

Power Verbs for Managers and Executives

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Power Verbs for Managers and Executives

**HUNDREDS OF VERBS AND
PHRASES TO COMMUNICATE
MORE DYNAMICALLY AND
EFFECTIVELY**

**MICHAEL LAWRENCE FAULKNER
WITH MICHELLE FAULKNER-LUNSFORD**

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*To all my colleagues at DeVry, Inc., DeVry University,
and Keller Graduate School of Management who have
willingly and unselfishly shared their experiences,
backgrounds, knowledge, and understanding of the authentic
concepts of leadership and management.*

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Foreword

Americans who have spent time in or near the center of power in the industrial, political, social, or academic sectors of society have developed an intrinsic sense of the pivotal importance of vocabulary to catalyze an idea and transform the thinking of an individual, engender a new sense of identity of a work group, transform the mission of a large business enterprise, or even stimulate a sense of purpose and destiny of an entire society.

Dr. Faulkner's extensive experience base in the industrial and academic sectors uniquely positions him to offer a singularly insightful and valuable perspective on "power verbs," sharing previously undisclosed usage techniques and powerful concatenations of verbs that have the "weight" to transform and empower new ideas and catalyze a renewed sense of purpose and commitment and potentially even transform the life of the user. Dr. Faulkner characterizes these power verbs as "verbs that are emotionally edgy, powerfully positioned, with a kick, punch, and pizzazz."

Dr. Faulkner puts power verbs into a practical framework that focuses on the usage and dynamics of thoughtfully structured verbs that can generate real energy and power. It is an interesting, entertaining, and generally fun-to-read book with the serious potential to transform a person's career!

The motivation for this new book is centered only on the use of power verbs rather than developing a work on language skills. Dr. Faulkner compellingly develops the significance of language as having the power to shape the thinking of others—and he highlights the importance of what people really hear rather than the exactness of what is spoken. He sensitizes the reader about the power of words to do well or harm—it all depends on the synthesis of power verbs and the dynamism of the speaker. Most impressively, Dr. Faulkner explains how specific characterizations of power verbs and the use of imagery can significantly alter the mind-set and mood of the listener.

This refreshing and novel approach to language is entertaining, interesting, and exceedingly practical for anyone wanting to expand his or her sense of contribution to nearly any aspect of human endeavor. It is a "can't miss" opportunity to be nourished in the reading of this important and novel body of work!

*Eric J. Addeo, Ph.D., Chair: Networking and Communications Department,
College of Engineering and Information Sciences, DeVry University*

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About the Author

Dr. Michael Lawrence Faulkner is the author of six books. He is a professor at the Keller Graduate School of Management at DeVry University. He is a former U.S. Marine, who spent 30 years in a variety of leadership and executive management positions with Fortune 500 firms and major nonprofit trade associations, as well as helping run the family business before beginning his second career in academics. Michael is a member of MENSA, a Rotary International Fellow, the Keller Master Teacher Award, and holds a Silver Certification by the Toastmaster's International. In addition to his Ph.D., Michael has earned two master's degrees, one from NYU and an MBA from NYIT.

Michelle Faulkner-Lunsford is a 2001 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University where she majored in English and minored in Writing. Mrs. Lunsford spent 10+ years in the world of advertising and marketing as an Account Manager and Director of Marketing and New Business Development, managing multi-million dollar accounts from male enhancement medications to beer ads. In 2011, Michelle left the corporate world for the opportunity to raise her daughter.

Introduction

“Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning.”

—*Maya Angelou*

There is little doubt that communication is one of man’s most important tools. We use the tool (speaking, listening, graphic expression, and writing) to make sense of our world; to interact with other people; to network; and to express our feelings, moods, and intent. Communications, particularly our words, affect who and what we are as a species. How we use words has a major impact on the kind of world we create for ourselves and others. The roles of leaders, managers, and executives has not changed much since man became civilized but the mythologies—the way we carry out the roles—has changed.

