common for a company of your size to face...”
- “Some of the most successful clients I’ve coached have utilized...”

Do:

Share Relevant Experiences: Relate to their situation with experiences from similar scenarios or clients.

Be Specific: Whenever possible, provide specific details that support your point. The more concrete your social proof, the more effective it will be.

Maintain Confidentiality: Be mindful of maintaining the privacy of your clients or colleagues when sharing previous experiences or industry insights.

Balance Humility with Authority: Even while you're using these phrases to establish authority, remember to maintain a humble and open attitude. You're sharing your experiences and knowledge, not boasting about them.

Be Empathetic: Express understanding and empathy when you're using social proof.

Don't:

Avoid Overuse: Although these phrases are powerful, don't overuse them. It can make the conversation seem one-sided and diminish the uniqueness of the listener's situation.

Stay Clear of Overstatements: Avoid exaggerating or making sweeping statements. Your social proof should be credible and realistic.

Don't Be Arrogant: Avoid coming off as braggy or making it sound like you're name-dropping. The goal is to build trust, not to impress.

Don't Neglect the Listener's Perspective: While sharing your experiences, make sure to validate the listener's feelings or viewpoints. They should feel heard and respected throughout the conversation.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Handle Objections...

In a modern and dimly lit boardroom, a culture consultant has just finished a presentation covering his company's services, assessment tools, and training programs. He stands before an executive team that will determine if his services can resolve their pervasive culture of friction and miscommunication that's currently plaguing the organization. The floor is now open for questions and comments.

The Chief Operating Officer leans forward. "While I appreciate your thorough presentation, I have concerns about the potential disruptions this change might bring. Introducing such sweeping measures could cut down our productivity company-wide."

All eyes dart back to the consultant. "That's a very valid concern," he responds, "and one that I've encountered quite often in my experience. It's natural to worry about the short-term disruptions that changes like these might cause. However, I've found that such disruptions are typically much smaller than expected, especially when managed correctly.

"What's more, the positive long-term effects are substantial. My team and I take a very strategic and hands-on approach to guide these transitions smoothly. We ensure that there's strong communication throughout all levels of the organization and that each phase of the plan aligns with your operational goals.

"Remember, our ultimate aim is to boost not just productivity, but also job satisfaction, employee retention, and your bottom line. In previous implementations, most clients have reported a notable increase in their overall efficiency, and a significant improvement in their work culture within the first few months."

A sense of relief spreads across the room, followed by nods of approval from a few executives. The consultant has successfully addressed the objection, easing their concerns while subtly demonstrating his expertise and experience. The conversation continues, this time with a newfound sense of optimism for the potential partnership.

Embrace Objections as Opportunities

Objections and pushbacks are a normal occurrence and shouldn't be viewed as obstacles to your desired results, but instead as opportunities. Every objection is a window into what your prospect is concerned with, and therefore what they value.

You can easily avoid becoming defensive towards objections with the phrases outlined below. Each acknowledges and validates the concerns expressed, while also opening a door to showcase the features of your product or service that address those concerns specifically. These phrases work to transform perceived problems into tailored solutions, shifting the conversation from conflict to collaboration

Handling Objections Phrases and Examples

Incorporating some strategic phrases can help you navigate objections effectively during a conversation. Here are some examples that can demonstrate your understanding, maintain the connection, and refocus the conversation towards solutions:

- "That's a very valid concern. It's one that others have shared in the past and here's how we've addressed it..."
- "You're right to bring that up. When we faced a similar issue with another client, this is what we did..."
- "It's natural to have apprehensions. My best performing clients have found these parts of our program particularly helpful. ..."
- "I can see why you might think that. Let me clarify how we manage this aspect..."
- "I appreciate your honesty and raising this point. It allows us to discuss how our process works in relation to..."

Do:

Acknowledge their concern. Validating their worries shows empathy, understanding, and respect for their perspective.

Stay calm and confident. Maintain your composure, your attitude and demeanor can help them feel even more secure in your response.

Clarify if needed. If the objection isn't clear, ask probing questions to get more details. It shows you're interested in understanding their viewpoint fully.

Provide evidence. Back up your claims with data or examples whenever possible. This can help convince your audience.

Don't:

Get defensive. Remember, objections are not about you but about a specific concern or query. There's nothing to get defensive about when you view objections as opportunities.

Overpromise. Ensure your reassurances are backed by facts and achievable outcomes.

Ignore. Don't sidestep an objection, even if it seems trivial. Addressing it properly shows you're taking the other person seriously.

Interrupt and rush. Give them time to express their concerns fully before you respond.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

The last time Carlos had his one-on-one meeting with Tim, he shared his request that Tim “speak up a bit more” on team Zoom calls. To which mild-mannered Tim responded with a respectful nod of agreement. Earlier in the week, the team was once again meeting on Zoom, and Tim was still being his shy self.

