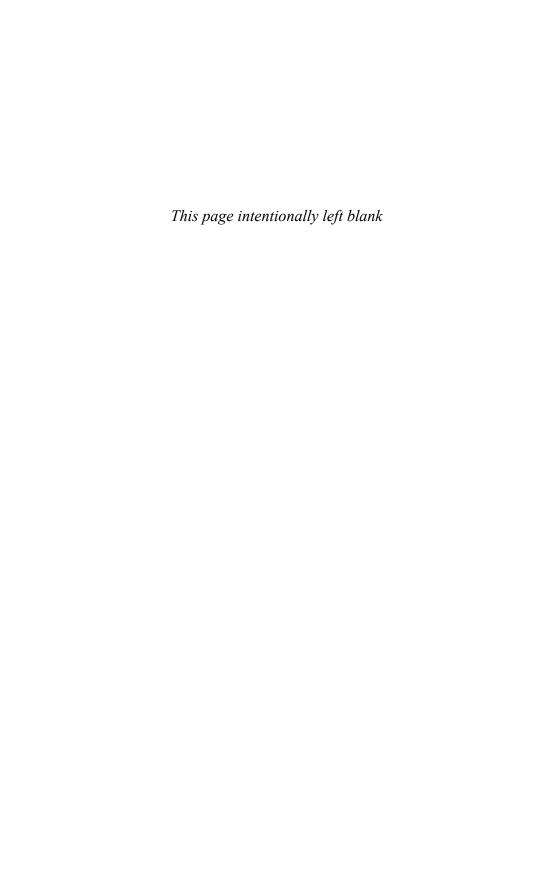
ABSORB

The Most Powerful Verbs and Phrases You Can Use to Win in Any Situation

MICHAEL LAWRENCE FAULKNER

with MICHELLE FAULKNER-LUNSFORD

Top 100 Power Verbs



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THE MOST POWERFUL VERBS
AND PHRASES YOU CAN
USE TO WIN IN
ANY SITUATION

MICHAEL FAULKNER
WITH MICHELLE FAULKNER-LUNSFORD

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Proofreader: Anne Goebel

Senior Indexer: Cheryl Lenser

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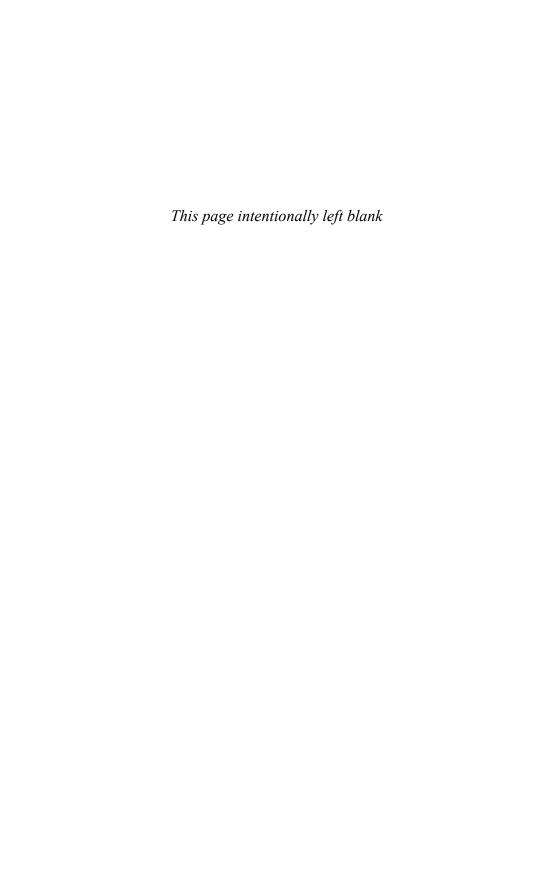
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To our families:
Without them, we are nothing.
With them, anything is possible.