There is a quotation attributed to Plutarch, although there are no sources that can trace it to him, which goes, “When Cicero spoke, people said, ‘How well Cicero speaks!’ But, when Demosthenes spoke, they said, ‘Let us march against Phillip.’” The point here is that when leaders speak, it is usually, but not always, to persuade. Sometimes the purpose is to inform, but as Rudyard Kipling said, “Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind” so whenever we speak, we are using a powerful human tool. Thomas Fuller may have said it best, “When the heart is afire, some sparks will fly out of the mouth.” This book will give you some sparks.

This book is not intended to teach specific skills of leadership, management, or even public speaking, oration, rhetoric, or how to deliver a good presentation. You will not learn detailed skills of visualization, or in-depth channeling of your message. You will not learn details of tone, cadence, pitch, or resonance. You will not learn the details of nonverbal body language such as hand and arm gestures. However, it is a book that will introduce these concepts (and hopefully you will explore them further on your own).

It is a book that can help make you a better leader, manager, or supervisor by helping you become a more powerful, more effective communicator. It can do this because it will help you choose the most powerful verbs—the spark of sentences—powerful verbs that will resonate deeply with people, powerful verbs that people will react to and remember.

I am referring to the power verbs that are the flame that makes phrases and sentences that will ignite peoples' passions, the power verbs that kindle, illuminate purpose, and make people want to take action...to march on Phillip.

Michael Faulkner

1

The Technology and Power of Language

Why a book on verbs, you may be asking? Not just verbs, but “power verbs.” There are a couple of reasons. First, there are already more books on language skills and specifically verbs than you can imagine, so the world does not need another one of those books. Second, it would not be much fun to write or read another boring language skills book (not that all the other books on verbs are boring). But, if they were so interesting, wouldn’t there be a movie or a music video of one of these books by now? Lastly, this isn’t a book about the old standby verbs. Everyone knows the 16 basic English language verbs: *be, do, have, come, go, see, seem, give, take, keep, make, put, send, say, let, and get*. We won’t spend much time of these.

Power verbs, on the other hand, are verbs that are emotionally edgy, powerfully positioned, with a kick, punch, and pizzazz. There will be more on these gregarious verbs later.

There are hundreds of books, guidebooks, blogs, and other ways for people to learn about how to use verbs and grammar. However, we wrote this book because in our combined half century of experience in leading, teaching, managing, mentoring, coaching, and marketing (and, oh yes, parenting), we learned one fundamental truth: It’s the combination of the chosen word(s) and the power of the way they are delivered—the rhythm—that makes the greatest difference in how people receive and react to words. We also realized that using power verbs adds color, flavor, spark, enhanced rhythm, and kick to our written words as well, such as poems, plays, and other writing. We have noticed that many writers and speakers hang safely to bland “verbs of being.” Just as a reminder, verbs of being are forms of the infinitive *to be*—*am, are, is, was, were, be, being, been, have, had, might, may, must, could, can, would, will, should, and shall*. No one has to tell you these tend to be stylistically passive, stiff, somewhat bland, dull, and pedantic—somewhat boring, but safe. Of course, sometimes these verbs of being are necessary and that is when they should be used—when necessary.

LET'S TAKE A MOMENT AND THINK ABOUT LANGUAGE

“Words are the counters of wise men, and the money of fools.”

—Thomas Hobbes

One of the peculiar characteristics of our culture is how we deal with communicating with one another. Communication is perhaps the most important human function in which we engage and we don't do it very well and aren't trained very well. Because we don't trust our instincts driven by our amygdala (which some refer to as our animal brain) as much as we should, we have trouble really absorbing the nonverbal human communications adequately.

Think about all our acculturation that teaches us to deny our amygdala-driven instincts (e.g., “We'll cross that bridge when we come to it,” “Don't judge a book by its cover,” “Don't jump to conclusions,” “Look before you leap,” “Act in haste, repent at your leisure,” “We should have a committee meeting to talk it over first”). In spite of the knowledge of how much communication is transferred by nonverbal cues, there is very little education and training in our schools to improve human nonverbal perception.

