

Nonverbal Influence Outline

FMEA Annual Meeting 2015

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1. My Background.

- a. My journey in my first few years in the Army taught me the importance of influence.
- b. My time as a special investigator in the Army taught me the value of body language in interrogation.
- c. My mentor in Fort Carson, Colorado Springs, taught me the value of understanding human dynamics.

2. Premise of my talk - All good things in your life are directly correlated to your level of influence, why?

- a. Cannot achieve anything of significance without the help of others.
- b. Cannot illicit help from others without influence; hence, influence is your key to success.

3. Power statement – Your level of influence is based on your level of mastery of human dynamics.

- a. Mentor taught me “If you want to succeed in life and truly make a difference, then you must understand human dynamics to the point that nothing anyone does surprises you.”
- b. Influence is the complete understanding of human dynamics.

4. A major component of human dynamics is the interpretation of non-verbal cues.

- a. The average person only speaks 11 minutes per day; however, a person never ceases to communicate through body language.
- b. The human body can produce over 7 million unique movements.
- c. Spoken words in a conversation only communicates 7% of the meaning.
 - i. 38% communication through tone, inflection, and other sounds.
 - ii. 55% communication through nonverbal expressions.
- d. In the course of over a 30 minute conversation, two people will communicate approximately 800 different non-verbal messages to each other.

5. Primary goal in human interaction is to align expectations and form an agreement with one another.

- a. Disclaimer #1 – What I’m about to teach you should never be used to manipulate another person. Manipulation may bring short term success, but will ultimately fail and decrease your level of influence.
 - b. Disclaimer #2 – The human experience is complicated and nuanced. Body language is a tool for detecting tendencies. The techniques and gestures I will show you are what most people do in most settings; however, they are not fool proof. Sex, age, cultural background, family dynamics, and many other demographics play a role in body language that could lead to different interpretations. I will show you the most common gestures that will help leverage your communications skills.
- 6. *Increasing your influence with another person increases your chances of aligning expectations with the person with whom you are speaking. Identifying and interpreting nonverbal cues will help you gain a better understanding of the other person’s mood, comfort level, and intentions.***
- 7. *There are three primary objectives with nonverbal communication.***
- a. Situational awareness. Interpret nonverbal cues to fully understand the situation in the room before the meeting and discussion begins.
 - b. How the world sees you. Understand and appreciate how your presence changes the dynamics in the room, the meeting, and discussion.
 - c. Interpret “body leaks”. Assessing non-verbal communication to ensure the words used in a meeting are authentic.
 - i. Body leaks will reveal three things to you in a situation:
 - 1. Level of comfort in a person;
 - 2. Level of agreement in a person;
 - 3. Level of deception in a person, in which there are two types of deception to detect:
 - a. Withholding information;
 - b. Falsifying information.
 - c. Note – There will usually be some level of deception in most conversations you have. You must determine how much the deception hurts the conversation as some deception is harmless.
- 8. *Situational awareness. Understanding the human dynamics of a situation will dictate the success of the meeting. Assessing the atmosphere before the meeting begins will give you an advantage and increase your chances for success. Here are examples of what you are looking for in a situational analysis.***

- a. Social setting – Understand the mood of the room and assess how you will approach individuals based on what their body language is telling you.
- b. Office setting with a decision maker – Find the #1 influencer to the decision maker and assess that person’s body language.
- c. Team negotiations – Watch the person sitting to the immediate right and left of the negotiator. What is their body language telling you? Assess their nonverbal cues will provide insight into how the meeting is going.

9. How the world sees you. The “temperature” of the room changes once you enter. Fully grasping that your personality, status, and mood affects the atmosphere of the room and the context of a discussion is critical as you navigate a relational interaction with another person or a group of people. There three things to consider:

- a. Sally Hogshead’s book “How the World Sees You” is a study of how your personality affects others. Knowing that you have certain quirks, strengths, and weaknesses in your personality can be helpful as you learn to leverage your strengths and how they affect those around you.
- b. Use body language to gain positive agreement. By using positive signals and comforting body language, you will influence others to be in a more accepting mood as you negotiate the terms of a new contract or seek to gain buy-in to a new project. (I will show examples of positive body language).
- c. Top five body language mistakes you can make in any setting:
 - i. Crush someone’s hand during a handshake. It hurts and leaves a negative impression. A firm handshake is good, but don’t overdo it.
 - ii. Cross your arms across your chest. Never do it. It puts off a defensive and negative vibe.
 - iii. Put your hands on your hips while standing. It portrays superiority over the other person or group of people with whom you are speaking. It will make others uncomfortable and make you look arrogant.
 - iv. Have shifty eyes. Make eye contact and engage with the person. Don’t break eye contact too soon or avoid eye contact and don’t scan the room as you are talking with someone.
 - v. Check your phone. This is a dismissive move and shows a lack of interest in the other person.

