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9/27/2014

Top 8 'Rules/ Guidelines For Nonverbal Communication in the Workplace'

For: Prof. Alison Lietzenmayer COMM 305

Several thin, curved lines in dark green and light grey originate from the left side and sweep upwards and to the right.

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To the Human Resources/Management Team audience, from business owner to frontline worker, my learning environment, online, and other students to try and adapt using these rules or guidelines for non-verbal messages in the workplace.

Summary

The purpose of this report is to examine both the communication theory and practice of communication in a professional setting as it relates to non-verbal communication in the workplace. Eight informal-level rules or guidelines are suggested and analyzed since it is the weakest area overlooked in businesses nonverbal behaviors. According to Cheryl Hamilton (2014), the silent messages sent across people in a business or professional setting will be easier to be interpreted once a specific situation is identified, their cultural history known and their personal frame of reference noted: “To accurately determine the meaning of a nonverbal (silent) messages in a business or professional setting, you must know the sender’s personal frame of reference and cultural background, as well as the specific situation” (p.137). Results indicated the importance of the roles of interpersonal communication, small group, organizational, and mass media communication as it relates to the workplace for successful communication, rapport and satisfaction. Recommendation are to innovatively communicate the rules discussed to improve quality and productive relationships at work for maximum productivity expressed by synchronized actions of speech. Next steps noted were a creation of personalized annual checklists using the rules discussed to determine levels of progress after implementation, with a timely review of necessary to fix the missing links observed.

Introduction

This report relates to workplace communication and is appropriate to people from business owner to frontline worker in the USA. Problems in a business setting occur when mixed messages from people with individual differences, are portrayed by observing movements of the body, expressions and also how one behaves, thus non-verbal communication is defined as “all intentional and unintentional messages that are not written, spoken, or sounded” (Hamilton, 137). It has been observed that people use less verbal interpretations’ than non-verbal when communicating, scholars have noted and I quote “nonverbal codes is responsible for more than half of the meaning of a sender’s total message and that when the language, paralanguage, and nonverbal codes send conflicting messages, people tend to pay more attention to the nonverbal code” (Burgoon et al., 2010). This means that non-verbal method contributes more than verbal method in conveying messages. Taking views from previous communication guidelines such as several lenses, across dimension of culture being the individualistic-collectivistic; low-context-high-context; and monochronic-polychronic cultures, understood and explored were the technical-formal-informal levels of culture to generate my rules or advised guidelines.

Non-verbal communication is rule governed because it enables people to get along without negatively interfering with each other. Feedback from how others interpret or perceive how they are communicating is crucial to business success. Therefore I have created eight rules or advised guidelines discussed in this report as it relates to visual immediacy behaviors in a professional setting with a goal to improve rapport.

My rules that apply to the following types of non-verbal communication reflected are in figure 1 below:

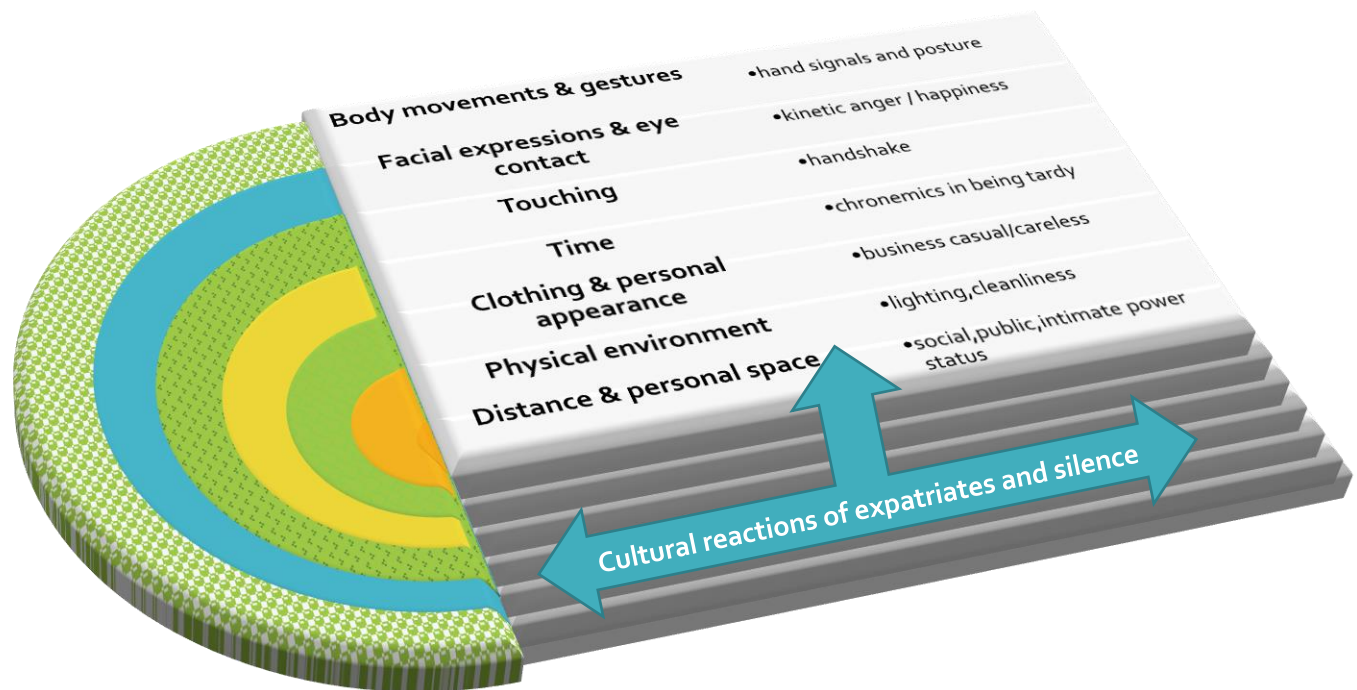


Figure 1

From business owner to frontline worker, following these guidelines will allow users to benefit as they will find here best practice information and tools that will help everyone develop more productive relationships at work for maximum productivity.

Rule 1: Exhibit positive, natural, genuine gestures & postures



This is effectively done by routinely collecting kinesthetic information by scanning, afterward's putting the information into context by situation to interpret correctly and finally learning by promoting appropriate action. Pay attention to decode why, where, how, when a person displays actions. Build the skill to signal a welcoming environment. Smile and establish communication to determine non-voluntary ascribed status. Practice self-reflect on your own kinesthetic skills, use authoritative posture and good energy dynamic commanding presence. Furthermore, encourage achieved status by incorporating affirmative action to gain capacity to take effective learnt action. Lewis (1998) suggests "individuals stand erect and walk with shoulders back and stomach in. This helps communicate a message of self-confidence, awareness, and enthusiasm." Attitudes of a good leadership are portrayed by no gait, (e.g. slow or stiff), minimal hand gestures unless displayed to a similar cultural audience, posture sat, stood in and way walked otherwise can be seen as lacking self-confidence or low self-esteem.

Rule 2: Look at intervals for affective meaning



This can be done by collectively looking for a group of signals to reinforce a point in spoken word with eye contact at intervals in a conversation or presentation as verbal and nonverbal communication work together to convey a message. When eye contact fails, it can be interpreted as evasive in North America individualistic culture or as confrontational and intimidating in a collective culture. Learning the culturally appropriate gaze is important, this is done by researching the individual ascribed status. Therefore looking for expressions of moods, thoughts, and emotions will enable you to interpret an individual accurately. Research by Webbink (1986) suggests "Eye contact...signals the exchange of speaker and listener roles...10–30% of the conversation. When individuals respond with their eyes they allow others to have a sense of their emotional state and can increase feelings of communication satisfaction."

Rule 3: Establish bonding by touching tailored to circumstance

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This interpersonal bond is relationship specific as the meaning can relate that of consolation, support, and congratulations. Intensity of closeness and strong personality can be promoted in the case of the continental grab or the handshake, or the Arabic men, French men as well as women kiss and greet, or even the Mexican hug and pat. Always consider persons with disabilities, such as with arthritis when interpreting this sensory message. Interpretations' should include a series of group behavior or gestures for accuracy as it is based on the interpreter's accepted norms. Cultural differences using haptics varies between collectivistic-high context cultures and individualistic-low context cultures, supporting this statement researchers state "Touch, like any other communication message, may elicit negative and positive reactions depending on the configuration of people and the circumstances" (Knapp and Hall, 2002).



