



# SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS

*White Horse Plains*

Community Futures Development Corporation



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## Becoming an Expert to Boost Your Business

**I**t used to be that you were only considered an expert after you'd put in a significant number of years in your industry and had a proven, successful business track record. Not so any more. Experts come in all shapes and sizes, are found in all age categories, and are considered experts because of what they know, rather than how long they've known it. Establishing yourself as an expert in your field can be a tremendous boost to your business. Your expert status will drive people that you may not normally have reached through your marketing or advertising efforts, to your business. Take the example of a New Jersey based financial advisor who established himself as an expert in the area of helping physicians deal with all aspects of financial planning and money management. He publishes articles in medical journals and trade publications, creates special reports on current issues facing physicians in the financial arena, hosts monthly seminars (combined with wine-tasting events) for clients and prospects, and volunteers his time for a non-profit organization comprised of other physicians. He gets calls from all over the country from doctors who read his articles. His wine-tasting events bring in huge crowds and his reputation and visibility are increasing day by day. By establishing himself as an expert, he has given himself access to a host of new clients he would never have otherwise acquired, with less effort. You can too. Here are some ways you can begin the process.

**Become the expert** - if you don't see yourself as an expert in your industry yet, take steps to become one. Are there courses you need to take, information you need to gather, professional designations you should apply for, organizations you need to belong to? Do whatever it takes to make you feel like you can present yourself with integrity and authority on a particular issue. If you can make it specific (fine a niche) all the better. The financial advisor I mentioned above does not necessarily present himself as an expert in all areas of financial planning, but has niched his expertise to being an expert in financial planning as it relates to physicians. Being an expert means you are up-to-date on industry developments, have detailed knowledge in a specific area, and are able to provide a service or product that excels in its benefit to your customers.

**Public speaking** - this is one of the most effective ways to establish yourself as an expert. People perceive anyone who stands in front of a group to deliver a



presentation, an expert. Find business groups in your area that meet regularly and who require guest speakers. Look for other groups who may benefit from your product or service and pitch yourself to them as a speaker. Locate a Toastmasters group in your area if you don't have a lot of experience as a speaker. Public speaking not only gives you an opportunity to present a message that gives you credibility in front of many people at once, it may even provide you with the opportunity to earn additional income. Don't be surprised if someone hands you a business card and asks you how much you'd charge to give that presentation to their company. Once you've booked a speaking engagement, present a topic that's of general (or specific) interest to that group of people. Remember, the point is to give them something valuable, not to plug your business. That will happen all on its own.

**Public seminars** - similarly, presenting seminars on relevant topics can also help you establish yourself as an expert. It takes a fair amount of time and preparation to do them, but in the end you have a captive audience who will be learning valuable things from you. If they've spent an afternoon gaining valuable insights on a specific issue relevant to their business, don't you think you'll be the first person on their list when they need further assistance?

**Write for publication** - if you've got even somewhat of a penchant for writing, write articles for trade or industry magazines. Having been published is a huge credibility booster.

**Offer your expertise to the media** - call up your local media and introduce yourself as an expert in your field. Let them know if they ever need a commentary on relevant subjects, you're available. You've just made their job easier and the potential of media coverage skyrockets your status as an expert.

**Publish a newsletter** - either in print or online. Anything you create that is read by others establishes your credibility and expertise. If you can do it for free, all the better. If potential customers get value from you at no cost, they are more likely to come to you when they need to pay for your service.

**Be active in your business community** - join your local Chamber of Commerce, become a member in your industry associations, volunteer on committees, go to mixers, be where the business people are. When you begin to be recognized by others in your community, opportunities will come to you.

Establishing yourself as an expert does require extra time initially that you may not be directly paid for, but the end result will produce more business with a smaller time investment. Wouldn't it be great if your name became the one people talked about whenever your area of expertise is on the table? Start today and you can create a world of opportunity for your business!

## The Power of Words in Selling

I was eight years old when I first learned the power of words. I wrote a story that so impacted my second grade teacher, she read it to the entire class, making it an example to all the other students. Some time later that year, I also learned that I had a gift for presenting words verbally - and won a speech contest as well. I've never really stopped marveling at the power of words to inspire, motivate, instruct and move people. I have also experienced the power of words to destroy, de-motivate, and negatively impact others. How we use words in business has a direct impact on our business success, and nowhere is this more evident than when we are using words to sell. One word or phrase can make the difference between influencing a potential customer to purchase what you are selling and losing that sale. The truth is, sometimes we aren't even aware of the impact of our words on those who are listening. In this article we'll explore some words that can kill sales, and words that can increase the success of your sales efforts.