Carlos is determined to help Tim come out of his shell. And so, Carlos tried the simple technique that his coach taught him. This time, during their one-on-one call, Carlos repeats the request, but with one important addition. "I'd appreciate hearing from you more on our calls," he begins and then adds, "because your questions and pushback help me and the group strengthen our ideas." This time, there was a glint of a deeper understanding from Tim.

On their next team call, Tim briefly expressed a hesitancy towards a proposed solution that led to a dynamic conversation and an improved solution.

Why did Carlos's second request have more of an impact? Impressively, it was just one word. Because.

Just Because: The Power of Explanation

In 1977, psychologist Ellen Langer ran the famous “Xerox study,” which demonstrated that people were more likely to let someone cut in line to use a copier if they used "because" followed by a reason, even if the reason was obvious or unnecessary.

In Carlos's situation, the use of "because" highlighted the value Tim brought to the team, which was probably a stronger motivator for him than the original, more generic request. It transformed a vague directive into a meaningful appeal, acknowledging Tim's unique contribution and showing him how his increased participation could directly lead to positive outcomes.

Adding "because" to your requests doesn't just make you more persuasive. It encourages you to think deeply about why you're making the request in the first place, ensuring that it aligns with your goals and values. As a result, you become more intentional, your requests more purposeful, and your conversations more impactful.

Requests Using 'Because'

Practice making requests with 'because' followed by a clear, substantive reason. Here are some phrases following this structure:

- "I think we should adjust the project timeline, because it will give us a better opportunity to incorporate client feedback."
- "I recommend we consider this other vendor because their expertise more closely aligns with our industry and needs."
- "I'd like us to discuss delegating more tasks to your team, because it would allow you to focus on the strategic aspects of the project"
- "Can you review this report by tomorrow, because I'd like to include your feedback in my presentation to the executive team."

Do:

Clarify your reasoning. 'Because' provides an opportunity to explain your thought process. This can make your intentions clear and prevent any misunderstandings.

Apply it to motivate others. By explaining the benefits or positive outcomes of your request, you can use 'because' to motivate others to act. Make sure that the reasoning provided aligns with their goals or interests.

Be honest and transparent. Don't use 'because' to manipulate. Your reasons should be genuine and truthful.

Don't:

Overuse it. While 'because' is a powerful tool, it can lose its effectiveness if overused. Use it judiciously to maintain its impact.

Use it to justify unreasonable requests. 'Because' should not be used to pressure someone into fulfilling an unreasonable request. Ensure your requests are fair and justifiable.

Use it to avoid responsibility. Do not use 'because' as an excuse for your actions or decisions. It's important to take responsibility and not hide behind the word.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Talk Yourself Up...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

The heart of downtown Chicago paints the backdrop of Lauren's medical spa. She's growing her practice and interviewing consultants who could help her expand the business to multiple locations. Today's meeting is with Susie, an operations expert who could help create scalable standard operating procedures for the different departments and roles within Lauren's business model. Susie, an expert project manager, is no stranger to benchmarking KPIs and project milestones. So it should be no surprise that she begins her consultations by benchmarking her clients' expectations, previous experiences, and priorities in their first conversation.

Drawing the Line: The Power of Comparisons

Comparisons are invisible yet powerful yardsticks. They shape our choices, set our expectations, and influence our satisfaction levels. Understanding this phenomenon can put you in the driver's seat for plenty of professional settings.

By learning about a person's or company's prior experiences, what they're prioritizing, and how they have tried to address certain issues in the past, you position yourself not just as a solution provider, but as a partner who understands their journey. Through this process, you can learn what benchmarks are shaping their perceptions of problems and potential solutions.

Phrases for Gauging Benchmarks

- "What's been your experience with..."
- "What makes this a priority right now?"
- "What does a successful partnership look like?"
- "How have you tried to address this in the past?"
- "In terms of timeline, what are your expectations for seeing noticeable results?"

Do:

Ask open-ended questions. Encourage dialogue that enables them to provide detailed responses.

Listen actively. Pay attention to not just what is being said but also the feelings and attitudes behind the words.

Do validate their experiences. Acknowledge their experiences, the strategies they've employed, and their perceptions of what did and didn't work.

Don't:

Rush the Conversation. Give them time to articulate their thoughts and feelings. Also, don't rush to provide solutions before fully understanding their specific context and needs.

Criticize past decisions or experiences. Your role is to learn, understand, and propose improvements, not to pass judgment.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want More Negotiating Room...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get On the Same Page...

