

# rB Vocabulary is Important | Rod Brace

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"Words kill, words give life; they're either poison or fruit -- you decide." - Proverbs 18:21, The Message

Vocabulary is important. However, we are so surrounded with words that we minimize their impact on our own well-being and that of others.

In Tribal Leadership, authors Logan, King and Fischer-Wright use one's language to place individuals and their collective organization in various stages of development. They point to "a specific fingerprint made up of language that people use" to understand the person's outlook on life including their work. Their premise is that when we change our vocabulary, we change our beliefs which in turn reinforces our new perspective and communication style.

Words have long been known to build up or tear down a child's self-esteem and life-perspective. That impact appears to have a similar affect on adults. I have been surprised through my 25 years of leadership to find past employees who still remember a compliment I gave or kept a thank you note I sent many years ago. We hold to the admiration given to us by our leaders. That admiration reinforces a leader's ability to "endear" those who follow to his or her leadership; which I believe is the strongest organizational connection to which a leader can aspire.

Words, of course, cannot be mere hollow scripts. Compliments and encouragement must be heart felt. Inquiries into a team member's well-being must be genuine. Transparency on the part of the leader must be real. Words are a reflection of our inner-beliefs. While they can be used to manipulate on occasion, over time, they will always bear out deeper convictions.

The Proverbs teach at length about the incredible power of words. Words are the means by which others will interpret our values, follow our encouraging vision, and learn of unknown capabilities. We are cautioned to guard our words. We are told that our words convey wisdom and cultivate honesty. They are not merely words -- they are elements of teaching, healing and direction. They are to be used wisely.

If you find some under your leadership who lack confidence, consider what your words have done to put them in that diminished state. Have you thoughtlessly dismissed their thoughts with a quick dismissal of their ideas and a statement of your own thoughts?

Consider how your words have stripped them of motivation. Have you removed their accountability and responsibility by speaking to them as children?

If you find they are self-focused at the expense of the team, have your words conveyed your efforts are all about me, my or I? Our team will mimic our words and therefore adopt our beliefs.

Vocabulary is important. Proverbs 16:10 instructs that "A good leader motivates, doesn't mislead, doesn't exploit." Your words will determine your standing against that promise.