

Three Words You Should Use As Quickly As Possible

CHEAT SHEET

022

THE BIG IDEA

The right word at the right moment doesn't just improve a conversation — it **changes a person**. When you know which words to use and when, your communication will change moving forward. Most business professionals have never thought about this for even five minutes — today, we fix that. Level 1 gives you three Speak Up Words that open people up fast.

THE GOLDEN RULE

These words only work when they're genuine.

The moment a compliment becomes a technique instead of a truth, the other person feels it. Humans have extraordinarily sensitive radar for inauthenticity. Don't perform these words — mean them. The framework becomes a way of being, not just a set of moves.

LEVEL 1 — SPEAK UP WORDS

LEVEL 2 — SPEAK INTO WORDS

COMPLIMENTARY

A specific, genuine observation that makes another person feel seen. Not flattery — it's other-focused and names something real.

AFFIRMING

Words that confirm who someone already is. You're not creating a belief — you're putting a name to what's already there.

APPRECIATIVE

Expressing that you don't take someone's time, access, or presence for granted. Appreciation acknowledges the cost of showing up.

CHALLENGING

Words that push someone toward what they're capable of but haven't yet reached. Challenge delivered with care is a gift, not pressure.

ENCOURAGING

Forward-facing words that speak into where someone is going — not just where they've been. You're investing in their next chapter.

THOUGHTFUL

Words that show you were paying close attention. Thoughtful language tells people their story is worth tracking.



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■ SPEAK UP WORDS • LEVEL ONE DEEP DIVE

01 NOT FLATTERY — GENUINE OBSERVATION

Complimentary doesn't mean empty praise. Flattery is vague and self-serving — you're saying something nice to get something back. A real compliment is specific, other-focused, and names something you actually noticed. In a business conversation, especially your first five minutes, a well-placed compliment does what no credential can: it makes the other person feel seen.

ELITE MOVE:

Notice first, then speak. Before your next conversation, practice mentally — ask yourself what you would compliment if you had to say it out loud. Then say it. Acknowledge what you observe, then follow with a question to deepen the moment. Look at what someone is wearing, carrying, or how they've shown up and name it specifically.

"I really like your bag — it's so unique. Where did you find it?"

02 RARE IN BUSINESS — POWERFUL EVERYWHERE

Appreciation is not a casual "thanks." In a business context, appreciation is shockingly rare. Everyone is busy. When you stop and genuinely express that you don't take this person's time for granted, you instantly separate yourself from every other person they met with this week. An appreciative person realizes there's a cost to showing up — and they say so.

ELITE MOVE:

Name what you're appreciating and why it matters specifically. Generic gratitude is forgettable. Before you get into business, acknowledge what it took for this person to be in the room with you — their time, their calendar, their attention. Name it. Then move forward. Make it specific to them, not to a category.

"I know you had a packed week — I genuinely appreciate you making this a priority."

03 FORWARD-FACING — SPEAKS INTO WHAT'S NEXT

Encouragement literally means to give heart to someone. A compliment looks at what someone has done. Appreciation looks at what they gave. Encouragement looks at where they are going and says: I believe in what's ahead for you. This is the word that makes someone walk away thinking — that person gets it. They see what I'm building, not just what I've built.

ELITE MOVE:

Pair encouragement with specificity. "Keep going" is warm. "The way you handled that shows real resilience" lands harder and stays longer. Find the thing this person is moving toward — their vision, their next project, what they're building — and speak directly into it. Ask a question first, listen deeply, then respond with encouragement that names exactly what you heard.

"What you're working toward here is something I think this market really needs."

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3 ACTION ITEMS

1 Audit Your Level One.

Before your next three business conversations, identify which Speak Up Word is weakest for you — Complimentary, Appreciative, or Encouraging — and make that the one you deploy first. Intentionally. Specifically. Out loud.

2 Practice One Word This Week.

Pick one Level 2 word — Affirming, Challenging, or Thoughtful — and build one moment in your next conversation where you use it deliberately. Not all three. One. Master the move before you add more.

3 Map Your Next Conversation.

Before your next significant business meeting, write down one Speak Up Word you will use in the first two minutes and one Speak Into Word you will use in the first five. Put it in writing. Preparation turns intention into execution.

“Speak Up Words are the words that lift. The words that warm a room before anything deeper is said. These are the words that signal: I see you, I value you, I’m glad you’re in this conversation with me.”



BryanBuckley



CARRY FORWARD QUESTIONS

1. What word does someone need in this moment that I can provide?
2. What does this conversation make available that I can speak up into?



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• BONUS DEEP DIVE • THE SCIENCE OF APPRECIATION

Bryan mentioned appreciation as a "strategic" skill and the research backs that up completely. Most people treat gratitude as a soft nicety, but peer-reviewed studies across organizational psychology and neuroscience show that expressed appreciation produces measurable changes in effort, trust, and relationship quality. Here's what the science actually says about what Bryan taught.

1 The Fundraiser Effect (Grant & Gino, 2010): A field experiment at a university found that a single brief expression of gratitude from a director — just two sentences — increased fundraisers' call volume by more than 50% that week. The effect was mediated by feelings of social worth, not self-efficacy. Appreciation doesn't just feel good; it changes how hard people work.

[View on PubMed](#)

2 Emmons & McCullough — Gratitude & Well-Being (2003): Participants assigned to a gratitude condition — recording things they were grateful for weekly — showed higher energy, more positive affect, and greater sense of connection than control groups across three studies. When Bryan says appreciation is a differentiator, the data says it also improves the person giving it.

[View on PubMed](#)

3 Social Reward & Compliments (Fareri et al. — Social Brain & Reward, PMC 2014): Research on the social brain shows that receiving a compliment or friendly gesture activates the ventral striatum — the same region that processes monetary reward. Striatal responses to social experiences mirror the reward prediction error learning signal found in monetary or food reward learning. Bryan's framework is neurologically sound: Speak Up Words activate real reward circuitry.

[View on PMC →](#)

BY BRYAN BUCKLEY

THE 1ST 5 MINUTES

You just learned the three words that open people up. Now go deeper. The 1st 5 Minutes gives you the complete framework behind why those words work and exactly how to use the first five minutes of every business conversation to build connection, earn trust, and create influence before you ever get to business.

Get the Book → 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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