



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR PERSONAL EXCELLENCE

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ABSTRACT



In today's escalating world of competition, professionals are often under pressure to achieve more than what they are capable of Hence, a professional must sound more impressive and effective, influence others more favourably, and enhance relationships with colleagues, customers and managers alike. "Communication-the human connection-is the key to personal and career success." Effective communication skills are decisive for professional excellence and can provide brand new direction to one's career. Many professionals sincerely desire to communicate effectively but do not really know how to become adept at communication. This paper attempts to dwell on the importance of effective communication in professional life. Sound knowledge of the subject, systematic and meticulous delivery and appropriate body language are the crucial building blocks of effective communication. Those who relentlessly make assiduous efforts to master these building blocks of communication can overcome the impediment of ineffective communication and become effective communicators.

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WHAT IS EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION?

Communication is about more than just exchanging information. It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information. Effective communication is also a two-way street. It's not only how you convey a message so that it is received and understood by someone in exactly the way you intended, it's also how you listen to gain the full meaning of what's being said and to make the other person feel heard and understood.

More than just the words you use, effective communication combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, engaged listening, managing stress in the moment, the ability to communicate assertively, and the capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person you're communicating with. Effective communication is the glue that helps you deepen your connections to others and improve teamwork, decision making, and problem solving. It



enables you to communicate even negative or difficult messages without creating conflict or destroying trust.

While effective communication is a learned skill, it is more effective when it's spontaneous rather than formulaic. A speech that is read, for example, rarely has the same impact as a speech that's delivered. Of course, it takes time and effort to develop these skills and become an effective communicator. The more effort and practice you put in, the more instinctive and spontaneous your communication skills will become.

COMMON BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- The use of jargon: Over-complicated, unfamiliar and/or technical terms.
- Emotional barriers and taboos: Some people may find it difficult to express their emotions and some topics may be completely 'off-limits' or taboo.
- Lack of attention, interest, distractions, or irrelevance to the receiver.
- Differences in perception and viewpoint.
- Physical disabilities such as hearing problems or speech difficulties.
- Physical barriers to non-verbal communication: Not being able to see the non-verbal cues, gestures, posture and general body language can make communication less effective.
- Language differences and the difficulty in understanding unfamiliar accents.
- Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping: People often hear what they expect to hear rather than what is actually said and jump to incorrect conclusions.
- Cultural differences: The norms of social interaction vary greatly in different cultures, as do the way in which emotions are expressed. For example, the concept of personal space varies between cultures and between different social settings.

HOW TO MAKE COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVE?

Learn to Listen: Listening is not the same as hearing; learn to listen not only to the words being spoken, but how they are being spoken and the non-verbal messages sent with them. Use the techniques of clarification and reflection to confirm what the other person has said and avoid any confusion. Try not to think about what to say next whilst listening; instead clear your mind and focus on the message being received.

Be Aware of Other People's Emotions: Be sympathetic to other people's misfortunes and congratulate their positive landmarks. To do this you need to be aware of what is going on in other people's lives. Make and maintain contact and use first names where appropriate. Do not be afraid to ask others for their opinions as this will help to make them feel valued.

Consider the emotional effect of what you are saying and communicate within the norms of behaviour acceptable to the other person.

EMPATHISE

Empathy is trying to see things from the point-of-view of others. When communicating with others, try not to be judgmental or biased by preconceived ideas or beliefs - instead view situations and responses from the other person's perspective. Stay in tune with your own emotions to help enable you to understand the emotions of others.

If appropriate, offer your personal viewpoint clearly and honestly to avoid confusion. Bear in mind that some subjects might be taboo or too emotionally stressful for others to discuss.

ENCOURAGE

Offer words and actions of encouragement, as well as praise, to others. Make other people feel welcome, wanted, valued and appreciated in your communications. If you let others know that they are valued, they are much more likely to give you their best. Try to ensure that everyone involved in an interaction or communication is included through effective body language and the use of open questions.

