



Rhetoric Guidelines Template

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So much of [Organization Name]'s work and reputation is influenced by 1) how effectively we communicate our messages, and 2) how accurately people understand our messaging. These guidelines were developed together as a staff in order for us to use consistent, accurate messaging, in our elevator speeches and beyond.

Until following these guidelines becomes second nature to you, ***make a habit of reviewing them...***

- 1) ...before public speaking engagements,
- 2) before meetings (especially with new or fairly new contacts), and
- 3) as you write significant emails or other documents.

Use of Jargon

Be aware of jargon in our language. When we stay aware, the rest of this will fall into place more easily.

Context is KEY. Certain jargon words may be appropriate for some audiences, but not others. (Ask yourself, is XYZ word or phrase part of this group's natural lexicon?)

- Ex. A fundraiser won't skip a beat if you use the phrase "community foundation." However, someone who's not part of the mainstream philanthropy world may not have a clue about what community foundations do, or even that they exist.

Clarification may be necessary when working with others, even when the jargon word is part of their lexicon.

- Ex. If an organization is talking to us about forming a partnership, make sure everyone is on the same page about what "partnership" really means.

When is it okay for us to use (appropriate) jargon?

- Industry-specific gatherings (BUT, remember they may define jargon words differently than [Organization Name])
 - [List specific examples here]
- Publications written for targeted audiences
- Business-focused or nonprofit-focused media channels

When is it NOT okay to use jargon?

- Any general public setting**
 - Non-industry speaking engagements
 - Social media, especially Facebook (use very sparingly with Twitter, if at all)
 - General promotional materials
 - Any mainstream press releases or media contacts

**There may be situations in which you want to *introduce* a jargon word to a new audience, and that's fine. Just make sure you explain it, using non-jargon words. (Example: explaining what "giving circles" are to a local community group.)

[Organization Name]'s Most-Used Jargon Words...Be aware!

[This has already been set up into 2 columns, so all you have to do is plop in your own words. A great place to get you started is The Communications Network's Jargon Finder: <http://www.comnetwork.org/category/jargon/>]

word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word

We may not use the following jargon words *quite* as much as the above list, but we should still be aware of them:

word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word
word	word

Cleaning Up Our Language

This applies to anyone who officially represents [Organization Name] – board members, staff, volunteers, etc.

Words/Phrases To Use MORE:

- [Could be a new tagline, a new program or focus area, a correction of a commonly misused term, etc.]

Words/Phrases To Use CAREFULLY

- [This list is great for terms that mean different things to different audiences, or terms that are frequently a point of confusion but must still be used.]

Words/Phrases To PURGE

- [Use this list for anything you want staff to STOP saying altogether, like old taglines, obsolete program names, or organizational catchphrases that are no longer accurate/relevant.]