**Big Marketing Power in a Little Word**

By Jeff Beals

Your English teacher isn’t going to like this.

Don’t get me wrong; the grammar and composition you learned in high school English class are critically important, but those rules don’t necessarily apply all the time.

Allow me to explain.

Your old English teacher would have preferred you write, “By carefully employing certain words, a professional gains a powerful advantage when selling his or her products or when trying to persuade others to accept his or her ideas.”

Here’s a slightly different version: “By carefully employing certain words, you gain a powerful advantage when selling your products or when trying to persuade others to accept your ideas.”

What’s the difference?

These two statements essentially say the same thing, but the first one is written in “third person,” while the second one is written in “second person.” English teachers would prefer the first statement. In formal writing, it is generally frowned upon to use the words, “I” or “you.” Scholarly journals, text books and respected periodicals are normally written in third person.

Proper English is a beautiful thing, but when it comes to succeeding in today’s loud and crowded marketplace, you benefit by catching people’s attention. You are more likely to accomplish your goals if you relate to people. Using the word “you” (and “your”) helps you do that.

No matter what your profession, there are times when your success depends on your ability to sell, pitch, market, convince, persuade, trade, suggest, coach, counsel, explain, and/or motivate another person. That all becomes easier if you address your reader or listener directly in the second person.

So, if you’re explaining something in an email, try to use the word “you.” If you’re giving a speech to prospective clients, paint a picture with “you.” If you want to empower and motivate your colleagues, use “you” to make your message resonate with them.

The word, “you” personalizes a conversation. It brings down barriers and erodes the formalities that may exist between you and the other person.

“You” can help prospective clients picture themselves using your products and services. For instance, if you are selling a time-share condo overlooking the ocean, your would-be buyer might be receptive to this marketing message:

“Picture yourself spending two weeks here every year. You can sleep in each morning in this king-sized bed, windows open with the sea breeze gently waking you up before you head over to your ultra-modern kitchen for your morning coffee. You step out onto your deck overlooking the massive resort pool. Your only problem here in paradise will be deciding what to do. Will you relax by the pool or will you take one of the hundreds of day adventures waiting for you in the surrounding area?”

Where do I sign up?

When I’m writing books or delivering speeches, I try to put “you” into the text even if the story I’m telling is about somebody else. When I use a highly successful person’s life or accomplishments to illustrate a point, I occasionally like to slip in “you” and “your” when I’m really talking about “him/his” or “her/hers.” Audience members are more likely to remember the point, if they feel like they are part of the story.

YOU will be a much more effective seller, marketer and persuader if YOU simply remember to transpose YOUR audience into YOUR stories.

One last thing – I have one important disclaimer for you.

There is a particular use of the word “you” that may backfire on you. Careful communicators avoid saying, “you must,” “you should,” “you better” or “you have to.” That’s bossy. It turns people off. Such language reminds you of when you were in trouble as a kid, like when your mother demanded:

“You have to clean your room!”

“You better finish your homework before you go outside!”

*Jeff Beals is an award-winning author, who helps professionals do more business and have a greater impact on the world through effective sales, marketing and personal branding techniques. As a professional speaker, he delivers energetic and humorous keynote speeches and workshops to audiences worldwide. You can learn more and follow his "Business Motivation Blog" at JeffBeals.com.*