



## 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 on the next page. What words can you add to this list?

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

Activate	Balance	Change	Defend
Advocate	Bedrock	Community	Degrade
Affirm	Benefit	Compassion	Democracy
American	Bold	Confirm	Destroy
Assist	Champion	Damage	Dignity
Diversity	Fairness	Harm	Hope
Endanger	Faith	Health	Hurt
Energize	Family	Help	Imperil
Engage	Fighting	Heritage	Injure
Equality	Forward	Honor	Integrity
Jeopardize	Neighborhood	Preserve	Protect
Justice	Nourish	Pride	Public
Legacy	Nurture	Principle	Relief
Mobilize	People	Progress	Respect
Nation	Power	Promote	Responsible
Risk	Threaten		
Safeguard	Tolerance	Value	
Strengthen	Tradition	Working	
Support	Trust		
Sustain	Unity		

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