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

The decision had been made. Sharron was starting her coaching business. Her first task to demonstrate this leap of faith? Branding. And that's why she's meeting over Zoom with Joey. Today is the big reveal, his first pass at possible logos for her business. She feels electrified with excitement and nervousness.

"Before we dive into the designs," Joey said to kick-off the presentation of the designs. "I want you to know how this typically goes.

"First, it's common for clients, whether they realize it or not, to hope there will be this magic moment of *'That's the one!'* when they look at the first round of designs. If that happens, great. But it's not a big deal if not.

"More importantly, even if that magic moment does happen, I still want you to sit with the designs for a few days. Look at the designs multiple times each day. Show them to a few people you trust and whose opinions you respect. Some clients end up sticking with their favorite pick from our first call, and some end up changing their minds after they have time to further consider. Either way, this is just the first step in the creative process. We have 2 more rounds of revisions if we need them. Sound good?"

"Sounds great!," she replied. At that moment, Sharon also made a mental note of what Joey just did. He masterfully just set out a beautiful roadmap of their process together even before they started. By calling out the little hope in the back of her mind that, yes, she did indeed secretly wish for that magic moment on this call, Joey not only demonstrated his expertise and experience, but she also felt reassured about what lies ahead.

Flash forward through the week following their call, and what did Sharon do? She followed the roadmap. She looked at her designs multiple times a day, got

the feedback from a few trusted sources, and returned to their next call fully confident in her decision and the revisions she'd like to request.

What a fantastic example to learn at the start of Sharon's business!

Nurturing Confidence with Framing

Framing is a way to set the stage. To lay out the path ahead. And framing in the way Joey did on the call also subtly positions you as a seasoned guide who has successfully navigated this path many times before.

Joey was well aware of the common insecurities, hopes, and anxieties that his clients might feel at each step of his process. He knew that by addressing these feelings upfront, he would be able to steer the process in a more productive direction and enable his clients to feel more assured in their decisions.

Most professionals overlook this step, skipping it entirely. Why? Because they've internalized their process. They know what lies ahead, and they forget to communicate that to their clients. You can gain more trust and confidence anytime you are able to "give them a heads up" to what lies ahead.

Phrases for Setting Frames

- "Before we begin, let me walk you through the process..."
- "I want to set the right expectations upfront..."
- "Just so you know, here's how we typically proceed..."
- "It's completely normal if initially, you feel... But remember that..."
- "Here's typically how things unfold..."

Do:

Provide a roadmap. Include the potential (and emotional) ups and downs of the process. This demonstrates that you've "seen it all" and won't be phased if there's an obstacle in the future.

Address common concerns. Acknowledge the feelings that your counterpart might be experiencing and assure them that it's normal and expected.

Be present. Even if you have been in this situation before, remember, it's likely the first time for your client or team member.

Don't:

Assume they know the process. Never take for granted that the other person knows what to expect.

Minimize their concerns. Always validate their feelings and assure them that you're there to help guide them through the process.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

In a bright conference room of a luxury hotel in Phoenix, Ben is standing on stage in front of 170 budding entrepreneurs. For the past day and a half, Ben, along with a few chosen experts, have been immersing the audience in the “must-knows” and “must-have” of starting a business. The educational content has ranged from marketing essentials and customer acquisition, to bookkeeping and smart hiring practices. The audience has been taking notes, asking questions, and getting excited for their next entrepreneurial steps.

As they approach the end of the second day, Ben offers an invitation to the group.

Ben is well-known in the industry for owning a reputable franchise in the home development space. He and his business partner have built a small empire with a garage floor refinishing company. And now he’s sharing some of the behind the scenes of his business model. After just a few not-so-humble brags, the audience is even more impressed by Ben’s skills and knowledge.

While Ben outlines the steps for becoming a franchise owner within the garage reflooring business, he admits a few potential downsides to making that decision. “Look, straight talk with you guys, this is not the right fit for everyone. I need you to know this up front. We do everything we can to set you up for success as a new franchise. From marketing materials, operational manuals, training, coaching, and learning from other franchise owners. But that doesn’t mean it’s going to be easy. I’m not promising rainbows and unicorns up here. I’m talking business. A real business with real work and real successes. And for those who this is a match for, this literally can be a life-changing experience.”

The energy in the room lit up. And days after the event, Ben was having consulting calls with a handful of qualified professionals motivated to join him for their entrepreneurial journey.

The Power of Strategic Admission

Strategic admissions involve openly acknowledging a possible drawback or challenge about what you're offering. You might think admitting to a potential negative aspect could deter someone from hiring you or working with you. However, when done correctly, it can enhance your credibility and build trust.

