



WORDS THAT INSPIRE GIVING

*“Good words are worth much,
and cost little.”* –George Herbert, Poet

As a savvy communicator, you know the power of words, but did you know that finding the right words can have a big impact on the level of donations you receive? Numerous studies have shown that adjusting your “ask” to include certain words can lead to a substantial increase in the amount you receive.

Sometimes the reason for the success of these words is self-evident (what donor wouldn’t want to be known as

being compassionate or kind?) Others are words that work when used to describe your organization or the people you are supporting. There are even words that work better based on the gender of the audience.

Here’s a list of some words that, when chosen carefully, can connect you more strongly with new and existing supporters and increase the amount of money you receive.

These words combine smart marketing with smart fundraising!

The 'Why' Word

Because

Providing a specific reason for your ask will make people more willing to comply with your request because it highlights the purpose or gives details about your work. ("We are reaching out to you today **because** this special drive will allow us to feed more children"). Because is also a powerful word when you acknowledge a donation ("**Because** of your generous gift of \$25, we were able to provide a nutritious dinner for 10 children.")

The 'Moral' Words

Kind

Care

Compassionate

Generous

Helpful

Academic Jen Shang, who with her husband Adrian Sargeant opened the Hartsook Centre for Sustainable Philanthropy at Plymouth University, has identified these words as among the most highly effective in fundraising because they are adjectives American use to describe "moral" people. Donors understandably have a positive response to being associated with these words, but again, they must be used with care. "Randomly injecting these words into the same communication that donors would not otherwise read anyway does not help anybody," she noted in a New York Times interview. "It is about allowing the donors the opportunity to reflect on who they think they are."

The 'Deserving' Words

Hardworking

Honest

Words indicating that those who benefit from your nonprofit are “worthy” and deserve that support can help secure a donation for your organization. A study from the University of London indicates people are more likely to give when they feel the beneficiaries are working to make their own lives better. It's the difference between “lending a hand” and “giving a handout.”

The 'Emotional Gratification' Words

Instant

Immediate

Loving

Small

We often consult our hearts more than our heads when giving; an emotional and urgent appeal finds us reaching for the phone or our debit card more quickly than a recitation of facts and statistics of how a nonprofit is helping. Certain words convey that better than others.

Instant and **immediate** let us know that our funds are going to work quickly on a group's behalf. Small works because it makes a donation seem manageable yet powerful (“A small gift of \$5 a month will allow us to...”)

Loving is the most interesting of these heart-filled words. According to a report from the BBC, a French professor of social psychology conducted an experiment where he placed donation cans in bakeries for a charity working in Africa. The cans were identical except that some said “donating = helping” and others said “donating = loving.” The ones that equated donations with love raised twice as much money as the ones that said “helping.”

The 'Guy' Words

Loyal

Responsible

Strong

Shang, who identified the words that Americans associated with a “moral” person (see above) also noted in her research that while those words were highly effective with women, they worked less well with male benefactors. Her studies showed that words like **loyal**, **responsible** and **strong** in appeals to men were much more effective.

The '**Capable**' Words

Certified

Highly-Rated

Expert

Your organization's reputation and the quality of your work can also affect fundraising. Touting your certification or ratings with groups like GuideStar or Charity Navigator can help establish your bona fides with potential contributors. If your organization is funding something like scientific research, it might also be useful to highlight that those conducting the research are experts in their fields.

The '**Two Most Important**' Words

Thank You!

Granted this last phrase will probably be used after the donor expresses an interest in your group or gives your money, but they are still the most important words in the fundraising process. Acknowledging your donors and expressing gratitude for their support will not only ensure that they feel like a vital partner in your endeavor; it will also help your retention efforts.

By carefully using the words that **inspire giving**, you'll help nurture a new relationship with donors that can benefit your organization for years to come.