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Foreword

I have enjoyed a friendship with Michael Faulkner (Dr. Faulkner) over many years, starting when he was a student of mine during the Vietnam War era. I am certain Michael has enjoyed and appreciated the collaboration of his daughter Michelle Faulkner-Lunsford in this *Power Verbs* series. His writing a series of books on verbs is not a surprise to me, to some extent because he was a Marine. His military background complements the skills of a man who has led as a student, businessman, and educator. I will not forget hiking with him in the mid-1970s on the Berryman Trail in the Missouri Ozarks. The plan was to hike the trail in two days. With Mike as our point man, we finished it in one. So if I had to choose a part of speech to describe Michael, you know what it would be.

When taking into account Michael's energy and creativity with this book's subject matter. I recall architect Buckminster Fuller's book. I Seem to Be a Verb

When taking into account Michael's energy and creativity with this book's subject matter, I recall architect Buckminster Fuller's book, *I Seem to Be a Verb*. Fuller describes himself, "I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing, a noun...I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process." Fuller's quote describes the author of *The Top 100 Power Verbs*. To get to this culminating publication on power verbs for "all occasions," he has steadily moved from power verbs for (1) job seekers, (2) presenters, (3) leaders, managers, and supervisors, and (4) career consultants, coaches, and mentors. In all of these, he spotlights verbs as the "spark of the sentence," selecting them for rhetorical purposes and basing this last one on Professor Barry Posner's practices of exemplary leadership.

Grammarians, editors, and teachers of composition often argue what should be the heart of the matter for a writer. All agree that the writer needs to know his audience before putting pen to paper. Faulkner addresses this issue early when he cites political consultant Dr. Frank Luntz: "The key to successful communication is to take the imaginative leap of stuffing yourself right into your listeners' shoes to know what they are thinking and feeling in the deepest recesses of their minds and hearts." It's clear that Faulkner selected verbs with Luntz's belief in mind, "Eighty percent of our life is emotion, and only 20 percent is intellect." So the reader should not be surprised to see verbs like "gin up, grapple, hang tough, hunker down, and kick start." Getting into your listeners' shoes and emotions is a gentler way of saying that the writer must become a sharpshooter, spotting his audience from a distance like a bulls-eye on a target.

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Faulkner soon turns his focus to choosing and employing the power of the verb. This book is a verb thesaurus comprising a collection of verbs that challenge, encourage, lead, and inspire. Indeed, in some verbs, the author's military background shines through. We don't find "ten hut, check fire, carry on, march, and fall out"; however, we do find verbs with tails, such as "cross the Rubicon, catch fire, call the shot, deep six, draw lines in the sand, and did-a-one-eighty." Faulkner cautions about using clichéd expressions, but some remain valuable for appropriate audiences and occasions. Other verbs—"dither, jawbone, jockey, marshal, nettle"—might be most appropriate for challenging a process or modeling a way. Others, such as "delegate, deliberate, innovate, and perpetuate," might be more appropriate, enabling others to act.

Readers will soon tap into the energy and drive of this author. His words capture the confident tone he holds in *The Top 100 Power Verbs*: "It is a book that can help you choose the most powerful verbs—the spark of sentences—powerful verbs that will resonate deeply with people."

My son is a cardiologist. He tells his students with tongue-in-cheek, "Do you know the heart is the most important organ in the body? People don't say, 'I love you with all my brains or my kidneys or my colon.' They say, 'I love you with all my *heart*." Dr. Michael Faulkner maintains that the verb is not just the heart of the sentence, but it is fire itself, the "flame" that ignites the writer's purpose and kindles the audience into action.

I am pleased to see his passion and commitment to successful communication. As one of Dr. Faulkner's teachers many years ago, I knew him as the recently returned Vietnam veteran looking to put his life together. Since our walk on the Berryman Trail, he has traveled a much longer trail in his successful professional career. And in this publication and series, he has provided writers with a proper tool for accomplishing their purpose. For these reasons, I am most pleased to recommend this book for your communication needs.