Rule 4: Determine Time/chronemics by culture, regional and international boundaries

Time imposes order to people in monochronic cultures, such as Northern Europe and North America, tend to be punctual for social or informal gatherings and are one event focused. Lackadaisical times dominate Latin America, the Mediterranean, or the Middle East. Knapp & Hall (2002) suggests "Individuals may view time as the location or duration of events, the interval between events, or as patterns of intervals (routines or cycles of behavior)" Lietzenmayer (2014) agrees symbols of time-arrival, duration and control can send status messages. For example, an employee asks for a raise, at the same time the manager looks at the time piece to determine if there is enough time for the conversation, the employee on the other hand interprets the looking at the watch gesture as avoidance of the question.

Rule 5: Demonstrate values as well as standards promoting an ethically responsible personal appearance

We look before we listen to form an impression, sources support my statement as I quote “appearance messages are generally the first nonverbal messages received and can be used to develop judgments about people based on how they look, what they wear, and their level of attractiveness, among other things” (Richmond & McCroskey, 2004). Hence, the need to encourage a common platform of dress according to corporate culture, alleviating distractions that doesn’t hurt a person religious or personal sentiments. In other words, establish a dress code of well-tailored not tight garments that convey professionalism, avoiding showy accessories, busy patterns and revealing necklines. To complement business attire, pay attention to control perspiration; avoid cologne or perfume due to others’ allergic reactions or sensitivities; ensure fresh breath; keep nails and hands neatly manicured; and appropriate actions of demeanor should match your dress to not be obscene or act in Gangnam style but instill a sense of integrity.



Rule 6: Establish a friendly and inviting physical environment

People react to the environment affectively to establish one’s quality and standard. For example the beliefs of industrial areas being polluted and ugly versus an attractive open welcoming environment whose material objects displays equality, comfort, importance, satisfaction and that of stability can evoke emotional responses’. The color and fun factor also affects the response therefore the work environment should be designed according to corporate culture, scholarly sources confirm this stating “Individualist societies like the United States emphasize personal rights and responsibilities, privacy, and freedom, whereas more collectivist societies emphasize community and collaboration.”

(Andersen, Hecht, Hoobler, & Smallwood, 2002)



Photos are from Google office in Zurich



Rule 7: Demonstrate distances and personal space/proxemics according to culture

Having knowledge is important to effectively communicate successfully by distancing and spacing behavior. Practices should be established for conversational distances depending on relationship whether intimate or social. Territorial patterns should also be established due to arrangement of furnishings to affect spacing and interpretation of privacy, for example, an office or a specific chair in the conference room. Hamilton (2013) supported this pattern stating “people converse well at right angles with no more than 4 feet apart, they cooperate on tasks if sitting side-by-side and group participation in circular patterns preferred.” Hamilton (2013) supported the concept of relational communication included the following:



Distancing requirements according to culture such as general collectivistic cultures required less space whilst individualistic cultures more space...intimate (touch-18inches) for private use, personal(18 inches-4feet) for workmates and close friends, social(4-12feet) for business transactions and public(12-15feet or farther) distances for speaker to large group instances. (p. 149)

Rule 8: Develop awareness of cultural expectations of expatriates as it relates to voice and written communication

People who establish habits in immediacy behaviors demonstrates the ability to be evaluated highly. This will allow preference to whom they see as credible and feel comfortable with to be seen as competent, having goodwill, and trustworthy. The way a credible person expresses themselves from being enthusiastic in their tone of voice showing genuine interest, to feedback encouraging the listener to repeat their interpretation (written/voice) is by practice. According to Hamilton (2013) supports practice as she stated “Role-play using hypothetical situations, use videotapes to review effects of own and others’ non-verbal behavior.



Image obtained from:
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Conclusions

The most significant recommendation given is to innovatively communicate the rules discussed to improve quality and productive relationships at work for maximum productivity. Once the citizen voice is heard, processes and structures can demonstrate communication levels of understanding expressed by synchronized actions of speech. Institutions would inherently communicate their interpersonal attitudes better proving accountable leadership and enhanced development results. Furthermore, next steps would be to create personalized annual checklists using the above mentioned rules to determine levels of progress after implementation, and a timely review of necessary missing links observed.

To avoid bias, the discussed rules were made using context clues keeping into consideration the disparity of culture, age, sex, social situation and power status to determine the eight rules for nonverbal communication. The rules discussed are designed to be adaptable in each and every organizational culture by aid of their own personalized annual checklist.

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