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Training | Coaching | Speaking
www.gildabonanno.com
gilda@gildabonanno.com
203-979-5117

Choose Million-Dollar Words

When you're preparing and practicing a presentation, your word choice matters. If your words are weak or unclear, they can interfere with your ability to communicate your message effectively to your audience. To be an effective presenter, you should choose what I call "million-dollar words" - strong, evocative, precise and sensible words.

- **Choose strong words.** Your words should convey your confidence and convince the audience to believe your message. Avoid using "weasel" words like "hopefully" and "sort of." If you're unsure, say so directly, but don't let those weasel words creep into an otherwise certain statement. This tip also applies to networking situations or when you introduce yourself. I've actually heard people introduce themselves using weasel words, such as "I'm Joe Smith and I kinda work in IT and sorta am responsible for disaster recovery." That introduction does not convey confidence.
- **Choose evocative words.** "She felt drained and collapsed into the chair." Can you see the image that those words convey? What if speaker said instead, "she was tired and sat down in the chair"? While that sentence is grammatically correct, it does not paint the picture as strongly as the first sentence.
- **Choose precise words.** American author Mark Twain said it best: "The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."
- **Choose sensible words** - words that make sense to your audience. Be careful not to overuse jargon or buzzwords like "leveraging our assets" or "touching base." Don't use a long word when a shorter one will do. Choose "explain" or "clarify" instead of "elucidate," for example. Using words that make sense to your audience will enable you to communicate your message clearly and effectively.

The next time you prepare and practice a presentation, spend a few minutes and focus on your word choice. Cut out any distracting or ambiguous words that cloud your meaning and replace them with million-dollar words - strong, evocative, precise and sensible. You'll be amazed at how much more effective your presentation will be.

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