



IMPORTANCE OF NON VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN MANAGEMENT

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The most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said. – Peter F. Drucker

ABSTRACT

Non-verbal communication is the most powerful form of communication and it is very important to know how to use it correctly. Effective communication skills of both verbal and written help a person greatly in achieving professional development, enabling to create their own value in the organization but non-verbal communication aids a person in creating image, as a person's disposition or temperament or behaviour tendency can be determined by non-verbal communication. As a useful tool, a person should consciously use nonverbal communication to make certain that they are communicating the intended message as effectively as possible. Non-verbal communication actually apprises people in to what is on

other people's minds. Business owners can gain from learning about nonverbal communication and its potential benefits. Nonverbal communication can increase the opportunity to interact with colleagues, competitors, clients and potential clients through avenues outside of explicit word choice.

Key Words: Body language, facial expressions, sound, eye contact, posture, gesture

Introduction

Nonverbal communication is anything that transmits an idea from one person to another without the use of words. There are mainly three methods of communication in business organizations, oral or verbal, written and non-verbal. Each and every method of communication has its own value and significance. The way a person listens, looks, moves, and reacts tells the other person whether or not he cares, and how well he is listening. When nonverbal signals match up with the words being said, they increase trust, clarity, and rapport. When they don't, they can generate tension, mistrust, and confusion. If a person wants to mask his/her own feelings or immediate reaction to some kind of information, the special attention should be given to non-verbal behaviour. Nonverbal communication is estimated to make up 65-90% of all communication, and understanding, interpreting, and using it are essential skills. There are literally thousands of nonverbal cues that can be used to ascertain what someone is communicating.

Components of Non Verbal Communication

Though the components of nonverbal communication are almost limitless, it can be broadly classified into three main categories: appearance, body language, and sound.

Appearance:

The appearance of both the speaker and the surroundings are vital for the successful conveyance of a message. For example, a speaker's clothing, hairstyle, use of cosmetics, neatness may cause a listener to form impressions about his/her occupation, socio economic level, competence, etc. Most of the highly structured companies really care about their dress code which represents a highly visible non-verbal sign. But no one can tell exactly what perfect outfit is for each company. If there is no specific dress code, the outfit should be

comfortable, clean and not inappropriate. It should be such that it can express a person's own feeling, his own personality and creativity.

Body Language:

Body language generally includes gestures, facial expressions, eye contact and posture. The correct use of body language serves as an effective nonverbal communication tool to convince fellow-workers at workplace leading to overall organizational success through self-development.

A firm handshake or warm hug indicates something very different than a loose pat on the back or a timid handshake.

Facial expressions convey a lot about what a person is thinking. Faces are extremely expressive, and often give our emotions away before we have a chance to say what we feel. Emotions such as happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, anger and surprise are universal facial expressions with the same meaning across all cultures. It is important to try to keep our facial expressions positive during a business conversation. Reading faces is not just a matter of identifying static expressions but also of noticing how faces subtly begin to change. People in face-to-face exchanges watch each other's expressions to gauge reactions to what's being said and heard. Even when some words are missed, observing the expression on a speaker's face can help the listener follow a conversation.

The smile is a very important form of facial expression. It opens the door to communication. A natural, pleasant smile carries great significance in establishing and sustaining human relationships in any business organisation. A smile can create a favourable impact and earn goodwill. But it is also true that all smiles are not genuine. The sales force is specifically taught to cultivate genuine smiles and smile liberally in their day-to-day transactions with colleagues and customers.

Eye contact represents one of the strongest tools in Business Communication. The eyes have been described as the gateway to the soul. They speak in the most revealing and accurate language. Eye contact can convey sincerity and confidence, which is often important in business organisations. Looking people in the eye when talking to them is a good way to let

them know you are listening to them and interested in what they have to say. People can feel different emotions and energy that a person sends by watching people into their eyes. Anger, sadness, happiness, warmth, joy, and love -- all powerful emotions are visible from eye contact. Not looking the other party in the eye can sometimes make you appear disinterested, nervous, or even shifty. All business people who wish to have successful business presentations must know how to use eye contact correctly and effectively enough to leave positive impression on others. A person who continually breaks eye contact during a conversation to glance at the clock or the door may be sending the message that he wants to exit the conversation. Too much eye contact can cause discomfort while too little can signal boredom or disinterest.

Posture is how a person stands or sits, whether arms and legs are crossed, and so on. Crossed legs or folded arms during a business meeting may signify relaxation or resistance to the ideas being presented. If a person maintains right body posture in business meetings, seminars, conferences and business presentations, he can create his good image in the people around him and can also succeed in his tasks effectively.

Sound:

Para-language or aspects of the voice apart from speech, such as pitch, tone, and speed of speaking is also a vital tool of non verbal communication. One may use a monotonous tone of voice for stating facts or an enthusiastic tone of voice while giving a sales pitch. The volume of voice as well as the timing and pace of words help in setting the tone of the conversation in a nonverbal manner. Again silence can also be a form of nonverbal communication. Silence can communicate a lack of understanding or hard feelings in a face-to-face discussion.

Apart from the above, the closeness or personal space which determines the level of intimacy, physiological changes like sweating or blinking more when nervous can also be the different form of non verbal communication.