## Words that Kill Sales

**Doubtful phrasing** - using words like "you probably won't be interested in this but . . ." or "your company doesn't use this product right?" Negative phrasing gives your prospects permission to say no. You've practically invited them to by the way you've asked the question.

**Saying "no" yourself** - Answering their question with "No, I'm sorry we can't do that for you." doesn't motivate your customer to say yes to you. In priming them for a sale, always focus on what you CAN do, and offer alternatives for the things you can't.

**Sarcasm** - Some of us use sarcastic humour in our speech very naturally, but many people don't respond well to sarcasm - especially if it makes them feel insulted or minimized. "It's your choice if you don't want to get in on this fabulous deal." Sarcasm guarantees that customer will never, ever buy from you.

**Slander of others** - Even though you're dying to tell your customer about your competitor's sleazy business practices, it will come back to bite you if you do. People perceive your putting down someone else's business as sour grapes, and it rarely, if ever, has the impact you desire.

**"Woe is us" language** - under the guise of honesty, telling your customers more than they really want to hear about your business - especially if it's about problems you've had or are having. "This isn't the first time our accounting department has screwed up." or "We have been having problems with that product line." won't go far in inspiring confidence in potential customers.

## Words that Inspire Sales

**"You"** - using the word "you" or "your" in your sales materials and presentations is powerful. It draws the customer into the experience and helps them to see the benefit of the product or service - "You'll increase your productivity by 20%!"

**"Money"** - people love to earn it, they love to save it, they love to spend it. If your words can convey how the *benefit* of a product will affect their money, you're on the right track.

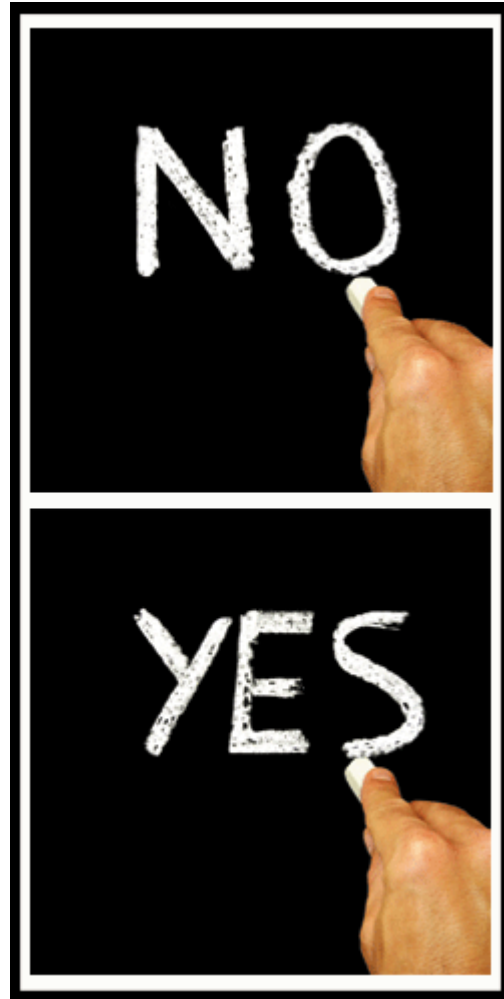
**"Guaranteed"** - consumers today love knowing they are secure in their purchase. If you can guarantee a certain result so that they are not incurring a risk with their purchase, your sales will soar.

**"Free"** - age-old but still effective. People love getting things for free. If you can offer something of value in addition to what your customer will be paying for, it's a huge motivator to buy.

**"Easy"** - we're overworked, overstressed, overwhelmed, and over-committed. We don't want things that will complicate our lives. If you can convince your customers that not only will your product or service make their lives easier, but that you can also make it easy for them to: afford it, pay for it, have it delivered or installed, learn to use it, etc., they will be more motivated to buy.

**"Yes"** - yes is the most positive word in the English language. It is full of potential and possibility. Use it in your presentations - ask questions of your customers to which you know the answer will be yes. "Could you use more time in your day?" Use the word yes a lot - answer with yes as often as you can.