We know from empirical research that an overwhelming amount of human communications (as much as 97%) is conveyed by nonverbal cues. These nonverbal cues are what some people refer to as body language. Much of this body language is found in various facial expressions. Research has shown that in spite of wide cultural differences in language and cultural norms, there are eight universal facial nonverbal expressions recognized throughout the world. Dr. Paul Ekman spent years studying facial cues and discovered 190 muscles in the nose and eye region of humans; many of these muscles respond involuntarily and are keys to determine whether a person is telling the truth or lying. Some of these muscle movements are so subtle that only a trained expert can detect movement. However, most people “feel” these by their amygdala, the almond-shaped portion of their brain or what some refer to as the animal or reptile brain. Long before humans developed our thinking brain—the cerebral cortex—our amygdala functioned and provided the fight-or-flight emotion. Fortunately for our species, we chose flight early on in a hostile environment where we were outgunned by bigger, faster, and fiercer predators. We were low on the food chain but had the advantage of having the amygdala, which allowed our species to survive and evolve.

For the 3% of human communication that is conveyed by language, we generally don't listen as effectively as we could and our educational system often fails students and society with minimal communication skills (writing and speaking skills). When you consider that communication is how we express almost every desire, need, emotion, feeling, want, expectation,

demand, and frustration to other humans, it is surprising and disappointing that lower forms of life do a better job of communicating.

We know that man communicated with other men for thousands of years prior to the invention of human language. Long before human verbal language, people found mates, raised families, hunted together, joined in early tribal communities, and selected leaders, but there was virtually no innovation, hardly any art or crafts, no real trade or commerce, and a very short life span. Then came language and everything changed.

This book is by no means an attempt to explain any particular theory of human development, but merely an extremely simplified explanation of how language may have developed for the purposes of positioning language as an important component of your culture.

Kevin Kelly wrote a book in 2010 entitled *What Technology Wants*. In this provocative book, Kelly introduced a brand-new view of technology in which he suggests that technology is not just hardwired metal and chips, but a living, natural system whose origin goes back to the big bang.

My intention is not to review the book. However, I would recommend it be read by every manager, supervisor, boss, mentor, coach, influencer, instigator, team leader, team member, entrepreneur, capitalist, investor, futurist, provocateur, teacher, professor, minister, government employee, politician, or new parent.

One point of Kelly's book to which I will refer is the point he makes with regard to the technology of language. However, to get to that point, it is necessary to cover some human history, so stay with me for a little while.

We know humans developed language about 50,000 years ago. There are theories that language developed slowly and other theories that it developed more or less spontaneously. For our discussion, it doesn't matter how language developed—it only matters that human language developed about 50,000 years ago. Kelly traces the development of human language to the behavior of humans. By tracing the behavior of the human species, we can follow Kelly's argument that language followed certain human behavior patterns.

At some point about 2.5 million years ago, the human brain grew larger and we began to use more refined tools than our ape line. Archaeological evidence shows the growth of human brains and simple stone tools. At this point, the first migration began out of Africa for two human species—Neanderthal to Europe and *Homo erectus* to Asia—*sapiens* remained in Africa. It is important to note all three species had the same brain size and same rough tools. Over the next 50 million years, all three species developed at about the same pace (none with language skills). All three species hunted with simple tools, developed crude art, had children, lived relatively short lives, did not bury their dead, and the population of these groups remained unchanged. This was the Mesolithic Period.

Then around 50,000 years ago, something radically different changed, something radical happened, something very radically different occurred. The sapiens in Africa suddenly underwent significant genetic changes. The sapiens became full of ideas and innovations and developed the desire to innovate, move, and explore new worlds. They spread out of Africa in what is known as the second migration and in 40,000 years had settled in every corner of the earth.

In a fraction of 1 percent of the time it took for the first migration to take place and for the first wave to settle in one spot, the sapiens covered the world. Not only did the sapiens have the desire to move, but they were also full of innovation. They developed fishhooks, fishnets, variable size spears and bows and arrows, sewing, and hearth stoves; they buried their dead; and they created sophisticated art and jewelry. Sapiens developed trade, pottery, and animal traps and built garbage pits. In the process of mastering all these innovative things, they overwhelmed their Neanderthal and Homo erectus brothers, leaving sapiens the only human species on the planet.

