



***But and Can't* – Two Little Words That Can Lead to BIG Problems**

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When dealing with customers, clients and co-workers, do you ever wonder why something you said was like the match that lit the short fuse? Why do people sometimes get angry or frustrated so quickly?

Usually it's the little things we're simply unaware of, such as those two little words: ***But*** and ***Can't***.

Even skilled communicators don't always realize how these words create negative feelings.

But is a ***delete*** word. It deletes everything that came before it in a sentence. There are times when that might be what you intend to do. Yet most often, particularly with customers, it can create frustration or anger as they feel you've suddenly turned the tables on them.

Can't is what I call a ***loss*** word. It makes the listener feel that something they want is slipping away—unless they put up a fight! Think of times when you've told a child they ***can't*** have something. Remember the reaction you got? That's why it's best to learn how to convey the message, while avoiding that explosive word.

Here are some examples of how you can avoid using the words ***but*** and ***can't***:

The Negative Power Approach:

I'd like to be able to do that for you, BUT I won't be able to.

I CAN'T do that because..... What I CAN do is..... Reverse these to put ***CAN*** before ***CAN'T***.

We CAN'T get to that until later this afternoon.

Note: ***Can't*** sometimes is stated in other ways: *That won't work. This would be impossible. and There's no way..*

The Positive Power™ Approach:

I'd like to be able to do that for you, however instead I CAN offer these two options

What I CAN offer you are these two options..... Which of these do you think will work better for you?

I CAN The reason I'm unable to do what you asked is This other option works well for customers because.....

We CAN get to that later this afternoon.

Note: Instead of ***but*** you can often substitute ***yet*** or ***however***. In some cases, ***and*** will work.

Practice putting ***CAN*** before ***CAN'T*** and eliminate ***BUT***, whenever possible. Restructure sentences to put the good news first, stressing the ***positive*** options you have to offer. I guarantee that when you make these small changes, customers, clients and co-workers will feel better about their encounters with you.

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