THE POWER
OF WORDS IN
LEADERSHIP

THEY CAN MAKE YOU
OR BREAK YOU

By LINIA ANIRUDDHAN
linia.anirudhan@leaderonomics.com

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N a world that is constantly striv-
ing for convenience, words have become less relevant than it should be – not being chosen with the care they deserve as a key in developing great leadership.

Words breathe life into business ideas and motivate people to action. It has become a catalyst that opens doors to change our mindsets and move our hearts.

It all lies in the power of words.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Words have power to uplift or to destroy, to build life or to “imprison” someone. Words have a lasting effect as they shape thought patterns, emotions and experiences.

Their influence is enormous and limitless.

As it is, the words we speak tend to echo what’s on our minds, hearts and souls.

Effective and transformational leaders recognise the impact of their words.

According to author Darlene Price, “With your words, you wield the power to plant seeds of either success or failure in the mind of another.”

Sadly, one of the biggest errors that leaders often make is to think that words are merely symbolic to explain things. We often forget that one of the dimensions of human language, which creates reality.

THE WAR OF WORDS

Some feel that the only way to influence people is through criticism, threats and negative words – thinking that pushing the extreme makes people respond better. Whilst they sometimes do, it is often out of fear.

On the contrary, some leaders are able to influence harmoniously towards exceptional results through words of affirmation and positivity.

Whether it is to motivate, engage, or build high-performing teams or individual morale, your words carry weight. They are no longer observers, but active participants.

ORGANISATIONAL STORIES

Their shared experience gives them a personal story to tell. Their story becomes an inspiration to others; they become a part of an organisation’s narrative. They are no longer observers, but active participants.

Kind words promote unity amongst people and have the ability to inspire others to propel change that they aspire to make.

Employees understand that their values are aligned with the organisational mission, they automatically become part of the story.

A wonderful concept is to identify with “conscious and “conscience” i.e. when would it be appropriate for us to be more conscious (awake) and when to have “conscience” (awareness of what is right and wrong).

Whilst discovering ways to help keep “conscious” and “conscience” straight, try emphasising on “conscience”, remembering the fact that conscience deals with your inner feelings and thoughts.

CONCLUDING WORDS

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1. IDENTIFY POTENTIALS AND STRENGTHS

People are not to be seen as objects or machines. Thus, it is important to treat them with respect through our action and words.

As leaders, look for a spark of greatness in your people. Focus on their strengths and try to discern what their capabilities are.

Help them visualise what they can possibly achieve if they overcome personal obstacles. Help them grow through meaningful relationships and connections.

2. TAP INTO THEIR PASSION

Keep in mind that even the most quiet and least demonstrative individual has a passion for something.

An inspiring movie and book called Gifted Hands: The Ben Carson Story revolves around an underprivileged African-American boy who was constantly called a “dummy” in school by his classmates.

Carson’s grades kept falling till he came out last in class, believing that he was actually stupid.

When his mother saw his poor grades, she was determined to turn his life around.

Instead of lashing out at his atrocious report cards, she said, “Ben, you are smarter than those grades.”

His mother continued to influence him diligently to pursue his destiny.

As a result, Dr Carson has become the youngest major division director in John Hopkins, serving as a director of pediatric neurosurgery at the age of 33.

In 1987, Dr Carson made medical history with a groundbreaking operation to separate a pair of Siamese twins.

3. TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR WORDS

Our choice of words is a reflection of what is inside us. It is quite a challenge for one to utter a positive word if the person is filled with negativity.

At the end of the day, the choice is in our hands: to use words to complain or to appreciate; to tear down people’s dreams or to raise them; to blame when things go wrong or to rejoice when things go well; to demand or to ask in humility; to speak in anger or to speak kindness.

Essentially, it is critical for leaders to replace words of discouragement with words that enlarge one’s potential – to encourage and to enrich him or her.

4. TAKE AUTHORITY OVER YOUR CURRENT STATE OF EMOTIONS

Spend some time reflecting on the kind of influence you desire to wield. In my humble opinion, positive words propel one to go forth in power with less physiological and emotional damage.

Studies have proven that over 90% of what we communicate is non-verbal.

No words can be said without emotions. People tend to read emotions more than words sometimes.

The tone we use also matters – a leader can choose to use an authoritative or uplifting tone when conveying a message. The issue comes when leaders say too many things without much thought.

In John Maxwell’s Becoming a Person of Influence & Talent is Never Enough, he quoted playwright John Luther.

“Natural talent, intelligence, a wonderful education – none of these guarantees success. Something else is needed: the sensitivity to understand what other people want and the willingness to give to them.”

5. BE CONSCIOUS OF THE CHOICE OF WORDS

We should be careful with our words, for the saying goes “watch your words, for they become action”. A wonderful concept is to identify the difference between “conscious” and “conscience”, i.e. when would it be appropriate for us to be more conscious (awake) and when to have “conscience” (awareness of what is right and wrong).

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