

25 Words & Phrases to Win With - Part 1

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Whether you're negotiating with another agent, interviewing a potential team member or just having a difficult conversation, it's important to remember that your words matter. The words and phrases you use set the context and tone and either turn your interaction into an aggressive one (where someone must win and someone must lose) or a collaborative one where everyone feels heard and everyone can win.

Words to Win With (General)

These are some words and phrases you can use to help you have more open and understanding conversations and interactions with clients, other agents, vendors and even family members.

1. Replace 'but' with 'and'....and consider replacing the sentence that follows.

The word 'but' is always followed by something negative - as soon as you say 'but' all the other person hears is the negative that follows. Replacing 'but' with 'and' can shift your conversation toward the points of agreement and better outcomes.

2. Replace 'better' with 'even better.'

The word 'better' implies that something was bad to begin with. Replacing it with 'even better' affirms the other person has done a good job so far and opens the door to make improvements.

3. Say 'You're right.'

In any discussion, debate or argument, we all want to be affirmed that our position or idea is right. Acknowledging that someone is right makes a big impact on that person (even if you don't agree with everything they're saying).

4. 'Please,' 'thank you,' and 'my pleasure.'

Not only is saying 'please' and 'thank you' one of the Four Referability Habits, it just goes a long way in interactions with others. We undervalue the impact of politeness - no matter who you are talking to.

5. 'I would.'

When people ask for your opinion, they're really looking for social proof (they want you to agree with their idea). Answering with 'I would' acknowledges their perspective and builds momentum in your interaction without saying too much.

6. 'What would it take?'

When you're in a debate or discussion with someone, and they're pushing back on your solution, it's natural to get frustrated. If you can get someone to answer this question, they stop thinking about the obstacles in the way and actually consider the path forward. It creates a psychological shift into solution-thinking.

7. 'If you had a magic wand...'

This phrase introduces suspension of disbelief and is also a psychological shift into solution-thinking. This phrase helps the other person table their resistance to your solution and creates a context where the impossible isn't an obstacle anymore. It allows them to drop their defense and maybe change their response.

8. Say 'no.'

We have to learn to say 'no' more often. Everything you say 'yes' to means saying 'no' to something that could be more important. Sometimes the best thing you can say to someone is 'no.' Even better? Saying 'no, thank you.'

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9. Ask permission.

If you take the time to ask permission, it's probably because you're going to ask for something big so a preliminary request for permission lays the groundwork. The three best questions to ask for permission: 'Can I ask you a question?' 'Do you mind if I make a suggestion?' and 'Do I have permission to speak frankly?'

10. 'What do you think?'

When someone comes to you with a problem, it's easy to jump in right away to come up with a solution. One of the smartest things you can start with is, 'What do you think?' Asking open-ended questions allows you to gain more insight into the other person's thought process and allows you to guide and coach them through solving the issue.

11. 'How would you go about it?'

This is also an open-ended question. It gives the other person the chance to be heard which is powerful. It changes the context of the conversation and allows them to share more. It also puts the responsibility on the other person to think practically about the solution.

12. 'I trust your judgment.'

When you ask someone to do something, empower them to be part of the solution by using words of affirmation. Using 'I trust your judgment' tells the other person you're on their side and puts responsibility back on them.

13. 'Can you tell me more about that?'

This question allows you to be a better listener by using tactical empathy. Asking 'can you tell me more about this?' forces you to see the situation from the other person's point of view. Make yourself really hear what they're saying. Not only does it help you, but it makes them feel like you're trying to understand them.

14. 'I don't know. Let me find out and get back to you.'

There will be times when you'll have to acknowledge that you don't know everything - whether you're a new or experienced agent. The worst thing you can do is pretend to know what you don't. Be honest, admit it and then actually follow up with the answer. It shows integrity and hard work.

15. 'Let me see what I can do.'

When someone asks you for something difficult (or just impractical), saying 'let me see what I can do' is neither a yes or a no. It just means that you're both working toward the same goal and you'll try to do what they're asking of you (even if you don't think it's possible). You might be surprised by what you can get done and if you can't, at least you tried and weren't the one who ultimately said 'no.'

16. 'Who do you know who...?'

This classic question is essential when you're asking for referrals. When you ask someone this question, it creates an "open file" in their brain. Even if they don't know someone off the top of their head, their brain will hold onto to the question. This kind of question reframes people's thinking to consider what is possible.