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Luntz: Health CEOs should be more personal

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Health care providers must change their words to change American perceptions of the industry, according to Republican pollster Frank Luntz.

He encouraged health care leaders to stress individual relationships when communicating with the public. He advised using the words "accountability," "responsibility," "compassion," "answerable" and "value." Those are the words that spark a connection and generate trust, he said.

Luntz was the keynote speaker of the **Business Council of Alabama's** 2010 Health Care Reform Update on Friday at the **Harbert Center**. He advised publicly traded health care companies to inject personable language into their annual report filings.

He said letters from CEOs are among the most read portions of those filings. Most lack any personal touch or way to connect with the public – meaning they only reinforce stereotypes of uncaring, profit-driven corporations.

Corporate America as a whole, and particularly CEOs, would be wise to humanize their public communications, Luntz said. He provided data showing 79 percent of Americans blame CEOs for the country's financial condition, compared to 21 percent that blame companies.

People are looking for respect from corporate America. In growing numbers, Luntz said, Americans are refusing to buy products from companies they don't like or feel haven't demonstrated an investment in their lives.

"The public doesn't feel the commitment," Luntz said.

A large majority of Americans feel the country is headed down the wrong track, Luntz said. The health care debate has driven down President Obama's popularity and that of just about everything in Washington.

The public's ire is most concentrated on lobbyists (33 percent) and bureaucrats (30 percent), according to Luntz's data. His poll data from what is most disliked in D.C. also includes 19 percent for Obama and 18 percent for Congress.