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. No solution is perfect. And being honest about imperfections allows your potential clients and employees to not only make informed decisions, but they're also less likely to be surprised or resentful when those imperfections show up. Instead they'll be prepared and willing to weather a few small storms for the results they want to achieve.

Phrases for Strategic Admissions

- "It's important to note that..."
- "I want to be honest with you about..."
- "In the spirit of full transparency..."
- "I must admit that..."
- "It's worth acknowledging that..."

Do:

Be honest. Authenticity is crucial when you're making a strategic admission.

Remain positive. While acknowledging a challenge, also remind the person you're talking to about the benefits they stand to gain.

Attract the Right Fit. Strategic admissions are a great tool for drawing in the right clients and employees, while dissuading the rest.

Don't:

Dwell. Strategic admissions should remain simple and straightforward.

Dismiss concerns. If they have further questions, address them directly.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations...

When You're Networking at Events...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

Within a newly opened, mahogany-lined bar in downtown Denver, Haru and Jack are catching up on old times. Haru is in town for a business trip and getting to see Jack, his former boss from when he worked in the U.S., is a real treat. It's only been 18 months since Haru decided to pursue a career in executive coaching. Thankfully, things are going well, but he also knows that this is just the beginning. He's going to need a handful of trusted advisors on this journey, and Jack is at the top of his list.

"I've always appreciated your straightforwardness with me," Haru says, "Even if it was intimidating at first."

"I call it like I see it," Jack replies. One of his favorite phrases. "And I'll tell you something else, Haru. I'm really proud of you and what you've accomplished so far. You're going to do great things."

"Thank you, Jack. That means a lot to me. And, to be honest, I was hoping that I might be able to call you once in a while to get your cut-to-the-chase perspective on things when I find myself in need of some trusted insight and advice. I promise not to abuse the privilege. It would just mean a lot to know that I have you in my corner."

Jack slaps Haru on the shoulder and says, "You know you didn't need to ask permission for that. And, yes, absolutely. I'm here anytime you need a swift kick to the butt."

They enjoy another round of drinks and laughs before calling it a night.

And a few months later when Haru calls, Jack knows exactly the kind of advice he's seeking.

Meeting Expectations

The expectancy effect is a psychological phenomenon suggesting that when we have positive expectations about someone's behavior or abilities, they are more likely to fulfill those expectations. By acknowledging and appreciating specific qualities in individuals, we can effectively encourage the development and manifestation of those characteristics.

When you genuinely recognize and value a particular trait in someone, it signals to them that this quality is valuable and desirable. This subtle form of encouragement can motivate individuals to embrace and enhance that aspect within themselves. By highlighting the positive impact of the desired characteristic and expressing appreciation for it, you reinforce its value and encourage its continued presence.

In Haru's case, he's setting the tone for future advisory calls with his good friend and mentor. But, using some of the suggested phrases below, you can also set the tone and subtle expectations for meetings, conversations, and speeches, too.

Phrases for Encouraging Characteristics:

- "I'm looking forward to a fun and creative brainstorm session today."
- "It's a pleasure meeting you. [NAME] said you [INSERT CHARACTERISTIC]."
- "I understand you have a reputation for quality customer service."
- "I'm hoping I can call upon your attention to detail to help me sort through this."

Do:

Be in alignment. Mention qualities that the other person truly identifies with.

Genuinely appreciate. Highlight the positive impact and importance of the desired characteristic in relevant contexts.

Keep it simple. No need to go on-and-on when using the expectancy effect. A simple mention often does wonders.

Don't:

Overuse or exaggerate. Any hint of insincerity can backfire.

Pressure. Pushing too hard might cause defensiveness.

Be a hypocrite. Your actions need to be in alignment with your requests, too.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You're Networking at Events...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers (and Employees)...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want More Negotiating Room...

Within an Italian restaurant in Oklahoma City at a Dean Martin-style half-moon booth sits Jim, professional speaker, New York Times Bestselling author, and Emmy Award winning producer. Across from him is me, a person fortunate enough to call him friend and mentor.

“I like the idea of this phrase book,” as we sip on our customary post-dinner Port. (In addition to the many teachings I’ve received from him, high up on my gratitude list is that he introduced me to Ports.) “I’ll tell you one of the phrases I learned from someone at the National Speakers Association. ‘Up to what?’ There’s no doubt in my mind that that one phrase has added millions to my speaking business.”

Maximizing Potential

Business budgets can often be on a sliding scale. The world of professional speaking is no different. In the early stages of conversations between meeting planner and speaker, a top question on the speaker’s mind is ***‘what’s your budget?’*** and a top question on the meeting planner’s mind is ***‘what’s your fee?’***

Jim, along with other savvy speakers, takes control of the conversation by asking his top question first. “What’s your budget for this event?” and immediately after the meeting planner’s response, then casually and directly following with, “Hmm hmm, up to what?”

