

Mind your Language

Have you ever considered how the language you use may be influencing your behaviour and other people's perceptions of you?

One of the most potent barriers to effective communication and positive influencing is our use of language.

Inflexible

The following words reflect (and potentially create) an environment where things are perceived as black or white and as sources of tension:

Urgent, overstretched, crisis, problem, deadline, threat, target, must, should, always and never.

Flexible

These words represent multiple viewpoints and greater flexibility:

Important, challenged, opportunity, turning point, time frame, possibilities, evolution, adaptation, strategies, could, usually and seldom.

To make sure your language is getting you the results you want:

- Pay more attention to the language used by someone you admire.
- Evaluate the impact of your language by taking a look at the letters and memos you write, or tape a few of your conversations and presentations.
- Assess whether this is the view you want to present.
- If not, create or adopt a list of words that are more open, flexible, and creative.
- Try using the replacement words for a period of time (ideally, at least 21 days).
- Assess the impact of your new approach to language. You may find it has brought about positive changes in your behaviour and the performance of the people around you.