**"Person's name"** - people do love to hear the sound of their names, as long as it's being used in a genuine way. "So Steve, do you have any questions about what I've shown you?" Using a person's



name inspires trust. Do it often.

Being aware of the power of language in sales can make a big difference between hearing "yes", and hearing "no" in response to your sales efforts. Try making a few changes and see what a difference it makes in your sales success.

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# Motivation Myths and Strategies for Your Workforce

Have you ever been part of a workforce that lacked motivation? Even if you had a positive attitude and wanted to keep your motivation high, it doesn't take long to be dragged down to the level of the lowest common denominator. Motivation is both tangible and intangible at the same time. It's tangible in that you can feel the motivation level you're experiencing in your work environment, but it's often intangible as far as being able to determine what contributes to that feeling. It is however, arguably one of the most important factors in making the workplace one that is healthy, happy and productive, rather than toxic and unproductive. Much research has been done on what motivates people, and motivators have changed throughout the decades. What motivated a worker in the 1920's or the 1950's is no longer the same as what motivates workers now. You may be surprised at the things that do and don't motivate according to recent research. One key element to begin thinking about, is that true motivation doesn't come from an outside source - it comes from within the individual doing the job. Think less "how can I motivate these people?" and more "what kind of an environment can I create so that people are self-motivated?" This conceptual shift may make a huge difference in how you approach the task of motivating your workforce.

## Motivation Myths

**The Money Pit** - while money may seem like a powerful motivator, it doesn't last long because it is external. Generally, people would rather make less money in a job where they feel a high level of satisfaction, than make lots of money in a job with little or no satisfaction.

**The Competitive Edge** - contests, salesperson of the month, key employee of the week, etc. inspire only a small percentage of workers - those with naturally competitive natures, but generally, competition doesn't motivate people to do better. This is especially true if you have someone in your workforce that excels in a specific area and who is ALWAYS at the top. It makes the others feel as if there's no point in trying to achieve their own personal best if they can't make it to the top.

**The Praise Factor** - this generation suffers exceedingly from the "disease to please". Using recognition or praise as a motivating factor only exacerbates this syndrome, because the reason for doing a job well becomes the praise, rather than a sense of pride from simply doing the job well. While it is important to acknowledge excellent work, it should only be part of the motivation.

**Dare to Discipline** - while disciplinary action toward an employee is sometimes necessary, it should be noted that it is not a good internal motivator. People may be motivated to avoid the specific behaviour that "gets them in trouble", but discipline rarely motivates people to perform better.

## Motivation Strategies

**Genuine Responsiveness** - when employees know they can trust you, be heard by you, and be validated for their ideas, they will be motivated to do well for you.

Developing an atmosphere where you are genuine with them and where they see you as a fellow traveler rather than a dictator, they will feel safe in bringing their own values and contributions to the workplace.

**Training and Equipping** - people are motivated when they have the right skills, knowledge and tools to effectively do their jobs. Providing appropriate and relevant training, adequate equipment, and current tools is a way to motivate them to do well and take pride in what they do.

**Empowering Decisions** - when employees are given the authority to make decisions and to live or die by the results of those decisions, they feel empowered to do their best.

I recently saw this sign at my local video store: "Our employees are authorized and empowered to do whatever it takes to satisfy our customers." That kind of power inspires loyalty, encourages problem solving, invests the employee in the business, and brings the best possible service to the customer. Of course, if you empower them to make decisions, you must be prepared to stand behind them.

**Valuing their Contribution** - the number one motivating factor for people in the workforce today is job satisfaction; the feeling that their contribution makes a difference. Acknowledging their strengths and channeling them into positions in your company that maximize those strengths is an enormous motivator. So is allowing them to learn, grow and discover while they are working. They may begin in the accounting office, but discover that they are great at sales. Allow for that kind of process in your business. When people discover things about themselves and feel valued for what they contribute, their motivation rises from a deep inner place, and that goes a lot farther than offering them a raise.

**Clear Expectations** - providing clarity in how employees are to perform their jobs. Having regular and meaningful evaluations where strengths and weaknesses can be discussed openly with a view to improvement, concrete job descriptions and a clear expectation of the attitudes necessary in your workplace all allow for positive motivation.

The theory behind motivation is changing, and the concept of motivating people from the inside rather than from the outside is being proven day by day in the modern workforce. It is one that is worth considering for you and your business. The goal is to provide a work environment that encourages self motivation, rather than imposing external motivational tactics on your staff. Give it a try and see how it works for you!