—Ken Boyer
English Professor (Retired)
St. Louis Community College/FV

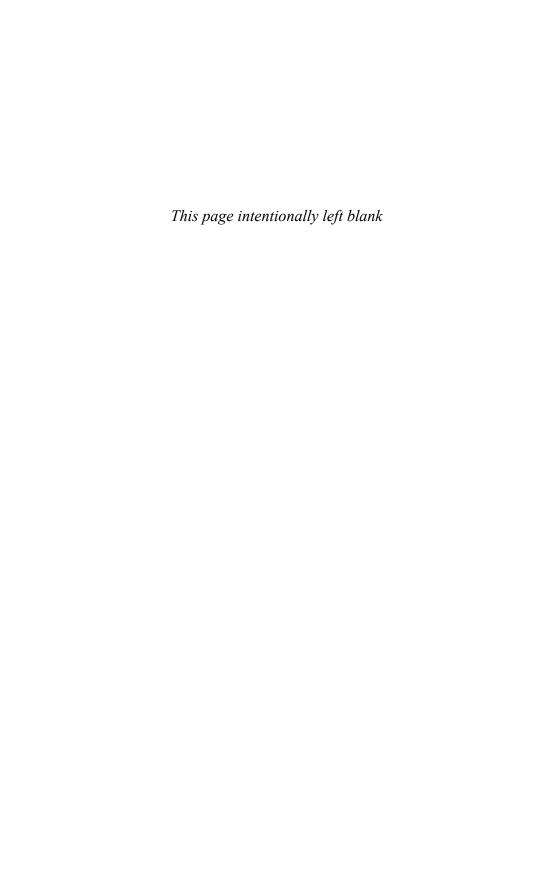
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I would like to acknowledge and thank all of the members of the FT Press Publishing team. Every single person with whom I had the privilege to work, from the editors to the proofreaders, copy, and style specialists, to the layout and production people, and all the others who did work for my books, were the best. They were professional, patient, and dedicated to turning out a superior product.

About the Author

Dr. Michael Lawrence Faulkner is the author of six books. He is a professor at the Keller Graduate School of Management at DeVry University. He is a former U.S. Marine who spent 30 years in a variety of leadership and executive management positions with Fortune 500 firms and major nonprofit trade associations. He also helped his family run the family business before beginning his second career in academics. Michael is a member of MENSA, a Rotary International Fellow, and a Keller Master Teacher Award recipient. He holds a Silver Certification by the Toastmaster's International. In addition to his Ph.D., Michael has earned two Master's degrees: one from NYU and an MBA from NYIT.

Michelle Faulkner-Lunsford is a 2001 graduate of Middle Tennessee State University where she majored in English and minored in Writing. Mrs. Lunsford spent 10+ years in the world of advertising and marketing as an Account Manager and Director of Marketing and New Business Development, managing multimillion dollar accounts from male-enhancement medications to beer ads. In 2011, Michelle left the corporate world for the opportunity to raise her daughter.



Introduction

There is little doubt that communication is one of man's most important tools. We use the tool (speaking, listening, graphic expression, and writing) to help us make sense of our world, to interact with other people, to network, and to express our feelings, moods, and intent. Communication, particularly with our words, affects who and what we are as a species, and it is one of the key things that differentiate us from other species. In fact, our species (*Homo sapiens*) managed to overpower and eliminate two earlier human species (*Neanderthal* and *Homo erectus*) who had far less communication skills than *Homo sapiens*.

There is a quote attributed to Plutarch—although there are no sources that can trace it to him— which says, "When Cicero spoke, people said, 'How well Cicero speaks!' But, when Demosthenes spoke, they said, 'Let us march against Phillip." The point here is that when leaders speak, it is usually, but not always, to persuade. Sometimes the purpose is to inform, but as Rudyard Kipling said, "Words are the most powerful drug used by mankind," so whenever we speak, we use a powerful human tool. Thomas Fuller may have said it best, "When the heart is afire, some sparks will fly out of the mouth." This book gives you some sparks.

This book is not intended to teach specific public speaking skills, oration, rhetoric, or how to deliver a good presentation. You do not learn detailed skills of visualization or in-depth channeling of your message. You do not learn details of tone, cadence, pitch, or resonance. You do not learn the details of nonverbal body language such as hand and arm gestures. This book introduces these concepts (and hopefully, you will explore them further on your own).