**IMPORTANCE OF NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

Nonverbal communication represents two-thirds of all communication. Nonverbal communication can portray a message both vocally and with the correct body signals or gestures. Body signals comprise physical features, conscious and unconscious gestures and signals, and the mediation of personal space. The wrong message can be established if the body language conveyed does not match a verbal message. Nonverbal communication strengthens a first impression in common situations like attracting a partner or in a business interview: impressions are on average formed within the first four seconds of contact. First encounters or interactions with another person strongly affect a person's perception. When the other person or group is absorbing the message, they are focused on the entire environment around them, meaning the other person uses all five senses in the interaction: 83% sight, 11% hearing, 3% smell, 2% touch and 1% taste.

FIRST IMPRESSION

It takes just one-tenth of a second for someone to judge and make their first impression. A first impression is a lasting non-verbal communicator. The way a person portrays themselves on the first encounter is non-verbal statement to the observer. "First impressions are lasting impressions." There can be positive and negative impressions. Positive impressions can be made through the way you present yourself. Presentation can include clothing and other visible attributes. Negative impressions can also be based on presentation and also on personal prejudice. First impressions, although sometimes misleading, can in many situations be an accurate depiction of others.

POSTURE

There are many different types of body positioning to portray certain postures, including slouching, towering, legs spread, jaw thrust, shoulders forward, and arm crossing. The posture or bodily stance exhibited by individuals communicates a variety of messages whether good or bad. Posture can be used to determine a participant's degree of attention or involvement, the difference in status between communicators, and the level of fondness a person has for the other communicator, depending

on body "openness". Studies investigating the impact of posture on interpersonal relationships suggest that mirror-image congruent postures, where one person's left side is parallel to the other person's right side, leads to favourable perception of communicators and positive speech; a person who displays a forward lean or decreases a backward lean also signifies positive sentiment during communication.

Posture can be situation-relative, that is, people will change their posture depending on the situation they are in.

CLOTHING

Clothing is one of the most common forms of non-verbal communication. The study of clothing and other objects as a means of non-verbal communication is known as artifactic or objectics. The types of clothing that an individual wears conveys nonverbal cues about his or her personality, background and financial status, and how others will respond to them. An individual's clothing style can demonstrate their culture, mood, level of confidence, interests, age, authority, and values/beliefs. For instance, Jewish men may wear yamakas to outwardly communicate their religious belief. Similarly, clothing can communicate what nationality a person or group is, for example, in traditional festivities Scottish men often wear kilts to specify their culture.

The way one chooses to dress tells a lot about one's personality. In fact, there was a study done at the University of North Carolina, which compared the way undergraduate women chose to dress and their personality types. The study showed that women who dressed "primarily for comfort and practicality were more self-controlled, dependable, and socially well adjusted". Women who didn't like to stand out in a crowd had typically more conservative and traditional views and beliefs. Clothing, although non-verbal, tells people what your personality is like. The way a person dresses is typically rooted from deeper internal motivations such as emotions, experiences and culture. Clothing expresses who you are, or even, who you want to be that day. It shows people who you want to be associated with, and where you fit in. Clothing can



start relationships, because you're cluing other people in on what you are like.

GESTURES

Gestures may be made with the hand, arms or body, and also include movements of the head, face and eyes, such as winking, nodding, or rolling one's eyes. Although the study of gesture is still in its infancy, some broad categories of gestures have been identified by researchers. The most familiar are the so-called emblems or quotable gestures. These are conventional, culture-specific gestures that can be used as replacement for words, such as the hand wave used in western cultures for "hello" and "goodbye." A single emblematic gesture can have a very different significance in different cultural contexts, ranging from complimentary to highly offensive.

DISTANCE

According to Edward T. Hall, the amount of space we maintain between ourselves and the persons with whom we are communicating shows the importance of the science of proxemics. In this process, it is seen how we feel towards the others at that particular time. Within American culture Hall defines four primary distance zones: Intimate (touching to eighteen inches) distance, Personal (eighteen inches to four feet) distance, Social (four to twelve feet) distance, and Public (more than twelve feet) distance. Intimate distance is considered appropriate for familiar relationships and indicates closeness and trust. Personal distance is still close but keeps another "at arm's length" the most comfortable distance for most of our interpersonal contact, social distance is used for the kind of communication that occurs in business relationships and, sometimes, in the classroom. Public distance occurs in situations where two-way communication is not desirable or possible.

