

## **The words we use and how that impacts the way we are judged**

At The Baron Group, we get to observe thousands of videotaped sales simulations every year. As a result, we have had the opportunity to hear many different people provide feedback. We are always intrigued at how certain people react to certain words. Sometimes it can be surprisingly negative. Here are some examples:

**“You guys...”** Many salespeople use this term in referring to their clients. In some ways, it can be an endearing term. But for many people, it can be seen as unprofessional—they think that this is how you refer to friends, not clients. It is simply too casual a way to refer to clients for some people.

**“It’s easy...”** Be careful with this one. What might be easy for you can be quite challenging for your client. You can unwittingly put a client on the defensive when you simplify something that may not be clear to them. Don’t forget that you are often perceived as an “expert” and you don’t want to intimidate your clients.

**“Girl...”** You know this one, but we hear it enough that we need to mention it. Elementary School students are boys and girls. Adults are men and women. Refer to a woman as a girl and you will pay for it. That’s a given.

**“You should...”** When you tell someone what they “should” be doing, you usually appear to be judgmental—even if you do not think that you are judging. Adults don’t like to be told what they “should” do. They like to hear recommendations in language that demonstrates respect. Instead of telling someone what they “should” do, suggest that they *consider* this, or explain why you are *recommending* that, or encourage them to *use* this. But avoid the “shoulds.”

**“We can’t do it...”** How do you feel when you ask someone for something and you get a negative response like this? Figure out what you *can* do or explain what you would *like to do* before you tell them what they can’t do. Great problem solvers say we can’t do it.

**“We think...”** In some ways, it is humble to say something like this. But if you wish to be perceived as an Advisor, you need to take a position. Don’t come on too strong, but be confident when you make that recommendation. Words like “perhaps,” “hopefully,” “maybe,” and others work against you in the same way. Let’s act like Advisors and take confident positions when suggesting what we know will work best for our clients.

**“Sports Analogies...”** We love to use sports analogies—“blocking and tackling,” “right down the middle,” “quarterbacking the process,” “throwing a curve ball,” “level playing field,” “slam dunk,” “home run,” “lay-up,” and “in the stretch” are just a handful of the dozens of sports analogies that we all use. We are not suggesting that you eliminate them for your vocabulary, but it is important to realize that a significant segment of the population can get turned off very quickly with sports analogies. So be careful when you use them and be sensitive about the possible reaction.

**“I disagree...”** What a great way to create conflict, or at minimum cause discomfort. Try to say the same thing in a less aggressive and confrontational way, such as “I have a different point of view,” or “here’s a different perspective,” or “I see it differently.” These are much less toxic ways to disagree. It is akin to someone in a problem solving meeting saying “I have another idea” as opposed to “I have a better idea.” Which feels better?

**“I never...”** The old cliché says “never say never.” What better way to end a conversation than using words like “always,” “never,” “only,” “unacceptable,” or “impossible.” There are times we need to use words like these... just try to avoid them with clients.

Our clients know that we like to speak about process—not content. The words we use are clearly part of the content equation, but it is important to remember that the words we use too often define who we are or how we are perceived.

So take care with your words. Too often, the most innocent use of a word can lead to an unfortunate reaction—and we have too much on the line with our clients to allow that to happen.