



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

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Orchestrating Attitude—Part 3

Orchestrating your Words

by Lee J. Colan, PhD

Editor's Note: Catch up on Parts 1 and 2 of "Orchestrating Attitude" in the January and April 2008 issues of The Stepping Stone, and watch for the conclusion of this series, "Orchestrating Your Actions," in the October 2008 issue.

Remember the old saying, "Choose your words carefully?" This phrase is used to warn the speaker of the impact of her words on others. In reality, the greater impact is on the speaker, not the receiver. Once you have spoken or heard the words, they become programmed into your mind. **It's not what you say, but what you repeatedly say.** The words you repeat are gradually convincing your mind that these statements are true; therefore, precluding your mind's eye from seeing any possibility to prove your words wrong.

Our mind hears our words, good or bad, and then programs our brain accordingly.

Words reflect our commitments to act. **Our words tell the truth.** Whether we have a long conversation with a friend or simply place an order at a restaurant, every word makes a difference. The results of our interactions are rarely neutral; they are almost always positive or negative. Ask yourself, "Do my words reflect a commitment to being joyful, helping others, creating win-wins, keeping things in perspective, seizing the moment, continuously learning, embracing change?"

Words are the seeds of commitment. We plant the seeds with each movement of our lips. Once they are spoken, our words either grow in the form of an immediate response or they take time to germinate. Whether the result becomes apparent sooner or later, we cannot speak words of failure and defeat and expect a life of success and victory.

Here are three instruments for orchestrating your words:

1. Talk yourself up!
2. Speak with strength.
3. Ask the right questions.

Talk Yourself Up!

Did you know that you talk more to yourself than to anyone else in the world? In the face of challenging situations (and we all have our share), the words you choose for that conversation with yourself will directly impact how long you will find yourself in those situations. **Use your words to change your situation, not to describe it.** The moment you speak something—good or bad—you give birth to it as an idea, an expectation, a desire. You have planted the seed that will, sooner or later, grow into the results you will reap.

When you're feeling somewhat down-spirited, don't tell people how you feel, tell them how you *want* to feel. By controlling what you say and how you say it—using positive words with enthusiasm—you help to change your physical and mental state.

I remember the year I started my own business. I jokingly refer to it as "the year I told a million lies" because I spent a lot of time talking myself up. Let me explain. Like most start-up businesses, I had my share of challenges, disappointments and adjustments. I recall many well-intended friends asking me, "Hey, Lee, how's your business coming along?" I could have described my situation by saying, "Gee, it's been a tough year. I have had to really dig into my savings to keep things going and it's been a lot harder than I thought it would be to convert my existing business relationships into paying customers. To boot, it's a lot more work than I thought it would be."

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Lee J. Colan, PhD, is a leadership expert, author and speaker. Learn more and contact him at www.theLgroup.com.

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That type of response would not only drag my friends down—and no one wants to hang around a downer for too long—it would have planted the seeds of doom for my business. Instead, I chose to use my words to change my situation. I wasn't telling a lie, I was simply "choosing my view" in response to my friends' inquiries. So, I said something like, "I feel good about my prospects and am confident that I am doing the right things that will pay off long-term. Most importantly, I am passionate about my work and that's a victory in itself." My words planted the seeds of the success that was to come.

Most people enjoy working and living with people who live and work with a positive, upbeat attitude. **Tell people how you want to feel and it won't be long before you do.** So, the next time you are feeling gloomy and a friend asks you how you are doing, talk yourself up!

Speak With Strength

The words we use are more powerful than we can imagine. There is power in the words that we use, the things that we say, and the things that we do. Most people greet each other with words that have no power or energy. Think of the last time you heard someone else (or even yourself) respond to a greeting of "How are you?" with "Oh, I am doing so-so," "Hanging in there," "I'm surviving" or "Not too bad." It probably wasn't much past yesterday.

Now, try this experiment. The next time anyone asks, "How are you?," whether it's someone at work or a cashier at the store, respond with strength. Give them an energetic, enthusiastic, "Great!" or "Terrific!" It will be hard to do without a smile on your face, and you are likely to get one back. Second, you will likely feel a

physical response of increased energy. Third, your words will send a message to your mind that will be consistent with feeling Great! or Terrific! To see the results, you have to do this often and with sincere enthusiasm (not robotically). When you do, your subconscious mind will begin to act on what you are saying and begin to design your reality to be consistent with your thoughts and words.

Speaking with strength also creates a sense of accountability and commitment to get the best from yourself and others. Your challenge is to consciously avoid using words that are strength killers. These words sap energy and commitment from your interactions, and ultimately, your actions. **Eliminate these words** from your vocabulary:

- I can't
- If
- Doubt
- Try
- I don't think
- I don't have the time
- Maybe
- I'm afraid of
- I don't believe
- It's impossible.

But omitting these negative words is not enough. A sports team needs more than just a good defense to win; it also needs a strong offense. So, you must also mobilize your own offensive assault with the words you choose.

Build positive mental connections, personal strength and commitment by using these strength builders:

- I can
- I will
- Expect the best
- Commit
- I know
- I will make the time
- Positively
- I am confident
- I do believe
- All things are possible.

The power of your actions is preceded by the power of your words. Choose to speak with strength and watch the power of your words bring out the best in yourself and others!

Ask the Right Questions

The fastest way to change the answers you receive—from yourself and others—is to change the questions you ask. Consider the possible responses to questions like these:

- What happens if I fail at this?
- How will I deal with this problem employee?
- How can I get through this situation?
- How will I ever afford the car I want?

On the other hand, think about the responses that positive, more empowering questions will yield:

- What's the best way for me to be successful at this?
- How can I support the success of this employee?
- How can I make the most of this situation?
- What are the options I need to consider in order to buy the car I want?

In the last question about affording the car you want, asking the right question opens one's thinking to alternatives like: looking at a used model, no-money-down financing, increasing my savings for next six months to afford the down payment or looking at leases.

Asking the right question gets you better answers whether you are asking it of yourself or of others. **The questions you ask will either limit or expand the possible responses you get.** Additionally, your choice of words will

also dictate how involved, receptive and motivated the recipient will feel.

For example, in the heat of a month-end deadline, a sales manager might ask his lead representative, "Why are we falling short of this month's sales goal?" The representative naturally feels defensive, put on the spot and unable to respond to the supervisor's satisfaction, regardless of the reason. An alternative question could be, "What do you think we can do to ensure we meet our sales goal?" Now, the representative feels involved in the solution (versus being accused of the problem), receptive to brainstorming alternatives and supported by the supervisor. In short, he feels motivated to meet the goal.

The power of the answers you receive is directly proportionate to the power of the questions you ask. Consider how the questions you ask, both at work and at home, elicit certain responses. Ask yourself, "How can I ask questions to get the best from myself and others?"

Next time, we will discuss how to orchestrate your actions.

But you don't have to wait to take a *FREE Attitude Tune-up!* A five minute investment will help you practice these instruments and more effectively orchestrate your attitude! Visit www.theLgroup.com. □

