



## **The “Dirty” Words Salespeople use**

***- Jim Lewis, Founder & President, Princeton Sales Partners, LLC***

Effective selling is not as much about where you show up but what you say when you get there. Most salespeople sound, well, like salespeople. To get in the door you will have to avoid sounding like a salesperson – and it may be the words you speak in the first 10 seconds that give you away.

People like to buy things. Most people, however, don't like to be sold. The more someone sounds like a sales person, the less the buyer is going to trust them and the less empowered they buyer feels. To defend themselves, buyers feel compelled to take more time to make decisions, to conduct more research about you and your company. They request more demos and do more reference checking.

If you are calling on a senior decision maker and you sound like a salesperson you won't get very much of their time. In fact, if they have an effective “gatekeeper” you may not get in at all.

Language influences how people perceive us and their willingness to engage in a conversation. Whether you are speaking to prospects over the phone or in person there are words and phrases that have dramatic affects on listeners; often bad affects.

During the first 5 to 10 seconds of your conversation, buyers make decisions about whether to fully listen to you or not. In the days of nuisance telemarketing calls – to your home at dinner time – how did you determine if it was a prospecting call? You could just tell, right? In fact, it was the words that the caller used and how those words were delivered that gave them away. Language is a craft and, if use well, can work to your advantage. Use it poorly and it can kill a sales opportunity instantly. To help you avoid this common trap, I've compiled a list of “dirty” words and phrases that salespeople use that should be banned!

These words act as neon lights to buyers who already have their guard up that you may try to sell them something. Worse, they signal insincerity.

“Bad” words and phrases unknowingly creep into our vocabulary and we often do not realize the negative impact they have. Here are my translations of these words in the minds of the listener. Is this really the message that you want to send?

## **INSINCERE**

You say this:

The prospect thinks or hears this:

Obviously

If it's obvious, I must be STUPID.

Basically

Because it's too hard for me to understand?

Candidly

He/She must not have candid been so far.

Trust me

Don't trust him/her.

Honestly

Because I've be lying through my teeth up to now.

How's it going

They don't really care.

No problem

It IS a problem, so I doubt this person understands

Everyone agrees that rapport is established very early in the sales process. Yet, that rapport can be quickly damaged by insulting the buyer, even if you do it unintentionally.

## **HYPE**

If you are in a technology industry you have likely heard these words thousands of times. What do they really mean? Aren't these opinions? How much weight does the opinion of a salesperson carry, particularly at the beginning of a sales cycle? How would a prospect measure the degree of “**robustness**” that would lead them to choose your product over another? How “**elegant**” would it have to be to close the sale? Prospects are already wary of claims made by marketing and sales people about the capability of their products. Using these words further reinforces the stereotypical image that prospects have about salespeople.

Worse yet, it forces the buyer to spend more time, not less, evaluating your offering.

## **AMBIGUOUS**

The words *integrated, cutting edge, seamless, efficient, synergistic* tell prospects nothing about how they are going to solve their business problem or achieve a goal. What about the phrase “user friendly?” Isn’t everything described as user friendly whether is or is not? Prospects want to know how they will use specific capabilities of your product or service, and in which situations, to address business needs.

In my observation of exceptional sales people, I note that they don’t oversell and that their language – the words they chose – is simple and descriptive. And in our workshops, we pay particular attention to word choices including those listed here. For each utterance we fine the students one dollar to help them first recognize that they have used a “dirty” word or phrase – and then to help remember not to use it again. This is both fun and effective.

Here is a two step process to help you clean up your language!

1. First, become aware of the language other people are using by listening. At your next sales meeting keep track of the number of times you hear any of the words or phrases listed above. As you listen to others you should become aware of your own usage of these words.
2. During your next sales call – on the phone or in person – have someone else count your use of any of these words. Have them present you with the bill during the call debrief. For each occurrence, put a dollar into a jar. After a few days of this, buy yourself a cup of coffee – or lunch if you’ve been particularly persistent with the “dirty words”. Hopefully, you’ll be cured by then.

For more information about how we teach salespeople these skills you can reach us at the following address:

**Jim Lewis**  
**Founder and President**  
**Princeton Sales Partners LLC**  
**66 Witherspoon, Suite 381**  
**Princeton, NJ 08542**  
**609-333-9785**  
[Jim@PrincetonSalesPartners.com](mailto:Jim@PrincetonSalesPartners.com)  
[www.PrincetonSalesPartners.com](http://www.PrincetonSalesPartners.com)