Anecdotally, I’ve been told that this one question increases the negotiation range about 50% of the time.

The Outlier of This Book

This is the one phrase in this book that, in my opinion, doesn’t have any counterparts. Its power lies in its simplicity and curtness.

Do:

Ask the question, and shut up. In many ways, this is a power move. Any words after the question diminishes that power.

Keep it casual. A laissez-faire attitude will serve you well here. A smile when you ask might not hurt either.

Don't:

Be confrontational. It's only 3 words, so tone plays a big role here.

Push too hard. Be respectful of the other's position and boundaries.

Neglect your value. Remember the value you and your services bring.

Complementary Chapter...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

The gentle hum of her computer fan, a few clicks of a mouse, and the blue glow of a Zoom call. Kim has been discussing her struggles of her new remote work lifestyle. She has dreaded this conversation with her manager because she's been afraid of how she might be perceived. Remote work is a lot of people's dream situation, including hers. Which is why she was surprised at how the physical distance has led to feelings of disconnection, and at times, a drop in her productivity. Kelly had always been a high performer, reliable and dedicated. The shift to remote work, initially an exciting change, has been a cause of growing distress.

After she said her piece, her heart raced as she waited for her manager's response.

"If I'm understanding you correctly, Kim, it sounds like..." followed by a succinct and empathetic summary of her statements. Kim's heart rate immediately calmed down. She felt heard and understood by her manager. And, together, they outlined some steps to try out to see if they could help Kim in regaining some connection and bring back some flow to her work.

The Power of Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing serves two main purposes. First, it allows you to check your understanding, ensuring you've truly grasped the speaker's meaning. Second, it demonstrates empathy and attentiveness to the speaker, making them feel heard and respected. Paraphrasing can be particularly helpful in plenty of professional situations: from difficult conversations to consultative sales to meeting wrap-ups.

Phrases to Demonstrate Understanding

- "If I'm understanding you correctly,..."

- "Just out of curiosity..."
- "It sounds like you're saying..."
- "Let me make sure I've got this right..."
- "I'm curious about..."
- "Correct me if I'm wrong. What I'm hearing is..."

Do:

Listen actively. This means not only hearing the words that another person is saying but paying attention to how they say it.

Seek clarification. If you're not sure you've understood correctly, ask for clarification. It's better to ask than to assume and risk misunderstanding.

Reflect emotions. When paraphrasing, it's not just about the factual content. Reflecting the emotions you perceive can show empathy and understanding.

Don't:

Interrupt. Allow the speaker to finish their thought before you try to paraphrase.

Assume. Don't fill in gaps in what the person has said with your own assumptions or interpretations.

Parrot. Paraphrasing isn't just repeating the exact words the other person used. Try to put it into your own words to show you've genuinely understood.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

Amidst the calm of the Texas Hill Country, Maya, the founder of a med-tech startup, is leading her company's executive retreat on envisioning how they plan to transform telemedicine.

The team is enthusiastic and determined, but Maya feels like they're not thinking big enough. She wants to explore the full potential of the company. Her belief is that it is easier to prune a big idea than try to grow a small one. But right now, everyone is still playing it safe.

She sees that they need permission to play. To let their minds momentarily expand beyond "realistic expectations." So, to help with that, she sprinkles in phrases like, "If you could waive a magic wand, what would that ideally look like?" and "Assuming we are able to cross that bridge, what would happen next?"

In no time, the group opens up and the ideas get better.

Guided Visualization

In our fast-paced world of efficient productivity, few people feel like they have the time, or the permission, to play with their ideas. To think big. To imagine their ideal scenario. Instead, it is heads down and push forward for just about everyone. So, there might be times when you're tasked to draw out those ideal scenarios for someone, whether it's at a company retreat like Maya or 1-on-1 with a valued client. Sometimes one's wish-to-haves take a little more encouragement to get expressed than the typical nice-to-haves.

Phrases to Ignite the Imagination

- "Imagine..."
- "Let's dream for a moment and suppose that..."

- “If you could waive a magic wand, what would change?”
- “Assuming we’re able to cross that bridge...”
- “What would your future self hope that you’d accomplish?”
- “Walk me through your perfect scenario. What would that look like?”

Do:

Set the scene. Your choice of words can greatly impact the creative atmosphere. Use language that invites exploration and free thinking, while setting a positive and encouraging tone.

Encourage expansion. Reinforce the value of expansive thinking. Sometimes the wildest ideas can lead to the most innovative (or even simple) solutions.

Maintain an open mind. Stay receptive and open, it will inspire confidence and creativity.

