

THE POWER OF WORDS

BY CAROL L. BROOKS, SR/WA

Max sits at his desk staring at a project file. The expandable envelope is jammed with plans, contracts, reports, schedules and property records. He picks it up, hesitates, and then tosses it down. He has done this a thousand times today, it seems. What made him think he could take the lead position on this project anyway? The public is in an uproar. Nobody wants this transmission line. They're angry and threatening to block the project.

Max is overwhelmed. But perhaps his main problem isn't with the public, but with his self-talk. Words are powerful, whether they are spoken, written or simply in our thoughts. The words we use to think and talk about our workload, our goals, our projects and the people we work with influence our thoughts and actions about them.

Words create impressions, images and expectations. They build psychological connections and influence how we think. Since thoughts determine actions, there's a strong connection between the words we use and the results we get. Words have the power to promote a person's self-image or leave an emotional scar for years to come. Poorly chosen words can kill enthusiasm, affect self-esteem, lower expectations and hold people back. Carefully chosen words can motivate, offer hope, create vision, effect thinking and alter results. Our word choice should create a visual of a desired outcome.

Perhaps the most powerful influence on our attitude is what we say to ourselves, and believe. It is not what happens to us, but how we respond internally to what happens that determines our thoughts and feelings, mind power, and ultimately,

"The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives."

-Anthony Robbins

our actions. By controlling our inner dialogue, or self-talk, we can begin to assert control over every other dimension of our lives.

But sometimes we speak to ourselves far more negatively than we would to an adversary. Negative thoughts will only derail our goals to success. We are continually faced with challenges and difficulties, with problems and disappointments, with temporary setbacks and defeats. How we talk to ourselves can affect how quickly we spring-back from the low points in our lives.

Our self-talk determines the quality and tone of our emotional life. When we see things positively and constructively, and look for the good in each situation and each person, we have a tendency to remain naturally positive and optimistic. Since the quality of our life is determined by how we feel, one of our most important goals should be to use every psychological technique available to keep ourselves thinking about what we want, and to keep our minds off of what we don't want, or what we fear.

Think back to Max and the conundrum he has created by the power of his words. How does he perceive his situation – as a problem or a challenge? It's more than semantics. Different words evoke different feelings. We would no doubt have a more positive frame of mind meeting a challenge than fixing a problem. So, let's encourage Max to replace his negative thoughts with some

positive word choices, which might look something like this:

Negative: "What made me think I could take the lead position on this project?"

Positive: "I've worked hard since I got into right of way, and I've delivered on all of my jobs. Although this is the biggest and most important job I've been assigned, I'm up for it. I can do this!"

Negative: "The public is in an uproar. Nobody wants this transmission line. They're angry and threatening to block the project."

Positive: "My team and I will listen to everyone's concerns and treat each owner as an individual. We'll work hard to build trust. We may not please 100% of the property owners, but we'll do our best."

We program our brain with the words of our self-talk. Fortunately, our brains are willing to be reprogrammed. We simply need to use encouraging words. In the totality of life itself, you are highly valued and play an intricate role—choose words that match your vital contribution.



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