Importance

While a strong business education helps in operating a business, effective people skills, especially the skill of non-verbal communication helps in success of a business. According to A. Barbour, author of the book, “Louder than Words: Nonverbal Communication”, the total importance of a message is represented like this:

- 7 per cent verbal (words)
- 38 per cent vocal (volume, pitch, rhythm, etc.)
- 55 percent body movements and facial expressions

From the above it can be said that more than 90% of communication consists of non verbal type. Therefore, it is important for business owners, managers and leaders to be aware of the nonverbal messages they send and to develop the skill of reading the nonverbal messages contained in the behaviour of others. The ability to read a person's attitudes and thoughts by their behaviour was the original communication system used by humans before spoken language evolved. Being tuned into someone's nonverbal communication cues can help in determining what is truly being said beyond just the words being spoken. Effective communication and good interpersonal skills have always been considered important for management. People can be benefited from learning about nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication can increase the opportunity to interact with colleagues, competitors, clients and potential clients through avenues outside of explicit word choice. It can help in demonstrating confidence, enthusiasm and professionalism through attire choice, active listening cues and the ability to present a message.

But communications can go awry when the non-verbal aspects conflict with the words being said. For example, if a manager tells someone that he likes him while using an angry tone of voice, the listener will receive conflicting messages. But if a manager sits forward and smiles during the part of an employment review regarding an employee's strengths, the employee may accept the praise as genuine.

How to Improve Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication skills can help a person in multiple facets of life. People with such skills tend to thrive better in relationships at work, in social circles and with family and loved ones. Most of us learn to interpret non-verbal communication as we grow up and develop. It is a normal part of communication with other people, and most of us use it and

interpret it quite unconsciously. But a person can also practice and manage nonverbal communication to convey messages more effectively by studying and learning the skill of interpreting human behaviour by keen observation. Watching other people's body language, facial expressions and intonations, and being conscious of own physicality and feelings can enhance non-verbal communication.

Observe others

- When a person use a nonverbal skill effectively, try to incorporate that nonverbal skill into your own communication style. For example, if a person effectively raises his eyebrows in a way that sends the message, "I really do not believe you," without saying a word, then incorporate that nonverbal skill into your own way of communicating for a similar type of situation.
- Pay attention to other people's nonverbal cues. In a meeting, observe two people talking with each other. Notice the tone of their voices and the positions of their bodies. It can be easy to tell who is going to "win" a disagreement based upon the nonverbal body language used.

Observe Yourself

- Watch own body language. The way you position your body during a conversation speaks volumes. If you want to end a conversation sooner, make a point of looking at your watch. If you want to be in a power position during a conversation, stand while the other person remains seated.
- Pay attention to the tone. Use your tone to energize your words. If you want to motivate another person, you need to put some energy into your speech. If you want to put another person in his place, use a deeper and more firm voice.
- Strengthen eye contact. The fastest way to improve nonverbal skills is to make eye contact with the other person during a conversation. By making eye contact, you are connecting with that person, which makes it much easier for both of you to understand each other.

It is important to record yourself with both a video camera and an audio recorder to see how you communicate non-verbally. Are your gestures matching your words, or giving away what you're really thinking?

Understanding of non-verbal behaviour can be improved by observing in a mirror. For example, practice a forth-coming speech in front of a mirror or watch yourself while talking on the telephone. Notice how your face and body convey your emotions. Monitor the pitch and volume of your voice. Again, smile represents the best weapon for making customers and business people around us to feel comfortable and appreciated. The best thing is practicing in front of the mirror till we feel comfortable enough to share it among the people.

Group Exercises

Group exercises can also help in improving non-verbal skills. For example, write different emotions like anger, despair, desire, annoyance or amusement on a sheet of paper and distribute those sheets in the group. Then ask each player to select an emotion and use non-verbal communication to convey it. Let the group identify the emotion. Again, a person can be allowed to monitor a discussion between two people, who will report back on their non-verbal behaviours and its effect on the conversation.

Non verbal Communication in different cultures

Nonverbal cues may differ from culture to culture. There are few facial expressions that are actually universal throughout the human race. These include anger, disgust, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise etc. But there are certain non verbal tools like personal space, eye contact, touching may mean different things in different cultures. For example, it is considered polite to maintain quite a bit of eye contact when speaking to a superior in United States. However, in many Asian cultures, this would be seen as disrespectful. Again, the thumbs-up gesture, which generally signals approval in English-speaking countries, is considered offensive in other countries, including apparently Greece, Italy and some parts of the Middle East. So the managers or business owners travelling different countries must be familiar with the culture and non verbal language of the countries for better communication with customers or for a business deal.

Conclusion

To become a successful person in business requires much more than good speech. People who have the ability to communicate, verbally and non-verbally, have the best chance of obtaining successful relationships in their personal and professional lives. Verbal communication represents just a small percentage of communication and the rest is to have

adequate non-verbal skills and to know how and when to use them properly. Sometimes although voice and words can be under control, but body language such as facial expressions, movements and gestures can give true thoughts and feelings about something. Matching nonverbal communication to spoken words will make clients, vendors, professional associates and other stakeholders trust a person. But interpreting non-verbal communication is not that simple. It is not a language with a fixed meaning. It is influenced and driven by the context in which it occurs. This includes the place and the people concerned, as well as the culture. There are many ways for learning and improving personal non-verbal skills. Correct interpretation and usage of already learned skills can help management in achieving goals in any business organisation.

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