10. Interpret “body leaks”. A person can carefully choose his words or actively choose to be silent and cautious in a conversation; however, his body movements will almost always give him away and allow a glimpse into his intentions and mood. Here are some things to look for when assessing the authenticity of a conversation.

- a. Look for a cluster of gestures. Try not to make the mistake of assessing a situation based on one nonverbal cue. Reading nonverbal cues is like reading a sentence. Trying to interpret a meaning by reading just one word, out of context, could be misleading.

The same rule applies with gestures and body movement. Don't try to interpret a single gesture out of context and assume you fully understand the motives behind the person using the gesture.

- b. Focus on three main areas of the body: the eyes, the arms, and the hands.
 - i. Eyes – Use the eyes to detect mood, level of comfort, and deception. When an extrovert is nervous, he will make eye contact for long periods during a conversation. When an introvert is nervous, she will avoid eye contact for long periods.
 1. Rapid blinking indicates nervousness.
 2. When asking a question and the person contemplates his answer, he will often break eye contact. This is normal as he is formulating his thoughts. The key is to watch where he shifts his gaze.
 - a. If he looks to the right, he is pulling facts as he is using the left side of his brain. This could mean that he is comfortable with his pending answer or he's pulling from a carefully scripted story he's prepared in advance.
 - b. If he looks to the left, he is using the creative side, or the right side of his brain, which could indicate his making up a story or is not sure how to answer and is creating an answer to the question.
 - c. If he looks down, then that indicates that he is unsure of his answer and how to proceed.
 - d. If he looks up, then it indicates superiority and confidence in his answer.
 - ii. Arms – The arms communicate level of comfort.
 1. A person will use her arms to “body block” you when she is uncomfortable with the content of the conversation. When a person body blocks, she is defensive and experiencing discomfort in the topic of discussion.
 2. There are three body blocks to watch for in a conversation.
 - a. Crossed arms, in front of the chest, is an indication that a person is defensive and expressing a level of disagreement. (I will discuss how the hands play a role in reading the level of defensiveness in a crossed arm body block).
 - b. Partially crossed arms in front of the body indicates discomfort and uncertainty.
 - c. Arms placed behind the back indicate confidence and openness on the subject. However, if the person is holding his arm with

the other hand higher up the arm, then this indicates he wants to be open and vulnerable, but is still a little unsure with the situation.

- iii. Hands – People have a hard time controlling their hands during the course of conversation. The hands can be busy and will express a myriad of body leaks.
 1. The handshake is a wonderful indicator of a person’s intentions.
 - a. The knuckle crushing handshake indicates dominance and insecurity. This person is overcompensating.
 - b. The limp handshake indicates apathy or lack of interest.
 - c. The palm facing down handshake indicates that the person intends to control the conversation.
 - d. The palm facing up handshake indicates that the person intends to submit to you in the conversation.
 - e. The equal palm or vertical handshake indicates that the person views you as her equal and will act accordingly.
 - f. When the person uses her other hand to touch your arm during a handshake, indicates a prior relationship. The higher up the arm the person places their hand, indicates their level of comfort and the intimacy of the relationship.
 2. Deception. Be aware anytime a person places their hand anywhere around their face when answering questions. This almost always communicates some level of deception.
 3. When talking to a person, be aware when his hand approaches his face.
 - a. Placing his hand in front of his mouth indicates he does not believe you, when is listening or he is withholding information if he does this while speaking.
 - b. Placing a finger in his mouth indicates he is unsure of your conversation.
 - c. Placing his hand around his eyes, indicates he does not see “eye to eye” with you and is not in agreement.
 - d. Placing his hand around his ear, indicates he is not hearing you or understanding you.
 - e. Rubbing his hand behind his neck, indicates stress and frustration.
 - f. If a person places a finger over his mouth or rubs a finger near his lips, then he wants you to stop talking and wants to make a point.