Honor what is shared. Even if an ideal outcome can’t be achieved, the idea can still be respected

Dig a little deeper. Typically, the point of this exercise isn’t to craft a perfect solution, but rather discover what’s truly important to someone and what they value.

Don't:

Rush the process. Creativity can't be rushed. Allow for ample time for someone to think and share their ideas.

Neglect to follow-up. After the brainstorming session, it's important to go through the ideas, discuss them further, and plan for the next steps when applicable. Igniting the imagination is just the first step in bringing those ideas to fruition.

Complementary Chapters:

When You’re Networking at Events...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

Amber, a respected thought leader in her industry, is leading an educational webinar on fintech trends to a group of bankers. After warmly welcoming everyone, she takes a breath, looks directly into her webcam, and says, "Since you signed up for today's program, I'm assuming that you are wanting to get the most out of fintech products without causing major disruptions throughout your organization. I'm also assuming you have a love/hate relationship with fintech in that it provides plenty of possibilities, but trying to keep up while doing your due diligence to also meet regulations has started to make your head spin. Her words carry through the virtual airwaves as her audience window fills with silent and affirming nods.

Setting the Stage

"Assumptive Framing," like in Amber's opening statements, can be a powerful tool. Stating your assumptions isn't just about putting your cards on the table, it's also a shortcut to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

Stating your assumptions about your audience can be a deft way to frame your presentation and set expectations, like in the example above. And when you use assumptive framing in conversations and small group meetings, it can also be an invitation for someone to correct any inaccurate assumptions, thereby furthering your understanding and strengthening your message.

Phrases for Assumptive Framing

- "I'm assuming that..."
- "My understanding is..."
- "I take it that..."
- "If I'm not mistaken..."

Do:

Be accurate. Missing the mark by too much might set you back and harm your chances of building a quick rapport.

Invite correction. Encourage the other party to correct you if your assumptions are inaccurate. This not only validates their perspective but also opens the door for further dialogue.

Don't:

Ignore the emotional side. Weaving in an empathetic description of one's experience demonstrates your deeper understanding

Be too specific. This isn't the moment for details (unless you're 100% sure that the details will apply to everyone). Focus on common experiences to the topic you're addressing.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You're Networking at Events...

When You Lead Discovery Calls...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want to Attract the Right Customers...

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Learn What Others Know...

Thomas, a seasoned landscaper, strolls through a buzzing home and garden show, a sea of vendor booths sprawling across the exhibit floor. Each booth has representatives standing by, ready to make an impression and show their latest products or services. As he approaches one of these booths, his eyes meet those of a young, eager fertilizer vendor. Thomas extends a hand and asks, "Mind if I take a closer look at your products?"

Thomas listens to the vendor as he goes through his spiel before he asks his next question. "So, I don't entirely understand how this compound differs from the other one. What are the best use cases for each?" Thomas knows a bit more than he's letting on. Rather than coming across as a know-it-all, he chooses to suss out the potential of using this company's products while the vendor feels like he's providing an education.

Being a Lifelong Learner

Thomas uses a communication technique known as 'Feigned Naiveté,' appearing less knowledgeable than you are to encourage others to share their expertise. By "playing dumb", you set the stage for others to showcase their knowledge and expertise. People tend to explain things in more depth and detail when they feel like they're helping, thereby providing you with valuable insights into their knowledge, skills, and experiences.

Phrases for Feigned Naiveté (And Actual Naiveté)

- "Could you help me understand, what's...?"
- "I'm not entirely sure I get that part. Walk me through it?"
- "I've always wondered about that. What's it like?"
- "This might be a basic question, but..."
- "I'd appreciate your help in understanding this. And I won't be offended if you explain it to me like I'm 5."

Do:

Be genuine. While the name suggests deceit, the intention isn't to trick someone but to encourage them to share their knowledge. Don't overdo it or come across as insincere.

Listen carefully. Use this opportunity to genuinely learn from the other person's expertise and perspective. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding, not just to make the other person talk.

Show gratitude. Always show appreciation for the information shared. Thank the person for taking the time to explain and share their knowledge.

Don't:

Belittle or mock the other person. Be mindful not to make the other person feel like they are being taken advantage of or mocked. Be respectful and courteous in your questioning.

Interrupt. Allow the person to fully explain without interruption. Cutting the person off mid-explanation can be off-putting and discourage open communication.

Be patronizing. It's a fine line between sounding genuinely interested and patronizing. Make sure your tone and body language communicate genuine interest and respect.

Complementary Chapters:

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You're Networking at Events...

When You Want to Gauge Someone's Benchmarks...

