

Verbal Packaging in Negotiation

The more skillful a person is in the use of language, the more persuasive s/he will be in a negotiation setting. People are persuaded by the words we use and how we use them. Since even a single word can affect an individual's perception about a negotiator and what s/he is trying to negotiate, negotiators choose their words especially carefully. Below is a list of words that are commonly used in business or negotiation settings and some alternate phrases that can make a negotiation transaction go more smoothly.

Words That Repel	Words That Persuade
Contract	Agreement
Meeting	Time to get together
Sign here	OK, autograph
Cancellation	Right of rescission
Cost	Investment
Ruling	Resolution
Problem	Challenge
Objections	Concern
Expensive	Top of the line
Cheaper	More economical
Service charge	Processing fee

Your word choices will paint different pictures for different people because the way in which we define words is based on our belief systems, our past experiences and our social roles. The associations we hold about certain words will dictate our actions and how we respond to them. For example, some cultures view death as a celebration of life, while others view death as a tragedy. Sometimes, if used improperly, positive words can still lead to a negative response. For this reason, negotiators will often avoid certain words that are generally positive and instead use words that may still bear positive associations but are more ambiguous. For example, in the world of politics, we hear phrases like “freedom of choice,” “fiscal responsibility” or “responsible taxation.” When

politicians use such generalities, people of differing viewpoints can actually all be appeased. Those individuals hearing these words fill in the blanks and provide their own definitions.

Below are some simple guidelines that will help you keep your verbal packaging on the right track:

- Don't use jargon or technical language unless you are sure every member of the negotiation understands its meaning.
- Don't use profanity or slang. In general, using profanity damages your credibility. Be sensitive to whatever language your audience might find offensive, profane or otherwise. Avoid name-calling and other forms of abusive language.
- Speak in everyday language. You want everyone involved in the negotiation process to relate to you and to feel as comfortable with you as possible. Utilize language that will make you seem familiar and easy to follow.
- Keep your language simple and clear.
- Keep your sentences short. Use as few words as possible unless you are painting the overall picture. Portray just one idea at a time.
- Don't use vague and abstract words. They muddle your meaning and confuse your listener(s).
- Don't talk down to the other party by using pompous and pretentious words. Be direct; don't bluff or beat around the bush.
- Use verb-driven language. By using verb-driven language, you will arouse a greater sense of action and motivation in your prospects. Your statements will also sound more convincing. Verbs that are abstract or overused do not communicate excitement.