It is a book that can help make you more successful in whatever you do by helping you become a more powerful and more effective communicator. It can do this because it helps you choose the most powerful verbs—the spark of sentences—powerful verbs that resonate deeply with people, powerful verbs that people react to and remember.

I am referring to the power verbs that are the flame that make phrases and sentences that ignite peoples' passions, the power verbs that kindle, illuminate purpose, and make people want to take action... to march on Phillip.

-Michael Faulkner

1

The Connection Between Communications and Success

"Volatility of words is carelessness in actions; words are the wings of actions."

—Layater

There are two factors for which there are mountains of empirical evidence that overwhelmingly account for the success of individuals in any field. These variables are the verbal and networking skills of the successful people.

Common sense and simple observation can be your laboratory. Just look at the people you have worked for and most of the people you know. Furthermore, look at the people who run or own the organizations and firms where people work. Think about the people who own and run the vendor firms and organizations that service and supply the firms and organizations for which you, or people you know, have owned or worked. What is it that most of these people have in common?

The vast majority of these people have big vocabularies and extensive networks. Consequently, these are probably primary reasons why many are successful and why they are the managers, leaders, and owners of businesses and organizations as well as civic and social leaders. The common denominator of the most successful people is a cross-section of fields; it isn't education, family money, race, or gender. It's what they know and who they know!

It has long been known that successful people in every field do not have large, useful vocabularies merely because of their positions. That would be an incorrect correlation and not a proper explanation of cause and effect. In fact, it is the opposite that is true. Successful people in all fields are successful because they are helped tremendously by their skills in vocabulary and networking (Funk and Lewis, 1942, p. 3).

Success is not something achieved by birthright or tenure but rather something that is gained by hard, smart work and the help of an active network. This is a consequence of the successful person's behavior, actions, work, effort, results, intentions, plans, worldview, responses, and practices, and it is mostly what they do and say in every moment of every opportunity.

It has been said before that it isn't what one says that matters but how a person says it that counts. Dr. Frank Luntz takes it a step further and claims that it isn't what you say that counts; it's what people hear. The issue is you have to choose your words! In addition, you have to time the right words and give the right words the necessary emphasis with the correct supporting body language, so the receiver fully grasps what is said and does not pause or hesitate to understand your meaning.

Verbs are the catalysts of sentences. Power verbs bring sentences to life. More to the point, the right power verbs bring conversations, meetings, speeches, directives, resumés, memos, presentations, networking contacts, sales plans, marketing plans, and business and branding plans to life. Frankly, the right power verbs can put a pop into all interpersonal communications.

The definitive source for the English Language—*The Oxford English Dictionary*—states it this way: "It is a simple truth that in most sentences, you should express action through verbs just as you do when you speak. Yet, in so many sentences, the verbs are smothered; all their vitality is trapped beneath heavy noun phrases based on the verbs themselves" (AskOxford.com, 2008).

A successful person uses the power of human communication to give expressive life to their strategies, operational plans, directives, proposals, ideas, and positions. Human communication is, of course, a combination of nonverbal cues (body language) and the actual words spoken. Even the words that are chosen to be spoken by successful people are frequently invigorated and fortified with linguistic enhancements, such as metaphors, similes, figures of speech, and other vigorous uses of imagery, including hyperbole.

Sometimes the words are combined in rhythmic and symbolic phrasing called alliteration, repetition, antithesis, and parallelism. Successful leaders, managers, and supervisors are generally considered good communicators, or at least it is recognized that communication skills are necessary for them to succeed. These people can enhance their positions with their staff, direct reports, stakeholders, upper level management, vendors, students, media, and others with greater communication skills through the use of stories, citing references, using quotations, and figures of speech. However, there are two very important caveats. Whatever is used has to be fresh and it has to be *apropos*. Tired metaphors, idioms, similes, figures of speech, old stories, and lame references are worse than none at all. More importantly, using an inappropriate phrase, figure of speech, metaphor, simile, or a poor analogy can hamper communication.