When You Want More Negotiating Room...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get on the Same Page...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

It had become a common scene. A tired screen illuminates Greg's home office. Him sitting in front of the computer well past midnight trying to push through and finish his never-ending to-do list. His days were filled with chimes from email notifications and text messages from clients, often requesting "small" but urgent requests. He remembers when he loved his work, but now things have gotten out of hand. He knows he's become too accessible to his clientele. Some new lines need to be drawn so that Greg can reclaim his evenings, and his life.

He hired a coach to help him create processes that would help prevent scope creep, along with crafting respectful responses to clients with over-reaching requests. It's been 6 months since he implemented his coach's advice.

It's been wonderful to have his evenings and weekends back

Advocating for Yourself

Having clear boundaries is crucial for maintaining a sustainable work-life balance. In the initial excitement of building working relationships, it's easy to become too available, potentially leading to burnout. The key to setting boundaries is to frame them in a positive light, focusing on improving service or work quality while maintaining high professional standards.

Phrases for Setting Boundaries

- "In order to serve you better, I've decided to..."
- "To ensure each task gets the attention it deserves..."
- "To maintain the quality of work you've come to expect..."
- "Moving forward, I will be..."
- "I appreciate your understanding as I implement these changes..."
- "These new guidelines will help me to..."

Do:

Be specific. Clearly communicate what the new boundaries are. Ambiguity may lead to misunderstanding or confusion.

Frame positively. When stating new boundaries, emphasize the benefits that the change will bring to the clients.

Appreciate. Show recognition for the understanding and cooperation of your clients.

Don't:

Apologize excessively. Setting boundaries is a part of maintaining professional relationships and preserving your mental health. You're not doing anything wrong.

Neglect follow-through. Once you've established new boundaries, it's crucial to stick to them. If you keep making exceptions, your boundaries will not be taken seriously.

Forget to adjust. Boundaries can evolve as your business grows. Be open to reassessing and communicating new boundaries as needed.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Elicit Confidence in the Process...

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Talk Yourself Up...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

The summer heat of a Las Vegas afternoon is kept at bay within this posh resort and spa. Deep within this relaxing compound is an employee meeting room where two women have their quarterly employee review. Seated at this table is Lisa, a manager who has developed a reputation for mentoring employees into future managers, and Anna, her latest promising member of her team.

Led by Lisa's trademark elegant leadership style, the conversation is both a critique and a celebration - covering both Anna's successes and the areas that need further improvement. Anna had a rough few months recently while learning how to balance all of her new responsibilities. But, in spite of those speed bumps, Anna is optimistic about the next few months, thanks to Lisa's approach to these meetings.

"I really appreciated how you stepped in and took care of things when our computers were down. You not only remained calm, but your confidence in handling the situation made the rest of the staff and our customers remain calm, too." Even though Anna had plenty of struggles that Lisa directly addressed, she's still leaving the meeting with plenty of examples of what she did well along with stand-out behaviors and qualities that she's encouraged to keep bringing into her role.

The Power of Appreciation

Appreciation and gratitude are powerful tools that can inspire, motivate, and uplift others, whether in a professional setting or personal relationships. Studies have shown that when people feel appreciated and recognized, they are more likely to repeat the actions that led to the positive acknowledgment. By voicing your gratitude, you not only encourage the behavior you appreciate, but also create a more positive relationship, fostering trust, and cooperation.

This principle extends well beyond the context for employee reviews. It applies to every interaction we have. The more you vocalize expressions of appreciation, the more you invite those behaviors from others.

SPECIAL NOTE: Most of us are our own worst critic, which is why it's important to use this technique in your self-talk, too. Be intentional with expressing appreciation and gratitude to yourself. Acknowledge the behaviors and qualities you're proud of. In doing so, you'll encourage more of those behaviors, and even amplify them moving forward. Whether you write out your self-appreciation or take a moment to mindfully acknowledge your good qualities, this skill pays dividends throughout your life and relationships.

Phrases for Expressing Appreciation and Gratitude

- "I am really grateful for..."
- "I want to acknowledge you for..."
- "I appreciate how you..."
- "You did a fantastic job when..."
- "I want to thank you for..."
- "Your effort in/with... didn't go unnoticed."

Do:

Be genuine. Let your appreciation come from a place of sincerity. It's the authenticity of your gratitude that makes it meaningful.

Be specific. Pinpoint the action or behavior you're grateful for. The more specific you are, the clearer your message.

Express it often: Don't wait for big moments or achievements. Even small expressions of gratitude can have a significant impact.

Don't:

Use it as a trade-off. Gratitude isn't a bargaining chip. Avoid using it only when you want something in return.

Neglect the small stuff. Even small acts deserve acknowledgment. Recognize the everyday efforts of people around you.

