

## Are You Impressive or Impactful?

By Jill Konrath

Finding the right words to describe your product or service offering can be an agonizing task. As you well know, in today's crazy business environment it's tough to stand out from the crowd and impress corporate decision makers. That's why all the time, effort and resources invested in this valiant effort is so worthwhile.

But is it really? Before you answer, consider this meticulously crafted statement found on a technology company's website:

"We deliver an innovative, enterprise-class business integration platform that incorporates proven integration technology with next generation capabilities into one interoperable set of tools that delivers a unique combination of efficiency, agility and control."

Or how about this statement used by a business services firm trying to crack into corporate accounts:

"We facilitate corporate strategic achievement, high-speed knowledge transfer and employee engagement by utilizing a proprietary process which incorporates world class intellectual capital, proven management principles, an in-depth understanding of the human psyche as well as unique tools."

Are you duly impressed? They're loaded with all those power words that, according to many marketing gurus, will differentiate your offering from all your competitors. In fact, I'm amazed both companies were able to get so many differentiators in just a single sentence. Clearly they're not only superior to their competitors, but also quite "unique" – or so they said.

Unfortunately these "differentiated" messages have been heard a thousand times before by jaded corporate decision makers who have no interest in learning more. They're not impressed by your exciting, leading-edge products or full range of services.

From their perspective, it's a disingenuous self-serving pitch. Without even thinking, they immediately erect insurmountable barriers that are impossible for you to overcome. If you've heard comments like these before, it's highly likely that you tried to impress your prospects:

- We're already working with ..
- It's not in the budget.
- We're not interested at this time.

Simply put, being impressive doesn't work. So what's the solution? Here are some ideas on how you change the game so that it plays to your strengths.

## **Cut out the Crap**

Throw out all those impressive words and phrases that are utterly meaningless. They've got to go. Now! They're literally hurting your sales efforts. Unless you're incredibly diligent, you'll find them sneaking into your voicemails, popping up when you're networking, or showing up out during conversations with prospective customers.

Look at your written material too. While you may not be able to influence the collateral done by your corporate office, you certainly can control what's in your own emails, letters, PowerPoint presentations or proposals.

Be ruthless in this endeavor. Take out a big red marker and highlight any time it sounds like you're trying to impress the decision maker.

## **Focus on the Impact**

After you've cut out all the crap, you may not have too much to say about your product or services. That's good! No one cares about it anyway. All they care about is the difference you can make for their organization – which is your value proposition.

It's time to get to the heart of the matter. So get out there, talking to customers and determine what it is.

- What outcomes have they achieved because of your business relationship?
- What effect has your offering had on critical business metrics?
- What were the ramifications on their business unit, division, or department?

Listen to the words they use. You'll quickly discover that they don't speak "sales talk" at all. You'll never hear them rave about your unique methodology, passion for excellence or one-stop shopping. Instead, they'll talk about shortening time to market, increasing productivity, reducing error rates and driving sales in new markets.

That's their language. It's time to start using it. Don't get fancy and try to "Wow" your prospects with high-falluting language. Get down and dirty. Talk like they do. Discuss the problems they face, the challenges ahead, and the business objectives they must reach. Emphasize how you can help by focusing on them – not your "stuff."

When you focus on the impact instead of trying to be impressive, you'll notice an immediate change in their reactions to you. Instead of erecting barriers, they'll actually invite you into their company. Instead of hurling objections at you, they'll ask for your ideas & insights.

Isn't that what you want?

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Jill Konrath, author of *Selling to Big Companies*, is a recognized sales strategist in the highly competitive business-to-business market. A popular speaker at sales meetings, she helps her clients crack into corporate accounts, speed up their sales cycle and generate demand for their offering..

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