Some readers may be old enough to remember when live radio entertainment included speakers who had to sell listeners on the plot or story by painting verbal pictures with words. Today, we still have the need to create vivid imagery in our daily communication with what we say and how we say it. Furthermore, we have one more issue and that is, we are dealing with a more

attention-conflicted audience. So we add a third need and that is, we have to be aware of the fact that it is not always what we say that matters, or even how we say it, but now we have to deal with what it is people hear.

There are so many filtering biases, prejudices, attention sappers, and diversions that many people simply do not hear what has been said; instead they hear only what they want or need to hear. We cannot always control this phenomenon, nor do we want to, but we need to be aware of this dynamic.

Table 1.1 lists examples of tired metaphors, idioms, and clichés and their more contemporary versions.

Table 1.1 Tired Metaphors, Idioms, and Clichés and Contemporary Replacements

Time is money.	Time is profit.
Information is power.	Knowledge is power.
Business is a game.	Business is the game.
Hit the ball out of the park.	Hit for the show.
Take the hill.	Go around the opposition.
Take no prisoners.	Do whatever it takes.
Beat the bushes.	Scope out options.
Beat a dead horse.	Been down that road.
Been to hell and back.	Go the distance or went the distance.
Behind the eight ball.	Pinned down.

People respond to language that is highly certain, highly optimistic, highly realistic, and highly active.

Dull and uninteresting verbs make communications of any type dull, uninteresting, boring, and lifeless. On the other hand, the properly chosen power-packed verbs can electrify your communications. Your listeners and readers will be drawn to your topic and point of view like electromagnets.

Power verbs can be used in many ways; however, this book focuses on helping you understand how to use power verbs more effectively where they truly count, such as:

- In your everyday communications (discussions with peers, family members, friends, clients, customers, stakeholders, vendors, suppliers, and investors)
- In business documents (memos, reports, plans, and other documents)
- In toasts and impromptu comments
- In your networking communications
- In speeches, presentations, and executive briefings
- In resumés, cover letters, and interviews

We live, work, and communicate in a Mixed Martial Arts world, and our communication needs to be fresh and crisp, yet it does not need to reflect street lingo or be overwhelmingly "hip." Some power verbs are meant to assist you in putting life into your communications, giving them a special impact.

The power verbs are shown in the present tense. However, as the examples throughout show, the tense in which you use them depends on the circumstances.

VERB FORMS

In English, main verbs also known as "lexical verbs" (except the verb "be") have between four and six forms. Because this is not a text or style book, we are not going to get into the minutiae of what constitutes regular or irregular verbs or the thrilling discourse on the verb "to be," which has nine forms. We are more concerned with power verbs that you will be using in everyday communications and that you can use without a style book or cue card.

We will assume you can figure out the base verb from the progressive form we use. For example, if we use the present progressive form "accomplishing," we'll assume you will know the base form of the verb is "accomplish." Or if we use the past progressive form "was accomplished," we'll assume you know the base form of the verb is still "accomplish."

Progressive Forms

The progressive form is a verb tense used to show an ongoing action in progress at some point in time. It shows an action still in progress. Verbs can appear in any one of three progressive tenses: present progressive, past progressive, and future progressive.

The Present Progressive Tense—Verbs Showing ONGOING ACTION

The present progressive tense is one form that describes an action that is ongoing and one that happens at the same moment for which the action is being spoken about or written about.

To form this tense, use **am/is/are** with the verb form ending in **ing**.

Examples:

I <u>am meeting</u> with the others tomorrow. [present progressive ongoing action—using am + ing]

The project management team **is examining** the stakeholder's proposal. [present progressive ongoing action—using is + ing]

The team members **are researching** ideation options. [present progressive ongoing action—using are + ing]

She **is feeling** happy. [present progressive ongoing action—using are + ing]

Use the present tense to describe something that is true regardless of time.