Wait. If you appreciate something, express it in the moment or soon after. Immediate recognition makes your appreciation more impactful.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want More Candid Conversations....

When You're at Networking Events...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Encourage Certain Characteristics...

When You Want to Learn Someone's Perspective...

When You Want to Ignite the Imagination...

When You Want to Get On the Same Page...

When You Want to Talk Yourself Up...

Within a conference room in a chic boutique hotel in downtown New Orleans, members of a national association gather for their annual meeting. Hors d'oeuvres, cocktails, and lively conversations fill the hall. In the mix is Alex, a business consultant who recently moved to the area.

As he weaves through this forest of accomplished professionals, Alex finds himself in conversation with a group of fellow members, two of whom sit on the board. The discussion moves from industry trends to a little bit of industry gossip. When the discussion slows down and finds a natural moment to change topics, one of the board members turns to Alex and asks, "So Alex, how are things going after the big move here? How's business?" Wanting to make a good impression without sounding braggadocious, Alex smiles and casually replies, "I'm really excited about a project we just wrapped up for a client. They're already reporting improvements in their customer retention rates and margins. It's been exciting and satisfying to witness those kinds of results."

Humility Amplified

There's an art to sharing your achievements without coming across as self-absorbed or boastful. The key lies in amplifying humility in self-promotion. Speaking your wins isn't just about pure self-congratulations, but rather evidence of your commitment, skills, and the value you bring.

There's a delicate balance between self-deprecation and overconfidence, and it is within this space that these phrases work their magic. With them, one can highlight accomplishments, while still maintaining humility and relatability.

Phrases for Tactful Self-Promotion

- "I'm proud that..."
- "I'm really excited about..."

- "I'm so pleased that..."
- "I was fortunate enough to..."
- "I'm grateful for the opportunity to..."
- "It's rewarding to see..."

Do:

Relate achievement to others. Instead of focusing solely on your accomplishments, relate them to the benefits others have received from your work. This not only highlights your achievements but also demonstrates your team spirit and your focus on the greater good.

Share the impact. Discuss the outcomes and positive effects of your achievements, not just the achievements themselves. This demonstrates your focus on results and progress.

Maintain a positive tone. Keep your language positive and energetic. This creates an atmosphere of enthusiasm around your accomplishments.

Don't:

Overstate. Be truthful and realistic about your accomplishments. Exaggerating can lead to skepticism and damage your credibility.

Downplay other's achievements. Elevate yourself without downplaying or dismissing the achievements of others. This maintains an environment of mutual respect.

Hog the spotlight. While it's important to share your successes, ensure that the conversation is not monopolized by your achievements. Be ready to listen and celebrate the achievements of others, too.

Complementary Chapters...

When You Want to Subtly Establish Authority...

When You Handle Objections...

When You Want Requests to Lead to Action...

When You Want to Set Healthy Boundaries...

When You Want to Get the Best Out of Someone...

When You Want to Talk Yourself Up...

Conclusion

Whether you started this book with a goal to enhance your professional relationships, improve your personal relationships, or simply to become a more empathetic, understanding speaker and listener, you have taken a significant step in that direction.

I hope that you now feel equipped with a toolbox of phrases that are not only persuasive but that also foster connection, kindness, and understanding.

Remember, conversation is organic, fluid, and unpredictable. The true power lies not in the phrases themselves, but in how you use them, in your authenticity and empathy, and in how you adapt them to each unique situation and individual.

Never forget that your words have the power to influence, inspire, and make an impact. Use them wisely, and with clear intentions. Every conversation is an opportunity to understand and be understood, to influence and be influenced, to connect and be connected. And yes, it may feel like you are stepping out without a net at times. But it's in those moments, when you're out there on the tightrope of conversation, that you'll truly discover your strength and skills.

Cheers to the transformative power of words,

Sharí Alexander

About the Author

Sharí Alexander is a leading communication strategist, speaker, and author who specializes in elevating the influence of industry experts. She has worked with clients from diverse industries, including Fortune 500 companies, entrepreneurs, and high-profile individuals. Her work has been featured in 3 bestselling books along with media outlets, including Entrepreneur, Reuters, and USA Today.

As the founder of Elevated í, Sharí's coaching programs, workshops, and products are known for providing frameworks and techniques that can be tailored to individual communication styles. She is also a regular speaker at conferences and events, inspiring audiences with practical advice on how they can discover and elevate their own influential voices. Her work is recognized for its practicality and effectiveness in helping industry experts become more persuasive in their professional interactions.

For Sharí, there's nothing quite as rewarding as collaborating with clients to help them discover the clarity and skills needed to craft and scale their brand's message to the heights they envision.

To connect with Sharí and access additional resources, visit elevated-i.com.