The question we have to ask is what caused the radical change in sapiens? How did it occur? It can be argued that there was a point mutation or a rewiring of the brain was the cause. We are not proposing a cause, only stating the fact that there was an outcome that something radically changed, that something happened, that something very different occurred 50,000 years ago, and that radical change was language occurred and radically changed mankind forever.

WHAT IS THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF LANGUAGE?

Language accelerates learning; it speeds up innovation by permitting communication and coordination. A new idea can be spread quickly if someone can explain it and communicate it to others before they have to discover it themselves.

Taking the new technology one step further, language gave sapiens and us autogeneration, which is the ability of the mind to question itself. It is a mirror that reveals to the mind what the mind is thinking, allowing self-awareness and self-reference, and language explains the innovations and ideas that have formed in the mind. Without language, we could not access the bank of thoughts and ideas. We could not tell stories, interpret case studies, or compare things; we could not consciously create.

We use language, verbal and nonverbal, to make sense of our world. We use it to interact, confirm, beg, act, command, inquire, network, court, teach, coach, and entertain. A few verbal and nonverbal messages can influence us, can change our minds, can cause us to do something different, or can change

our position or vote. Words affect who we are. Without words, we would be isolated. Language and its nuances are uniquely human.

Language is something we learn completely by audio cues—by listening. We do this because human brains are hardwired—genetically prewired to learn language by listening as an infant. It is interesting that we are not even consciously aware we are cognitively learning. Before we had the ability to speak words, others could understand us. Our species survived and advanced, making other members understand with nonverbal cues. For millions of years, children communicated to their mothers that they were hungry. Men communicated to women and women to men that they were interested in them as partners. Hunters collaborated on big animal kills long before a word was spoken; man even showed another how to start and keep a fire going long before there were words for such things. Anthropologists believe the spoken word appeared on the scene around 50,000 BC—a long time to use grunts and pointing and body language.

The special significance of language as a great idea lies in the fact that it is related to all other great ideas insofar as ideas and thoughts are expressed to other persons, for the most part, in words, in speech, in language.

In Plato's dialogues, he used Socrates as a character and he spoke of people continually, calling attention to the slippery nature of words and how sometimes words conceal thoughts as well as express them. In more modern times, philosophers like Hobbes and Locke wrote about the abuse of words and how language should be used.

Today, we sort of view language as an enemy, a barrier to communication, a tyranny of words. There is even a debate over whether communications and speech are the same thing.

THE POWER OF WORDS

“The great use of words is to hide our thoughts.”

—Voltaire

As Dr. Frank Luntz says, “It’s not what you say. It’s what people hear” (Luntz 2007, xi). The meaning of this is the audience will translate your message through a prism of their own biases, interests, knowledge, awareness, feelings, attention span, and many other interpretative filters.

Once you have spoken words, they are no longer yours. Other people will translate them, evaluate them, and measure them. Choose your words, make them appropriate for the situation, and be aware of the power of words. Poorly chosen words or speech used for personal, hubris, or evil can impact self-esteem, destroy morale, kill enthusiasm, inflame bias, incite hatred, lower expectations, hold people back, and even make people physically or mentally

ill. Inappropriate words can make work and home toxic, abusive environments. There are many empirical studies showing that people who live and/or work in toxic environments suffer more colds, more cases of flu, more heart attacks, more depression, more of almost all chronic disorders, physical and emotional, than people who report living and/or working in happy, enjoyable, caring environments.

The old parental advice, “Sticks and stones can break your bones, but words can never hurt you,” was simply bad advice. However, well-chosen words or speech for the benefit of good or hope for others can motivate or inspire others to greater feats and deeds. They can offer hope; create vision; impact thinking beliefs and behavior of others; and alter results of strategy, plans, objectives, and people’s lives.

Peggy Noonan, the national syndicated columnist, knows a thing or two about words and how they impact us. She wrote recently about the advice Clare Boothe Luce once gave the newly inaugurated U.S. President John F. Kennedy. Ms. Luce was truly a remarkable woman. Her career spanned seven decades and nearly as many professional interests—journalism, politics, theatre, diplomacy, and intelligence.