EYE CONTACT

Eye contact is the instance when two people look at each other's eyes at the same time; it is the primary nonverbal way of indicating engagement, interest, attention and involvement. Studies have found that people use their eyes to indicate interest. This includes frequently recognized actions of winking and movements of the eyebrows. Disinterest is highly noticeable when little or no eye contact is

made in a social setting. When an individual is interested however, the pupils will dilate.

ACROSS CULTURES

While not traditionally thought of as "talk," non verbal communication has been found to contain highly precise and symbolic meanings, similar to verbal speech. However the meanings in nonverbal communication are conveyed through the use of gesture, posture changes, and timing. Nuances across different aspects of nonverbal communication can be found in cultures all around the world. These differences can often lead to miscommunication between people of different cultures, who usually do not mean to offend. Differences can be based in preferences for mode of communication, like the Chinese, who prefer silence over verbal communication. Differences can even be based on how cultures perceive the passage of time. Chronemics, how people handle time, can be categorized in two ways: polychronic which is when people do many activities at once and is common in Italy and Spain, or monochronic which is when people do one thing at a time which is common in America. Because nonverbal communication can vary across many axes—gestures, gaze, clothing, posture, direction, or even environmental cues like lighting—there is a lot of room for cultural differences. In Japan, a country which prides itself on the best customer service, workers tend to use wide arm gestures to give clear directions to strangers - accompanied by the ever-present bow to indicate respect.

Display of emotions: Emotions are a key factor in nonverbal communication. Just as gestures and other hand movements vary across cultures, so does the way people display their emotions. For example, "In many cultures, such as the Arab and Iranian cultures, people express grief openly. They mourn out loud, while in Asian cultures, the general belief is that it is unacceptable to show emotion openly." For people in Westernized countries, laughter is a sign of amusement, but in some parts of Africa it is a sign of wonder or embarrassment. Emotional expression varies with culture. Native Americans tend to be more reserved and less expressive with emotions. Frequent touches are common for Chinese people; however, such actions



like touching, patting, hugging or kissing in America are less frequent and not often publicly displayed.

KINESICS

The term 'kinesics' was first used (in 1952) by Ray Birdwhistell, an anthropologist who wished to study how people communicate through posture, gesture, stance, and movement. Part of Birdwhistell's work involved making films of people in social situations and analyzing them to show different levels of communication not clearly seen otherwise. Several other anthropologists, including Marget mead and Gregory Bateson, also studied kinesics.

Kinesic messages are more subtle than gestures. Kinesic messages comprise the posture, gaze, and facial movements. American looks are short enough just to see if there is recognition of the other person, Arabs look at each other in the eye intensely, and many Africans avert the gaze as a sign of respect to superiors. There are also many postures for people in the Congo; they stretch their hands and put them together in the direction of the other person.

It is the study of body movements. The aspects of kinesics are face, eye contact, gesture, posture, body movements.

1. Face: The face and eyes are the most expressive means of body communication. It can facilitate or hamper feedback.
2. Eye contact: It is the most powerful form of non-verbal communication. It builds emotional relationship between listener and speaker.
3. Gesture: It is the motion of the body to express the speech.
4. Posture: The body position of an individual conveys a variety of messages.
5. Body movement: Used to understand what people are communicating with their gestures and posture

HAPTICS

Haptics is the study of touching as nonverbal communication, and haptic communication refers to how people and other animals communicate via touching. Touches among humans that can be defined as communication includes holding hands, kissing (cheek, lips, hand),

back slapping, high fives a pat on the shoulder, and brushing handshakes, an arm. Touching of oneself may include licking, picking, holding, and scratching. These behaviors are referred to as "adapters" or "tells" and may send messages that reveal the intentions or feelings of a communicator and a listener. The meaning conveyed from touch is highly dependent upon the culture, the context of the situation, the relationship between communicators, and the manner of touch.

PROXEMICS

Proxemics is the study of the cultural, behavioural, and sociological aspects of spatial distances between individuals. Every person has a particular space that they keep to themselves when communicating, like a personal bubble. When used as a type of nonverbal signal in communication, proxemics helps to determine the space between individuals while they interact. There are four types of proxemics with different distances depending on the situation and people involved. Intimate distance is used for close encounters like embracing, touching, or whispering. Personal distance is for interactions with close friends and family members. Social distance is for interactions among acquaintances. It is mostly used in workplace or school settings where there is no physical contact. Public distance is for strangers or public speaking.