Past Progressive Tense—Verbs Showing SIMULTANIOUS ACTION

The past progressive tense is one that describes an action that happened when another action occurred. To form this tense, use **was/were** with the verb form ending in **ing.**

Examples:

The new project team <u>was presenting</u> its recent findings when the power went out. [past progressive on simultaneous action—using was + ing] Four team members <u>were meeting</u> with the sponsor when the news broke about the award. [past progressive on simultaneous action—using were + ing]

Future Progressive Tense—Verbs Showing FUTURE ACTION

The future progressive tense is one that describes an action that is ongoing or continuous and one that takes place in the future. This tense is formed by using the verbs **will be** or **shall be** with the verb form ending in **ing**.

Examples:

Only one team member <u>will be presenting</u> during the annual meeting in June. [future progressive on future action—using will be + ing]

The clock <u>is</u> ticking. [future progressive on future action—using is + ing]

The band <u>is</u> playing. [future progressive on future action—using is + ing]

When the progressive form is not used for continuing events, a dramatic style effect can be produced.

The clock ticks.

The band plays.

Present Perfect Progressive—Verbs Showing PAST ACTION, CONTINUOUS ACTION, and POSSIBLY ONGOING ACTION

The present perfect progressive tense is one that describes an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and may continue into the future. To form this tense, use **has/have been** and the present participle of the verb (the verb form ending in **ing**).

Example: The project sponsor **has been considering** an increase in the budget.

Past Perfect Progressive—Verbs Showing PAST ACTION and ONGOING ACTION COMPLETED BFORE SOME OTHER PAST ACTION

The past perfect progressive tense describes a past ongoing action that was completed before some other past action. This tense is formed by using **had been** and the present perfect of the verb (the verb form ending in **ing**).

Example: Before the budget increase, the project team **had been participating** in many sponsor meetings.

Future Perfect Progressive—Verbs Showing ONGOING ACTION OCCURING BEFORE SOME SPECIFIED TIME

The future perfect progressive tense describes a future, ongoing action that will occur before some specified future time. This tense is formed by using **will have been** and the present participle of the verb (the verb form ending in **ing**).

Example: By the next fiscal year, the new product development project team <u>will have been researching</u> and <u>proposing</u> more than 60 new product categories.

Finally, we need to mention transitive and intransitive verbs.

Transitive Verbs

A *transitive verb* takes a *direct object;* that is, the verb transmits action to an object:

She **sent** the **text** (*text* = direct object of *sent*)
She **gave** the **lecture**. (*lecture* = direct object of *gave*)

In these sentences, something is being done to an object.

Intransitive Verbs

An intransitive verb does not take an object:

He works too hard.

He **complains** frequently.

In these sentences, nothing receives the action of the verbs *works* and *complains*.

Typical for English, there are many rules and exceptions to the rules for transitive and intransitive verbs, including some power verbs that can be either transitive or intransitive.

Recognize an intransitive verb when you see one

An intransitive verb has two characteristics. First, it is an <u>action verb</u>, expressing a doable activity such as **arrive**, **go**, **lie**, **sneeze**, **sit**, **die**, and so on. Second, unlike a <u>transitive verb</u>, it does not have a <u>direct object</u> receiving the action.

Here are some examples of intransitive verbs:

Huffing and puffing, we **arrived** at the church with only seconds to spare. [**arrived** = intransitive verb]

Jorge **went** to the campus cafe for a bowl of hot chicken noodle soup. [**went** = intransitive verb]

To escape the midday heat, the dogs **lie** in the shade under our trees. [**lie** = intransitive verb]

Around fresh ground pepper, Sheryl **sneezes** with violence. [**sneezes** = intransitive verb]

In the early morning, Mom **sits** on the front porch to admire her beautiful flowers. [**sits** = intransitive verb]

Sorry, Ms. Finney (my seventh grade English teacher), I know you would want me to talk about lexical and auxiliary verbs, compound verbs, copulas, prepositional phrases, gerunds, participles, adverbs, tense, aspect, mood, model and nonmodel verbs, subjects, objects, complements, modifiers, and so on, but I promised this would not be a style manual.

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