According to Ms. Noonan, the sentence idea comes from a story Clare Boothe Luce told about a conversation she had in 1962 in the White House with her old friend John F. Kennedy. She said she told him that “a great man is one sentence.” His leadership can be so well summed up in a single sentence that you don’t have to hear his name to know who’s being talked about. “He preserved the union and freed the slaves” or “He lifted us out of a great depression and helped to win a World War.” You didn’t have to be told “Lincoln” or “FDR.”

She wondered what Kennedy’s sentence would be. She was telling him to concentrate, to know the great themes and demands of his time, and focus on them. It was good advice. History has imperatives, and sometimes they are clear. Sometimes they are met, and sometimes not. When they’re clear and met, you get quite a sentence (*The Wall Street Journal* 2009).

Let’s look at a more contemporary example: the historic 2012 presidential debates. These debates may have more significance than previous ones because of the words chosen by the candidates, their rhythm, and their physical, nonverbal cues. A big part of communicating successfully depends on how well we negotiate the paradox of how the vast majority of human communication is conducted.

We know that more than 97% of human communication involves nonverbal cues (body language). To have a successful presentation, speech, or presidential debate performance, we must compose a sophisticated but seamless message, uniting our words in the proper rhythm, and use the corresponding nonverbal cues. If the words chosen don’t match the nonverbal cues or

vice versa, the audience will be confused and the message will be diminished or, worse, ignored.

In the world of movies, theater, art, and entertainment, words have a dramatic impact. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* edition, a special report entitled “What’s In a Name?” discussed a number of box office successes that might have had a different result if their original titles had not been changed. For example, the Bogart classic *Casablanca* had an original title of *Everybody Comes to Rick’s*. The Julia Roberts/Richard Gere blockbuster *Pretty Woman* had an original title of *\$3,000*. The successful *G.I. Jane* was supposed to be released as *In Defense of Honor*. The world might not have ever remembered Diane Keaton and Woody Allen in *Anhedonia*, which was fortunately changed to *Annie Hall* (*Wall Street Journal* 2012).

Words have the power to affect both the physical and emotional health of people to whom we speak, for better or for worse. Words used to influence are inspiring, uplifting, and challenging. They encourage, motivate, and persuade; they can be visionary; they can change people’s lives for the better. Verbal communication is a powerful human instrument and we must learn to use it properly. We need to not only learn to think about speaking in new ways, but also learn to think about language and human nature, psychology, and sociology.

Throughout history, there have been many examples of memorable quotes to demonstrate how what is said is just as important as how it was said. For example, when Lyndon B. Johnson was stumping for political office, he was debating an opponent and was asked the difference between himself and the opposing candidate. He famously replied, “He matriculated and I never matriculated.”

Some of the most famous speeches made by Abraham Lincoln are memorable not just for the message, but also for the fact that he condensed an enormous amount of information into them. It was not only the power of his words, but also his cadence that made the impact of the speeches more powerful. His second inaugural speech was only 700 words and the Gettysburg Address was just under three minutes.

The power of words can actually harm others. Power verbs express an action that is to be taken or that has been taken. When used correctly, a powerful verb has the power to impact your life whether you are going into battle, running for president, or simply interviewing for a job. Researchers have observed that when students are given standardized tests and told the tests are “intelligence exams,” the average scores are from 10% to 20% lower than when the same exam is given to similar students and told it is “just an exam.”

We know that words create impressions, ideas, images, concepts, and facsimiles. Therefore, the words that we hear and read influence how we think

and consequently how we behave. This means there is a correlation between the words we select and use and the results that occur.

Using powerful verbal imagery helps people to imagine vivid images and allows people to figuratively and literally see concepts being mentioned. This was first discovered in the early twentieth century and was initially known as the Perky effect and later called visual simulation. Individuals can project abstract thoughts. Almost everyone does this from time to time, but we refer to it as daydreaming. When a person daydreams, he is completely awake and his eyes are wide open, yet he imagines being somewhere else, doing something else.

Visual simulation impacts what people hear and how fast they respond. A cognitive psychologist, Rolf Zwann, has done a lot of research on the topic of what impact in terms of visual simulation is there when objects are in different orientations and shapes and people are asked to describe the objects, particularly if the people are prompted with words or sentences with the object beforehand. The results indicate people respond faster because what they see and hear were mentally simulated beforehand (Bergen 2012, 95). Many studies have confirmed that people construct visual simulations of objects they hear or read about.

