

## **Visionary Vocabulary:**

### **Key Words to Convey Values in Your Messages**

By Holly Minche

*"The difference between the almost right word and the right word is a large matter—it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." - Mark Twain*

The way you talk about your issues can make all the difference in the world. If you want your message to have the impact of a lightning strike—and not the brief flash of a lightning bug—then vision and values are a crucial part of what you have to say. To help people understand your issue, you must first broaden your message and use language that will connect with the largest number of people. As you craft your message, it is important to use simple, specific, easy-to-understand language. No tech talk or insider jargon!

Talk about your issues in a way that all people can personally relate to by linking your messages to the core values that we all care about—family, health, safety, security, respect, fairness. Help your audience understand what is at stake for them. Use hard-hitting action words that will grip your audience by the heart or hit them right in the gut. These words are the antidote to stifling jargon and "bureaucrat-ese" that deadens much political discourse.

For example, instead of saying "The factory runoff will negatively impact the surrounding residents," say "The toxic poison will imperil the lives of hard-working people and endanger their community."

Words such as compassion, fairness, heritage, justice, etc. all connect with people's core values. See the chart of hard-hitting action words to help flesh out your messages below. What words can you add to this list?

#### **List of Action Words To Convey Values in Your Message**

Activate	Community	Energize
Advocate	Compassion	Engage
Affirm	Confirm	Equality
American	Damage	Fairness
Assist	Defend	Faith
Balance	Degrade	Family
Bedrock	Democracy	Fighting
Benefit	Destroy	Forward
Bold	Dignity	Harm
Champion	Diversity	Health
Change	Endanger	Help

Heritage  
Honor  
Hope  
Hurt  
Imperil  
Injure  
Integrity  
Jeopardize  
Justice  
Legacy  
Mobilize  
Nation  
Neighborhood

Nourish  
Nurture  
People  
Power  
Preserve  
Pride  
Principle  
Progress  
Promote  
Protect  
Public  
Relief  
Respect

Responsible  
Risk  
Safeguard  
Strengthen  
Support  
Sustain  
Threaten  
Tolerance  
Tradition  
Trust  
Unity  
Value  
Working

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