



The Power of Five Little Words By Marci Moore & Pam Williams, The Innergized!™ Team

© Innergized!, Inc. 2005

For information about reprinting this article for your newsletter, website or electronic publication contact Pam Williams at 727-455-3628 or info@innergized.com

With the ever-increasing demands on your time and energy, effective communication in the workplace is more important than ever before. The costs of poor communication are high: misunderstandings between co-workers, lost productivity and in some cases, the end of once treasured relationships. George Bernard Shaw once said, "The greatest problem with communication is the **illusion** that it has been accomplished." Effective communication can certainly be a challenge.

There are barriers all around us. We don't always have enough time or energy, leaving our communication to five minutes between other commitments or a quick e-mail fired off before we leave the office for a week. Each of us listens through unique filters that come from our upbringing and life experiences. Other barriers include unresolved anger, lack of communication skills, distractions, and even different communication styles! As challenging as successful communication can be, the payoff is enhanced and more fully engaged relationships.

Effective communication can be traced to five simple words. Are you skeptical? We would have been too, if this advice hadn't been shared by one of our executive coaching clients, the well respected CEO of a large organization. This woman is a brilliant, sought after expert in her field, who learned the value of these five little words as a busy working mother. Over the years, she has found that they work equally well when communicating with her spouse, her staff, her board and all the others in her life. The five little words are: **YES, NO, REALLY, MAYBE and WOW!** It's that simple.

Let's start with the two of the first communication words we learn - **YES** and **NO**. Say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no. In other words, be authentic and clear in your communication. Don't expect others to read your mind, or to understand that when you say yes in a certain tone of voice, it really means no. By expecting others to decipher your messages, everyone wastes precious energy and time - a commodity we'd all like to have more of.

"The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention..." (Rachel Naomi Remen). Listening and expressing a sincere interest in what others have to say is another simple way to improve your communication. Listen deeply and actively to the ideas and concerns of others. Rather than jumping in with your own thoughts and stories, give others time and space to fully express their thoughts. When they stop talking, use words like **REALLY** to get more information. **REALLY?** Tell me more. **REALLY?** That's very interesting. I'd love to hear about it. Be patient - if this is a new habit for you, it may take some time for others to get comfortable with the idea that you are actually willing to listen. Listening is easy to talk about and harder to do, so you may want to create a visual reminder for yourself. One client used a small piece of duct tape wrapped around her pencil to remind her to listen when she was tempted to open her mouth.

Let's turn our attention to using communication to negotiate. When your response to a request is not a definite yes or no, how about **MAYBE?** Share the knowledge or concerns that make you hesitant to say yes. Create an environment that

empowers the other person and helps develop their decision making skills. Don't be afraid to disagree or negotiate - differing perspectives ultimately lead to better results. Do make sure that the environment for these discussions is one of healthy respect.

Finally, use the power of **WOW!** to recognize accomplishments and give praise. As Ken Blanchard says, "feedback is the breakfast of champions." A Gallup survey showed that employees who receive regular praise and recognition were more productive, more likely to stay with their employers, and had better on-the-job safety records.¹ And yet, according to another Gallup survey, in 2003, 65% of employees polled said they got no recognition for good work. Praise doesn't need to be perfect, just specific, genuine and deserved.

YES. NO. REALLY? MAYBE. WOW! Experiment with these five simple words and discover how they can transform communication with everyone in your life. Just remember that *simple* doesn't always mean *easy*, so practice, practice and practice some more.

¹ "The Power of Praise and Recognition," by Tom Rath and Donald O. Clifton, *Gallup Management Journal*, July 8, 2004.

Marci Moore and Pam Williams, co-founders of Innergized! Inc., partner with individuals, teams and organizations to help them successfully navigate transitions, build on their strengths, create stronger relationships, develop more focus, and create the energy necessary for lasting results. They offer a unique and fun team approach to their speaking, coaching, and consulting. Visit www.innergized.com to learn more about the 2008 Ultimate Success Circle for Professional Women and subscribe to their free Innergizing Tips newsletter.