

Three Words That Go Deeper Than the Conversation

Level Two · Speak Into Words

023

THE BIG IDEA

Once the room is warm and the other person feels safe, you have an opportunity most people in business never take. You can speak INTO them — not just to them, not just with them. Speak Into Words are the words that reach past the surface and touch something real. They don't just improve the conversation — they change the person. And that is the highest thing a business conversation can accomplish.

THE GOLDEN RULE

Level 2 requires Level 1 to work.

If you skip straight to Speak Into Words without first warming the room, they land like instructions — not like truth. The ground you prepare in Level 1 is what makes Level 2 possible. Elite connectors never skip the foundation.

LEVEL ONE: SPEAK UP WORDS	LEVEL TWO: SPEAK INTO WORDS
Complimentary A specific, sincere observation that makes the other person feel seen. Not flattery — a genuine acknowledgment of something real you noticed.	Affirming Confirming something true about someone's identity — not their performance, their character. The word that gives someone permission to own what they already know is true.
Appreciative Expressed gratitude that names the cost of the other person's presence — their time, their calendar, their openness. It separates you from almost everyone else they've met with.	Challenging Delivered with care, a challenge is one of the highest forms of respect. It says: I believe in your capacity to grow beyond where you are right now.
Encouraging The forward-facing word. It looks at where someone is going and says: I believe in what's ahead for you. The word that gives someone heart while they're still in the middle of the fight.	Thoughtful The signal that says: you were worth my preparation. You came with one question or observation that could only have come from thinking specifically about this person.

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• WORD / CONCEPT DEEP DIVE — LEVEL TWO: SPEAK INTO WORDS

04 AFFIRMING — CONFIRM IDENTITY, NOT JUST OUTPUT

Affirming is not agreeing with someone — it's confirming something true about who they are. Not their performance. Their character.

A **compliment** says: I noticed what you did. An affirmation says: I see who you are. One operates at the output level. The other operates at the identity level.

The best moment to affirm someone is when they've said something true about themselves that they aren't fully sure they're allowed to believe yet. Affirmation in that moment hands them the key to a door they've been standing in front of.

ELITE MOVE:

Be specific about what you're affirming and precisely where you saw it. "I see that in you" is warm. "I see that in you — and here's exactly where I saw it" is the version that changes someone.

Find the character trait — not the skill — that you genuinely see. Courage. Integrity. Curiosity. Persistence. Connect it to something you actually observed.

"The way you handled that situation tells me something about your character — and I want you to know it did not go unnoticed."

05 CHALLENGING — RESPECT LOOKS LIKE A PUSH

A challenge is not a criticism — it's one of the highest forms of respect you can offer another person. The absence of a challenge is not kindness. It is avoidance disguised as politeness.

Timing is everything. Delivered too early, a challenge lands like an attack. Delivered after the room is warm and the person feels safe, it lands like a gift.

Elite connectors don't leave potential on the table out of social comfort. They push because they believe.

ELITE MOVE:

Follow the challenge with silence. Ask the hard question — then stop talking. The discomfort of the pause is where the real answer lives. Most people talk right over it. Don't.

Precede the challenge with belief: "I want to push back on something — because I think you're underselling what this could become."

"What's actually stopping you — because I don't think it's what you said it is."

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• WORD / CONCEPT DEEP DIVE — LEVEL TWO: SPEAK INTO WORDS

06 THOUGHTFUL — PREPARATION IS A FORM OF RESPECT

Thoughtfulness is not a personality trait. It's a choice. And in a business conversation, it's one of the most powerful signals you can send.

To be thoughtful means you did the work before the conversation ever started. You considered this person — what they needed, what would serve them, what question would actually move something.

Thoughtfulness tells the other person: you were worth my preparation. That signal is one of the rarest things one human being can communicate in a business setting.

ELITE MOVE:

Before your next conversation, take 5 minutes. Find one thing about this person — their recent work, a challenge in their industry, something from your last conversation. Then go in with one question that could only have come from that preparation.

The goal is not to impress them with how much you researched. The goal is to make them feel worth the research.

"I've been thinking about what you said last time we talked — and I want to come back to it."



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3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Map Both Levels Before You Walk In

Write down one Speak Up Word you will use in the first two minutes and one Speak Into Word you will use when the moment opens. Put it in writing before you walk in — not as a script, as an intention.

2 Name the Word You've Been Avoiding

Of the three Speak Into Words — Affirming, Challenging, Thoughtful — which one makes you most uncomfortable? That's the one you need to work on first. Discomfort points directly at the move that creates the most impact.

3 Find Your Dean

Think about who in your life speaks words INTO you — not just to you. If that person exists, invest in that relationship. If they don't exist yet, start looking. And recognize that you may already be that person for someone else.

***"Words are not just communication.
Words are architecture. They build
rooms that people either want to stay
in or want to leave."***



BryanBuckley



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. What word does this person need right now that I can genuinely give?
2. What does this moment provide that I can speak into with intention and care?



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• BONUS DEEP DIVE · THE SCIENCE OF AFFIRMATION

Bryan touched on affirmation's power briefly but the research behind it runs deep. The act of confirming someone's identity in the right moment isn't a "nice thing to say." It is a measurable biological event with documented effects on cognition, physiology, and performance. Here's what peer-reviewed science actually says about what Bryan taught.

1 Identity Affirmation Buffers Physiological Stress: Creswell et al. (2005) in Psychological Science found that affirming personal values reduced neuroendocrine and psychological stress responses. When someone confirms a core truth about your identity, your body literally responds with less cortisol — making you more open, more capable, and more receptive to everything that follows.

[Creswell JD et al. Psychol Sci. 2005;16\(11\):846–851. → View on PubMed](#)

2 Self-Affirmation Improves Problem-Solving Under Stress: Research published in PLOS ONE (Creswell et al., 2013; PMID 23658751) showed that self-affirmation significantly improved problem-solving performance in chronically stressed individuals — restoring the cognitive capacity that stress had eroded. Bryan's framework delivers this externally: when you affirm someone's identity at the right moment, you restore their best thinking.

[Creswell JD et al. PLoS ONE. 2013;8\(5\):e62593. → View on PubMed](#)

3 Neural Reward Pathways Activated by Affirmation: Dutcher et al. (2020) in Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience (PMID 32248237) identified the neural mechanisms behind affirmation's stress-buffering effects: self-affirmation activates the brain's ventral striatum — the reward processing center — while simultaneously reducing activity in the anterior insula, the region that drives threat response. Affirmation isn't soft. It's neuroscience.

[Dutcher JM et al. Soc Cogn Affect Neurosci. 2020;15\(10\):1086–1096. → View on PubMed](#)

BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

Most business conversations are lost before they even begin. The 1st 5 Minutes gives you a simple, repeatable framework to turn every business conversation into a powerful connection — whether you're an extrovert who talks too much or an introvert who freezes up.

[Get the Book → bryanbuckleyspeaks.com](https://bryanbuckleyspeaks.com)



TURN YOUR 1ST 5 MINUTES INTO YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE — LEVERAGE OR LOSE IT.

Bryan Buckley is the leading authority on the 1st 5 Minutes of a business conversation — 5X author, speaker, corporate trainer, and podcast host. He helps sales professionals and leaders develop, deepen, and master their business communication skills so every conversation counts.

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