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# Eliminating Time Stealers

## Carving More Minutes Out of Your Day

**It's rare to meet someone these days who doesn't feel like they don't have enough time in their days to accomplish the things that need to get done. Time is indeed a valuable commodity, and one that seems increasingly rare. If you find yourself getting to the end of each day having barely made a dent in your to do list, you may need to evaluate whether your tasks are realistic given the amount of time you have, but it may also mean**

**that time stealers are at work in your day - taking an hour and making it only count for 40 minutes! Time stealers are insidious and often unnoticeable, but can drastically reduce your productivity if you're not aware of them. Here are ten common time stealers. Addressing these issues can dramatically improve the way your workday unwinds, and leave you feeling good about what you've been able to accomplish at the end of your day.**

#### **1. Lack of organization and clutter**

Last month we published an article on spring-cleaning your office. So . . . how many of you have done it? So much time is wasted during the day looking for a specific piece of paper, a phone number or a file. The time it takes you to organize your office will pay you back in spades for the time you save each day by knowing where things are.

#### **2. Inability to say no**

You can't do everything. That statement bears repeating - you can't do everything. You must learn to prioritize and say no (without guilt) to the things that are unrealistic for you to add to your already full calendar. Saying no is a learned skill - for some it comes easier than for others - but it is a necessary piece of the puzzle if you are to manage your time effectively. Prioritize the things you can (and want to) do, and learn to say no to the rest.

#### **3. Telephone, email and internet**

These are probably the most common unnoticed time stealers in our day. You're looking up a website for specific information and before you know it, twenty minutes have gone by and you've surfed twelve sites. You're in the middle of an important report and your email notifier tells you "you've got mail", so you interrupt your train of thought to see who's on the email "phone". Time management experts say that it takes an average of eight minutes for you to get back to the place you were before you were interrupted. Think about how many eight-minute increments you waste each day by giving attention to unnecessary interruptions. The best way to deal with these time stealers is to assign certain times of the day for returning emails and phone calls, and then discipline yourself to stick to it. Turn off the sound that tells you when you've received mail, and then return your email at the designated time. Log your internet sites so that you are aware of when you digress.

#### **4. Hidden time**

Those minutes we don't think about when we plan meetings or activities can really catch us at the end of the day. When doing your planning, remember to count the minutes it takes you to travel to and from meetings, look for parking, and account for unforeseen things that may affect your time (traffic, construction, weather). Even if the meeting is in your office - account for the few minutes someone may need to discuss a specific agenda item with you after the meeting.

#### **5. Inefficient meetings**

Never have a meeting without a timed agenda. Inefficient meetings can literally kill your well-planned day. Determine how much time each agenda item should take and do your best to stick to those times. Begin and end meetings on time and don't allow them to get off track. Whenever possible, don't allow for spontaneous additions to the agenda from the floor. Encourage your team to advise you ahead of time if they have something they'd like to add so you can determine if you have time for it, rather than being ambushed at the meeting.



## 6. **Lack of delegation (or asking for help)**

Remember number 2 - you can't do it all? Realize that delegating or asking for help, even if others can't do as perfect a job as you can (see the next point), will free you up to do the things that are really important, and that only you can do. Delegation is a smart time management principle that is greatly underused.

## 7. **Perfectionism**

Do you spend two hours on a project that was really completed in the first hour, because you can't let go of your perfectionist desire to make it PERFECT? If you're struggling to get things done each day, you don't have time for perfect. Determine that excellent is good enough and let it go. Besides, if you're a perfectionist, your excellent is probably perfect to most other people!

## 8. **Procrastination**

This time stealer is often difficult to deal with because people who procrastinate rarely get around to dealing with why they're procrastinating! Develop habits that encourage you to do things right away. Don't touch a piece of paper more than once or twice - deal with it. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today! Procrastination is one of the biggest sources of workplace stress, and it's the easiest one to fix - just do it.

## 9. **Lack of planning, prioritizing and focus**

Taking time at the beginning or end of each day to plan your activities for the next day, can make the difference between an efficient, well-run day, and one full of chaos. You can't of course, plan for every interruption or event that might throw your plans off track, but if you've really prioritized and planned, you'll be able to quickly see which items in your day can be reassigned to make up for the unplanned emergencies. Another trick is to schedule time into each day to "plan for the unplanned". One executive I know plans an hour every day for unforeseen things, and he usually uses that hour. Occasionally, on particularly smooth days, he finds himself with an extra hour, which he devotes to low priority projects, or leaving early for a round of golf.

