

The Two Most Important (But Tricky) Words To Master In Your Career

As a professional writer, I'm a self-described "word person." I delight in expanding my vocabulary and understanding the meanings and subtle nuances of words, even the seemingly ordinary ones.

For instance, though we tend to use the words *simple* and *easy* synonymously, they have slightly different meanings:

Simple refers to being uncomplicated and easily understood; ***Easy*** means something achieved without great effort.

Despite their similarities, simple isn't always easy; it takes discipline and a conscious and intentional effort to make something less confusing, complex, and difficult to understand or do. But in the context of your career, it's worth it.

When you do the hard work of simplifying things for your intended audience—your boss, partner, client, prospect, or potential employer—you make it easy for them to do business with you.

Start with clarity

Simplicity begins with clarity. If you don't or can't clearly articulate why others should work with you, you force them to do the work (i.e., make it hard for them) to decipher the mystery that is you. Spoiler alert: They probably won't bother.

Guessing equates to confusion, and when you confuse, you lose—potential opportunities, clients, projects, promotions, and partners. This is most unfortunate, particularly when this is something easily remedied through clarity.

When you're clear, everything is easier. People understand you, what you offer, your value, what differentiates you, how you can help them, and how they can assist you. Clarity helps others like, and trust you, making it easy to work with you.

Don't rely on clever

Yes, it's tempting to be witty in your latest marketing campaign or your LinkedIn headline, but if it leaves your audience scratching their heads, you're in trouble. Clarity trumps clever every time. Remember, you maximize the power of your words by simplifying them.

Lose unnecessary complexity

There's a reason the K.I.S.S. method endures. For those unfamiliar, K.I.S.S. is an acronym for "keep it simple, stupid." It originated as a design principle by the U.S. Navy in 1960 and stated that most systems work best if they are kept simple rather than made complicated. Simplicity should be a goal, and you should avoid unnecessary complexity.

Practically speaking, this means dropping flowery language, industry acronyms, and buzzwords. (You won't impress people with them.) Swap jargon for plain language to increase the odds of you and your message being favorably received and understood.

Keep it brief and focused

The hard truth: Multiple-page emails are rarely simple (or read), and long, meandering presentations ensure that you'll lose your audience's attention—and the opportunity to connect. Mark Twain said, "If I had more time, I would have written a shorter letter" — a reference to how much harder brevity is than length.

When you try to cover too much ground, you'll become unnecessarily complex. Rather than ramble on (which signals that you're unorganized and unsure of yourself), invest time to eliminate extraneous material and stick to one central theme, which helps you become more "user-friendly" and understandable.

Stay in your wheelhouse

Are you a Marketing Guru/Engineer/Entrepreneur/Monkey Trainer/Bitcoin Investor? Bad news: you're way too complicated and confusing.

There's nothing wrong with having multiple interests, but a Jack- or Jill-of-all-trades is perceived as an unfocused, master of none. Put your talents to their highest and best use by leading with your primary offering. Pick a lane, and go deep, consistently sharing your wisdom in your (targeted) zone of genius, making it easy for others to understand your value; how you can help them.

There are always two ways of doing things: the easy way and the hard way. And your career will be far less taxing on you if you go out of your way to make it easy for others to work with you.

Remember, in business, simple isn't always easy, but it's worth it.

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