

# FIVE WORDS STRONG LEADERS *NEVER USE*



PROGRESSIVE  
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP

# Does your language reflect your leadership?



Five small words can **undermine** your authority in surprising ways, but these small changes will help you drop weak language, speak with strength, and **boost your impact today.**



# 1. Qualifiers *“Kind of” “Sort of”*

- Why add grey areas when we don't need them?  
When something **either is or isn't**, these words convey hesitation to **pick a stance**.
- If one of your managers brings you incomplete data, it's not “kind of” incomplete. It is incomplete.
- **THE FIX:** If one item is kind of like another, say it's “similar” instead. That removes the ambiguity that “kind of” can bring.



## 2. Minimizers *“Just” “Little”*

- You’ll often hear (or say) this about a problem – “I just have a little problem.” If it’s worth mentioning, there’s no need to minimize it.
- The same is true of any statement – “I **just** wanted to say...” If you want to say something, **say it** – it’s more direct and has more impact.
- **THE FIX:** There’s no need to replace these words. Remove them outright. **Let the facts stand alone.**



# 3. Unnecessary Questions *“Okay?” “...Right?”*

- Be careful when checking comprehension – it can sound like you want approval or even permission. “This is the direction we’re going, okay?”
- Unless it is a question, state it like a fact. Adding questions could make it sound like you’re unsure.
- **THE FIX:** If you do need approval or consensus from your team or board, do so strategically and intentionally: “What are your thoughts on going this direction?”



## 4. Weak Solutions *“Idea” “Suggestion”*

- Ideas and suggestions are good things, but you can package them in **much stronger language**.
- What’s stronger – “an idea” or **the answer?**
- **THE FIX:** “Solution,” “approach,” “recommendation,” or “plan.” Be careful, though: If you say you have the answer, it should be a good one!



# 5. Meaningless Apologies “Sorry”

- **Sorry is addictive** – it’s far too easy to say – but overuse can hurt the impact of real apologies.
- If someone’s vacation was rained out, that’s just unfortunate: if it’s not your fault, why say sorry?
- **THE FIX:** “If you do make a mistake, apologize. **“I apologize”** is a mouthful – you won’t misuse it.



# Impact Word Cheat-Sheet

## WEAK

## STRONG

- |                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| X Sort of, Kind of .....             | Is, Isn't, Similar ✓                       |
| X Just A Little Problem.....         | A Problem ✓                                |
| X Right, Okay, Don't You Think?..... | State Facts ✓                              |
| X Idea, Suggestion .....             | Plan, Approach, Solution, Recommendation ✓ |
| X Sorry.....                         | I Apologize ✓                              |





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