

# The Words That Are Killing Your Productivity

Want to get more done? Then stop using this time-sucking class of words. Hint: One of them is in the headline.

What's the key to productivity? It turns out that you should have learned it in high school English class. In case you didn't pay attention that day, read on.

Do you remember what gerunds are? They're verbs conjugated in the continuous and progressive aspect. (In other words, they're words that end with "-ing.") We're talking about words like—well, like, "talking"—along with "working," "planning," "considering" and the like.

## Weasel Words

Gerunds suck. They suck time, productivity and progress. They're weasel words—your silent enemy as an entrepreneur. They undermine accountability, and where there's a lack of accountability there is usually a corresponding lack of productivity.

Here's an example of how it works. It comes to us from a U.S. Army general we know who got so sick of updates without substance that he banned gerunds from his subordinates' reports.

Let's say this general orders a lower-ranking officer to move some troops across a river.

Gerunds allowed? The soldier might report, "We're working on moving our unit and setting up across the river." Technically true, but it doesn't tell us very much about the unit's progress.

Gerunds banned? The soldier has to use more disciplined language, reporting only what he has already accomplished and what he plans to do next: "Our

soldiers are in place on the river bank. We've brought half of them across and we'll bring the other half across in 20 minutes." Far more accountable and useful.

## **Where to Focus**

So, what does this have to do with entrepreneurship? Simple. The path to ruin for many entrepreneurs comes from a lack of accountability. It's easy as an entrepreneur to get caught up in what you're doing---as opposed to what you've accomplished and what you plan to do next.

Banning gerunds from your speech makes that accountability a bit more natural. It's especially important when you account to yourself for how you've spent your time each day, and what you plan to do next. As an entrepreneur, you have to be absolutely focused and ruthless on how you spend your time.

So, avoid spending your day doing things like *making* phone calls, *holding* meetings and *brainstorming* or *considering* options. God forbid that you look back at the end of the day and have to acknowledge that you spent hours *checking* your email or *surfing* the Internet. Keep a schedule. Use checklists so that you can force yourself to record honestly how you spent your time. Put together a Gantt chart so that you can maintain focus on the big picture and see how what you do each day impacts it.

Ban gerunds from your vocabulary. We predict that if you can live up to the standard, you'll soon find that you're on your way to kicking ass and taking names as an entrepreneur.