People construct shape and orientation simulation. Studies show that when people listened, they more often looked at the set of objects that fit with the meaning of the verb, even before they heard the name of the relevant object. People make predictions about what the rest of the sentence will contain as soon as words that they have already heard start to constrain what could reasonably follow. People start to cobble their understanding of the sentence incrementally (Bergen 2012, 125).

Grammar helps get the visual simulation going by pulling together all the pieces contributed by the words in the correct configuration. People will more easily and clearly understand and comprehend your meaning if you have structured your sentence correctly. One particular form is transitive sentences. It is one that has a transfer of possession meaning. They start with a noun or noun phrases, are followed by a verb, and then have one or two noun phrases. The following is an example:

The outgoing CEO **kicked the problem down the road** to the new CEO.

If we use the intended transfer definition, the transitive describes an intended transfer of an object to a recipient, and, naturally, the recipient must be capable of receiving something (Bergen 2012, 106).

Words we use and the impact they have can even be impacted by our background and other influences. Consider the words *buy* and *invest*. If you are selling life insurance, you want the customer to buy, but in your mind, the purchase is a long-term investment. The premiums will be invested, the face value

of the policy will grow, there will eventually be loan value, and the investment will appreciate beyond the purchase price.

However, the customer thinks in terms of buying and how much it costs. The issue comes full circle again if the customer does buy and if he or she wants the insurance company to make good investments.

Nan Russell, writing for *Career Know-How*, introduces this word choice: problem or challenge. Would you rather your boss see your mistake as a problem or a challenge? Is it just semantics? Problems are things that are fixed; challenges are met. Different words evoke a set of different emotions and different feelings. People usually have a much more positive feeling about “meeting a challenge” than “fixing a problem.”

There is information about the medicinal benefits of power verbs as well as a warning about the power of words which, if used inappropriately, can actually cause individuals to become ill.

“In the study, published in *Pain*, researchers used functional magnetic resonance tomography (fMRI) to examine how 16 healthy people processed words associated with experiencing pain. The brain scans revealed which parts of the brain were activated in response to hearing the words.

In the first experiment, researchers asked the participants to imagine situations that corresponded with words associated with pain—such as ‘excruciating,’ ‘paralyzing,’ and ‘grueling’—as well as negative but non-pain associated words such as ‘dirty’ and ‘disgusting’ and neutral and positive words. In the second experiment, the participants read the same words but were distracted by a brainteaser.

The results showed that in both cases there was a clear response in the brain’s pain-processing centers with the words associated with pain, but there was no such activity pattern in response to the other words.

Researchers say preserving painful experiences as memories in the brain may have been an evolutionary response to allow humans to avoid painful situations that might be dangerous.” (<http://www.webmd.com/pain-management/news/20100402/words-really-do-hurt>)

USING WORDS IN SPECIAL WAYS

Words are used to paint pictures. Public speakers, teachers, radio broadcasters, and people who have an audience listening to a voice as their primary medium for communication paint pictures with words.

Weave in Beautiful Words

What words make you feel warm and happy? Sure, it's different for all of us, but there are some words with universal appeal (at least in English). The British Council, which oversees education of the English language, conducted a study of the "Most Beautiful Words in the English Language."

40,000 people participated in the study. The top ten words were the following:

1. Mother
2. Passion
3. Smile
4. Love
5. Eternity
6. Fantastic
7. Destiny
8. Freedom
9. Liberty
10. Tranquility

In our culture, there appears to be a growing trend of taking words that are nouns and converting them into verbs. *Verbed* (a word that has been used by many in the social media blogosphere to signify that so many nouns have become verbs in our everyday language) has made its way into the mainstream and is used in everyday language.

THE IMPACT OF POWER VERBS

People, especially the millennial generation (those born after 1977), don't talk much on the phone anymore; they text each other. Although texting is fine for quick, impersonal communications, it should never be substituted for professional communication. This phenomenon of taking nouns and turning them into verbs means that the English language is constantly evolving and changing, and therefore style manuals are outdated before they even hit the shelves, which is why this book is not a style manual.