- g. If the person places her hand under the jaw, this indicates frustration and she is holding back words she would prefer to say to you.
- h. When the person holds their chin with the side of their hand and with the index finger along the side of chin and pointing up towards their eyes, then are listening intently.
- i. When the person begins to rub her chin, she is making a decision.
- j. When the person leans back in a chair and interlocks his hands behind his head, he has made a decision and feels confident about the decision. This position also indicates superiority.
- k. Holding hands together in a “prayer” or steeple position indicates that the person is confident about the topic being discussed.
- l. Closed fists indicates tension and frustration.
- m. Palms facing up gestures indicates openness.
- n. Palms facing down gestures indicates a person is closed towards your position and feels dominant over you.
- o. Hands resting in the lap indicates genuine interest and trustworthiness.
- p. Hands wrapped around and clinging to a knee in a sitting position indicates tension and defensiveness.
- q. Sitting on hands or putting hands in pockets indicates that a person is withholding something or hiding from something.
- r. When a person rubs her hands together, she’s indicating she is done discussing a particular issue.
- s. Placing hands on the hips indicates confidence and superiority. The person that does this feels in charge of the conversation and is confident about where the conversation is going.
- t. Whenever a person “plays” with an object such as pen, a mobile device etc. This indicates nervousness or apathy towards a subject.

11. The sex, cultural background, and a person’s demographic history also influence the body language used.

- a. Women – They are connectors and tend to be more relational in human interaction. They preferred to be approached from the front, not the side or from behind. Nonverbal cues are relational motivated and tend to send signals that she is listening and paying attention.
- b. Men – They are competitors and approach human interaction as a zero sum game with winners and losers. Nonverbal cues are focused on whether a man is in agreement. Men liked to be approached from the side.

- c. Cultural – Where a person is from can be critical. For instance, Americans need more “personal space” when conversing with someone. However, a person with a Hispanic background or Arabic background is more comfortable interacting with someone much closer and more intimate. A person from England will tend to be less animated with his hands compared to a person from Italy.
- d. Demographic – A person that grew up in an urban environment is more comfortable invading someone’s personal space compared to a person who is from a rural environment.
- e. Why is this important? You can misread a situation if you do not consider some of these factors. For example, in a conversation with a woman she may nod her head up and down while listening to you to indicate that she understands you, while a man may do the same thing to indicate that he agrees with you. A woman may nod her head to show understanding, but may still disagree with you, while a man is nodding to indicate agreement. You may leave the conversation with a woman thinking she agreed with you, when she may in fact disagree with you.

12. When you begin to detect negative body language, then you must adjust to keep the meeting or conversation on track. You have three options:

- a. Ask targeted questions and look for the issue that is causing stress. The best question to ask in this situation is “Besides that, is there anything else holding you back on this issue?” Watch for body language cues as the person answers. Keep asking this question until you get positive signals. Once you discover the true obstacle in the relationship then you can discuss ways to clear that obstacle with that person.
- b. Look for ways to influence positive body language to change the person’s mood towards you. For example, if the person is crossing his arms in a defensive position. Hand him something like a paper to review or brochure to peruse. This will force the person to uncross his arms and promote openness.
- c. Defer the conversation and reconvene at another time. There is no point in proceeding with your agenda if the person is giving you negative cues.

13. Putting it all together is the key to winning with nonverbal communication. Learn to look for key nonverbal gestures and associate them with micro gestures to get an idea of where your conversation is going. For example, if a person crosses his arms and closes his hands into fists during your conversation, then covers his mouth as your making a point, proceeds to rub his chin for a moment as you’re closing your point and finally leans back and interlocks his hands behind his head then you know he’s about to disagree with your point and make a decision against your position.

14. Closing. Winning with people requires reading their body language so you can ensure that you are fully communicating with another person. Simply listening to someone is not enough to influence others in a positive way. By mastering the art of nonverbal communication, you will increase your influence and make an impact with the world around you. Always remember:

- a. Assess the room and look for nonverbal cues to gain an appreciation for the mood of the room. If the leader in the room is avoiding eye contact with you as you enter and his assistant is sitting next to him with her arms crossed tightly across her chest, then you are approaching a negative situation.
- b. Watch your body language. Keep your movements open and inviting. Make eye contact, keep your palms open and avoid body blocking. By keeping your movements open and positive then you will influence those around you to remain open as well.
- c. Watch for body leaks. In the end, a person will reveal her mood, intentions, and authenticity in her body language. So if you remember nothing else remember these three things.
 - i. Always notice how someone shakes your hand. The handshake is a strong indicator of a person's intentions.
 - ii. Always be wary of a person that puts his hand anywhere near his face as they answer your questions. This is a red flag, so proceed with caution.
 - iii. Anytime a person crosses her arms during a conversation, she is blocking you for some reason. It's your job now to dig further and figure out the issue.

15. Finally, never forget to smile. It's the international sign of friendliness!