

Are we using inclusive language and imagery?

Buddha said that words have the power to both destroy and heal. Today, this is truer than ever. Particularly for companies that are called to hold a certain standing in society.



By **CONCETTA CARDAMONE**
Digital Communication Consultant, Lundquist



There are no wrong words. There is however the incorrect usage of words. Language is living and it can be adjusted to respond to the practical needs of communication in a more effective and fluid way. It can also be a vehicle for matters of ethics and identity. It is important to define linguistic limits as well as to ensure these limits do not become a labyrinth with no way out.

The use of inclusive language requires an open mind, flexibility and continuous learning of the language to respect and connect with those around us. Writing and speaking in an inclusive way is a choice, but one based on communicative values that transform the way we think before the way we express ourselves in written or spoken words.

Having a strong grasp of the language not only allows us to communicate better in general but also to use the more inclusive vocabulary available and avoid getting caught up in slashes and asterisks, which are simple but sometimes superficial solutions.

This is true for written and spoken language. How often do we hear a joke with hidden prejudice we are so used to we don't even notice it? Language can help create worlds, but we must remember that there is inequality in things, like denied rights, discrimination, gender gaps and everyday stereotypes.

"We must train ourselves to use language with the wonderful spectrum of expression and registers it possesses."

VERA GHENO

Scholar, linguist, essayist and Italian translator



"How easy is it to recognise verbal and visual clichés that we use instinctively every day?"

Language is, more often than not, a symptom, a topical manifestation of deeper social and political disfunction. The words we choose to use shape our thoughts and the world around us.

AN IMAGE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Images are as powerful as words. In an image society, visually representing the concept of inclusion and respect for differences has the same value as choosing the best word to use. Creating a visually inclusive design concept means reevaluating the images, icons and colours we rely on and understanding how all these elements might embrace or exclude users.

Photos, illustrations and the general aesthetic are the first thing people notice. Choosing photos and images of people who don't seem real or who represent only a small part of the audience can have an unattractive effect on someone, and be distancing more than inviting.

In the past decade, the internet has catapulted cultural awareness to unprecedented levels. By pushing for diversity of content, we can strive to become a society that recognises the smallest nuances as a natural part of our collective whole.

When people feel represented, they see themselves as part of the identity and values of a company.

Stock images that are often used in corporate communications are design shortcuts, but this doesn't mean you can't do your best to choose them carefully and sensitively. Even a poorly chosen stock image has the power to damage the credibility of a brand.



Concetta Cardamone was one of the speakers at the Lundquist Annual Seminar 2022, which took place at the Corriere della Sera headquarters.