## 10. **Not enough time off or time for yourself**

Studies have proven that people who don't get enough time for themselves are actually less productive than those who do. Working through your lunch hour doesn't actually give you more time - it makes you less productive later in the day. Make sure you get enough breaks in your work day to keep your mind alert and fresh. Walking away from your desk for ten minutes may actually help you finish that task more quickly than staring at it for hours without a break.

Take stock of which time stealers are a problem for you and take steps to eliminate them. You may not make actually your day longer, but you may find more minutes in your day than you thought you had!

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# Minimizing Gender-Based Communication Mishaps

Millions of dollars are spent every year in Training and Human Resources industries on teaching people how to improve their communication skills. Training is often based on such things as understanding different communication styles, developing assertive communication skills, or dealing with difficult people. But far less time is spent

**addressing the basic issues inherent in the fact that men and women naturally communicate differently. For example, women: remember that staff meeting when you made a particular point on a subject and you felt it was not only invalidated by the men in the room, but that was completely misunderstood? And men: what about that time when you expressed your opinion to a woman on an issue unrelated to your relationship with her, and found that she took it completely personally? Both of you thought you were clear in your communications, and had you said those very same things to someone of the same gender - those misunderstandings would likely not have occurred. The reality is - we do communicate differently as men and women, and those very differences, if not understood, can cause a lot of unnecessary stress and conflict.**

The primary difference in the way men and women communicate has been described as "report" communication (men), versus "rapport" communication (women). Men communicate primarily to report information. Women communicate to build rapport with others. Here are some differences in speech patterns, facial expressions, body language and behaviour that are different between the sexes. Once you understand them, you can interpret their messages more clearly. This research has been provided by Dr. Lillian Glass in her book *"He Says, She Says: Closing the Communication Gap Between the Sexes"* (Putnam 1992).

### Facial Expressions

- Men generally provide fewer facial expressions than women, and fewer reactions, making them harder to read.
- Men tend to display a frown, or squint when they are listening, while women tend to nod their heads when listening. (A note on the head nod - men nod their heads only when they agree with what's being said, so when speaking to a woman who is nodding her head because she's listening, he interprets her nod as agreement).
- Men generally stare more during negative interaction, whereas women tend to avert their eyes when in conflict.

### Body Language

- Women tend to take up less physical space when sitting or standing, with arms and legs toward their body, and with notes or books on a table piled neatly in front of them. Men tend to spread out where they are sitting or standing.
- Women gesture toward the body, whereas men gesture away from the body.
- Women are generally more sensitive toward the nonverbal clues of others, men are not as sensitive to the communication clues of others.
- Women tend to approach men with a greater degree of personal space than men do.
- Women tend to sit straight and lean forward, and men tend to recline or lean back.



### Speech Patterns

- Men tend to speak more loudly than women. They also tend to interrupt more than women do.
- Men don't disclose as much personal information as women.
- Men make more direct statements about what they want or how they feel (say what they mean), whereas women give hints, or make indirect statements (hoping someone will figure out what they mean or assuming others will know what they mean).
- Men tend to make declarative statements ("It's really cold in here"), whereas women often couch those same statements with questions ("It's cold in here isn't it?" or "Don't you find it cold in here?") to seek confirmation from others.
- Men tend to ask fewer questions to stimulate conversation, women ask a lot of questions to stimulate conversation.
- Men rarely discuss their personal lives in business, and women tend to establish their business relationships by discussing their personal lives (report vs. rapport).

## Behaviour

- Women have a more emotional approach to problem solving, and men have a more analytical approach.
- Women ask for help far more than men do.
- Women talk more about how they feel and their relationships with others, while men talk more about what they did and their achievements.
- Women are generally more intuitive than men.
- Women are more apt to cry to release anger, while men are more apt to yell or need a physical release for their anger.

Rather than allowing the differences in communication to become a barrier or a source of conflict and misunderstanding between the sexes, use this information to build a bridge instead. Learn to adapt your style when speaking to someone of the opposite sex and always take the time to clarify rather than assume. The gap between the genders can be bridged! A few simple adjustments can help you to increase your business success by improving communication with your staff, your customers and people within your industry.

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