

**NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION  
AS A MEANS OF ESTABLISHING CREDIBILITY  
AND A LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL**

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The key to success in both personal and professional relationships lies in our ability to communicate well. Very often nonverbal communication or “body language” speaks louder than the words that we use. Discovering the peculiarities related to nonverbal communication in different cultures, exploring its functions are of great relevance to establishing credibility and developing leadership potential.

As you know, people learn various foreign languages, programming languages, Esperanto. But there is one more language available for all. It is the language of people’s gestures, facial expressions and body movements which are powerful communication tools that send strong messages. They can help to build trust, or they can offend or undermine what you’re trying to convey. According to some authors, nonverbal communication represents two-thirds of all communications [6]. It can portray a message both vocally or with the correct body signals. It is believed that “body language can give away hidden feelings“.

Scientists have established that the impact of any communication comes mostly from the body language of the presenter and only then it is followed by the voice quality. According to Professor Albert Mehrabian, the figures for the impact of communication are as follows: 55% body language, 38% voice quality and only 7% the actual words [1]. It is in accordance with the proverb which says that “actions speak louder than words“.

Nonverbal communication differs from verbal communication greatly. First of all, it is less structured, which makes it more difficult to study. There isn’t a book on nonverbal language to learn and master the vocabulary of gestures and expressions that are common in our culture. We don’t really know how people learn non-verbal behaviour. No one teaches a baby to cry or smile, yet these forms of expression are almost universal. Non-verbal communication is spontaneous. When we communicate non-verbally, we do it unconsciously. The actions come naturally, emotions are written all over our faces.

Some of the functions of nonverbal communication are as follows:

- ✓ to provide information;
- ✓ to regulate the flow of conversation;
- ✓ to qualify, complement, contradict, or expand verbal messages;
- ✓ to express emotions;
- ✓ to control or influence others;
- ✓ to facilitate specific tasks and many more.

To interpret another culture's style of communication, it is necessary to study "the silent language of that culture" as it expresses our feelings without words [3].

Many universal emotions are displayed in a similar nonverbal way throughout the world. To prove it, there are some examples.

You know that distances play an important role in communication. Some researchers distinguish four kinds of spatial zones: intimate, personal, social and official which are more or less observed in most cultures [6].

1. Intimate zone (15-46 centimetres) is intended only for people, who are in a close emotional contact with each other. These are children, parents, spouses, lovers, close friends and relatives.

2. Personal zone (46 centimetres-1,2 metres) is a distance which we keep when we are, for example, at a party.

3. Social zone (1,2 metres -3,6 metres) is for people whom we don't know well.

4. Official zone (more than 3, 6 metres) is the distance we keep when we appeal to a big group of people.

The main indicator of feelings is the expression of the face (eyes, brows, lips).

Some basic facial expressions can be divided into six types:

1) Love, happiness;

2) Surprise;

3) Suffering, fear;

4) Anger, resolve;

5) Disgust;

6) Contempt.

There are, however, some nonverbal differences across cultures that may be a source of confusion for foreigners, which proves that not all gestures are universal. Let's look at the way people express some of their emotions.

In many cultures, such as Arab and Iranian ones, people express grief openly. They mourn out loudly while representatives of other cultures (e.g. China or Japan) are much more subdued.

Feelings of friendship exist everywhere in the world but their expression is different. In some countries men embrace each other and women hold hands; in other countries these displays of affection are discouraged or even prohibited.

The "OK" gesture in American culture is a symbol for money in Japan. The same gesture in some Latin American countries is considered obscene and vulgar.

Many American businessmen enjoy relaxing with their feet upon their desks. But to show a person from Saudi Arabia or Thailand the sole of one's foot is insulting because the foot is regarded the dirtiest part of the body.

Nonverbal communication is very important in our life. Thanks to it we can understand each other without words. All our movements show our mood, feelings, what we want to say. But if we want to decipher them, to know our friends, our relatives and other people better, we must learn the language of people's gestures and body movements. Nonverbal communication makes us more attentive and confident.

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 [4, 6]. When other people are absorbing the message, they are focused on the entire environment around them, meaning they use all the five senses in the interaction: sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

Nonverbal communication plays a vital role in business. First of all, it helps to establish credibility and leadership potential. You can do a great deal to show that you are competent, trustworthy, and dynamic, if you learn to manage the impression you create with your body language, facial characteristics, voice, and appearance.

Furthermore, if you can learn to read other people's nonverbal messages, you will be able to interpret their underlying attitudes and intentions more accurately. When dealing with coworkers, customers, and clients, you should watch carefully for small signs that reveal how the conversation is going. If you aren't having the effect you want, check your words; then, if your words are all right, try to be aware of the nonverbal meanings you are transmitting. At the same time, it is important to stay tuned to the nonverbal signals that the other person is sending.

By improving nonverbal communication, you can express what you really mean, you can connect better with others, and build more reliable and rewarding relationships. When your nonverbal signals correspond to the words you're saying, it increases trust, credibility and leadership. When they don't, they can be a reason for tension, mistrust, and confusion.

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