

# 10 Persuasion-Killing Phrases You Should Never Use

Topic: [HR Management](#)

Price is the author of recently published [Well Said! Presentations and Conversations That Get Results](#).

Of course, you've got to know your audience and tailor your content to meet their needs, says Price. And being sincere, natural, enthusiastic, and passionate go hand in hand with maintaining good eye contact and being calm and polite.

HOWEVER, beware of the 10 killer phrases that doom your pitch to failure. If you want to maximize your success as you climb the career ladder, says Price, here are 10 phrases you should never utter:

## 1. AVOID "I can't do that" or "That's impossible" or "That can't be done."

Even though you may feel this way on the inside, these negative phrases are perceived by others as pessimistic, unconstructive, and even stubborn. Your boss, peers, and customers most likely want to hear what CAN be done. Instead say, "I'll be glad to check on that for you" or "What I can do is ..." or "Because of company policy, what I CAN do is ..."

## 2. AVOID "You should have ..." or "You could have ..." or "You ought to have ..."

These words—should, could, and ought—imply blame, finger-pointing, and fault. There's no quicker way to upset a boss, colleague, or customer than to suggest that he or she is guilty of something (even if it's true). Instead, take a collaborative approach. "Please help me understand why ..." or "Next time may we adopt an alternative approach ...." or "I understand your challenges; let's resolve this together..."

## 3. AVOID "That's not my job" or "I don't get paid enough for this" or "That's not my problem."

If you're asked to do something by your boss, coworker, or a customer, it's because it's important to them. Therefore, as a team player, goal #1 is to figure out how to help them get it accomplished. Even if it's not in your job description, saying so displays a career-limiting bad attitude.

For example, if your boss lays an unreasonable request on you, reply by saying, "I'll be glad to help you accomplish that. Given my current tasks of A..., B..., and C..., which one of these would you like to place on the back-burner while I work on this new assignment?" This clearly communicates priority; reminds the boss of your current work load; and subtly implies realistic expectations.

## 4. AVOID "I may be wrong, but..." or "This may be a dumb question, but..." or "I'm not sure about this, but..." or "This may be a silly idea, but..."

Eliminate any prefacing phrase that demeans or negates what you're about to say. Instead, get rid of the self-deprecating phrase, drop the 'but,' and make your comment.

## 5. AVOID "I'll try."

Imagine your boss says to you, "I need your proposal by 10 a.m. tomorrow for the customer meeting." Your reply is, "OK. I'll try to get it finished." The word "try" implies the possibility it may not get finished. It presupposes possible failure. Instead say, "I'll get it finished" or "I'll have it on your desk by 9 a.m."

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## 6. AVOID “I think...”

Which of these two statements do you find to be more effective: “I think you might like this new solution we offer” vs. “I believe (or I’m confident) you’re going to like this new solution we offer”? The difference in wording is fairly subtle. However, the influence communicated to your customer can be profound. Reread each sentence. The first one contains two weak words, “think” and “might.” These words make you sound unsure or insecure about the message, and subtly undermine your credibility. Notice how the second sentence is confident and strong. Replace the word “think” with “believe” and strike the tentative “might.” That’s a statement from someone who believes in what he or she is saying.