This book does not attempt to identify these urbane, hip, or chic fad words. Instead, a number of nouns that are now action verbs have been included in this compilation because in today's business culture, the commonly accepted practice is to include particular noun/verbs in the vernacular. Examples of these nouns that have also become accepted action verbs include the following:

Noun	Action Verb
Silo	Siloed
E-mail	E-mailed
Spam	Spammed
Message	Messaged

The impact of action verbs and how they are woven into our collective conscience is evident in the names that advertisers use for their products. For everyday items, we associate those products with action verbs. For example, the **Accord** car model, **Act** mouthwash, **Agree** shampoo, **Allure** ski product, **Ban** deodorant, **Budget** Rent A Car, **Converse** sneakers, **Dodge** cars, **Eclipse** exercise machine, **Endeavor** spaceship, **Edge** shaving cream, **Equal** sugar substitute, **Escalade** Cadillac, **Excel** software, **Glamour** magazine, **Gleem** toothpaste, **Google** the company, **Intuit** software, **Kindle** e-reader, **Marvel** comics, **Pilot** pens, **Pledge** cleaner, **Pioneer** sound systems, **Puff** tissues, **Quip** the precursor to the fax machine, **Raid** bug killer, **Shuffle** iPod product, **Spam**, **Target** retail store, and **Vanish** home-cleaning product. There are many more...these are just a few examples.

Over the course of time, the inconsistency of English grammar has made it increasingly difficult for nonnative speakers to learn English and even difficult for those who speak English as a first language to speak correctly. Some rules and styles are antiquated and not enforced. As a result, we have become lazy and are losing the war on poor grammar. English is a minefield of rules, and while I can assure you that this book is not a style manual, it goes without saying that if you were to follow all of the rules, then you would have to spend a lifetime studying them, you would end up speaking a language that a normal person would not understand, and, finally, you would be a complete bore.

As with any rule, there are also exceptions, counterexceptions, special rules, do's and don'ts, and other confusing rules. There are over 60 different rules and variations of rules for verbs alone. Once you have learned the rules, you still have to follow exceptions. For example, consider the word *lightning* used as a verb. We say it is "thundering and lightning all night." In this case, it is the only exception to the rule that *ing* can be added to the base verb to produce the -ing form. We do not say or write it as "thundering and lightninging all night," nor do we say or write it as "thundered and lightning all night"; in another exception to the rules, we say "we relayed a message" but "we relaid a carpet" (Crystal 1995, 205).

For all my former English teachers, professors, and the dedicated writers of the grammar books on linguistic style and theory who will wonder why there is nothing in this book about active and passive voice, conjugation, copulas, indicative, imperative, subjunctive mood, gradability and comparison,

person and number usage, verbal dueling, lexical, linking verbs, modal, primary, axillary, serial, defective and transitive or intransitive usage, that is your job. This guide can be thought of as a road map to help individuals toward success in everyday communications. It is that simple!

There is no attempt to excuse people from their responsibility and duty to learn the language correctly. However, there is a time and place for everything. Noam Chomsky, perhaps the most influential figure in the theoretical linguistics of the English language in recent times, conceived the goal of linguistics (all the rules, principles, and regulations) as a description of the mental grammar of native speakers.

Chomsky perceives linguistics to be the system of all these rules to those that characterize the mental structure that underlies our ability to speak and understand the language. Furthermore, Chomsky hypothesizes that humans have an innate language ability that enables children to acquire a mental grammar quickly when they are exposed to a particular language.

It's pretty amazing to think that a child learns an entire language by listening and some nonverbal cues. By the age of five, a person has about 70% of their lifetime vocabulary and linguistic rules learned by listening and observation.

Chomsky (and this is the last reference to a theorist or an intellectual, I promise) draws a distinction between competence in a language and performance in a language. Competence is the underlying knowledge of the theory and applications, whereas performance is the actual use made of that knowledge. This book doesn't assume anything; it provides a performance tool for one part of the language—POWER VERBS.

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